



**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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STATEMENT BY
HAMDALLAH ZEDAN
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
TO
**SIXTH MEETING OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC,
TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE**
Montreal, Canada, 12 – 16 March 2001

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased once again to welcome you to Montreal and to this sixth meeting of SBSTTA. It is a particular pleasure since this meeting coincides with the fifth anniversary of the physical relocation of the Secretariat to Montreal.

The last time you were gathered here in Montreal was in the wake of the successful adoption of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. That meeting helped lay the foundation for a very successful meeting of the Conference of the Parties in May. This week, you have the opportunity to build on that success.

As in the past, you have a heavy workload for a relatively short meeting. I would just like to take this opportunity to briefly outline developments since the last meeting of the Conference of the Parties that are of particular relevance to this body and to elaborate on some of the issues on the provisional agenda for this meeting.

May I first, however, express my gratitude to the Chair and members of the Bureau of SBSTTA for their support and guidance in the preparations for this meeting. The Secretariat is also deeply appreciative of the efforts of all those organizations, programmes and individuals who contributed their time, energy and ideas in the development of both the working and information documents for the meeting.

Since the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the Secretariat has been focusing on the follow-up to the decisions adopted and the preparations for this and many other meetings. This has involved a broad consultative process involving a wide range of expertise from all parts of the world. The Secretariat has organized liaison group meetings on invasive alien species, coral reefs and agricultural biodiversity. The proposed programme of work on coral bleaching and the elements of a work plan on physical destruction of coral reefs, as well as the options presented for future work on invasive alien species, were all developed to a large extent through those meetings.

Several meetings relating to the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI) have also taken place, notably the first meeting of the GTI Coordination Mechanism and the regional meetings on the GTI in Central America and Africa. The Coordination Mechanism meeting, held in November last year, was instrumental in finalizing the proposed programme of work that is now before you.

November also saw the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Forest Biological Diversity. The Group will meet again to finalize its work next month. The outcome of the Group's work will therefore be a very important element in the overall preparation for the next meetings of SBSTTA and the Conference of the Parties, where forests will be the subject of in-depth discussion. May I take this opportunity to thank the Government of Canada for its generous support for the first meeting of the Group and the Government of the United Kingdom for its similarly generous support for the second.

None of the other three ad hoc technical expert groups have yet met. Arrangements still have to be finalized for the meeting of the Group on Marine and Coastal Protected Areas, which will be held with the generous support of the United States and New Zealand. On the other hand, no offers of support have been received for the groups on mariculture and dryland biodiversity, and as such it will not be possible to proceed with the meetings until additional funding is found.

As part of the ongoing programme on implementation and outreach, an advisory group of experts met in January to review the latest draft of the Global Biodiversity Outlook. The draft is being circulated to all delegations at this meeting and I am pleased to invite you all to a lunchtime presentation of the GBO today at the end of this morning's session. Your comments will be highly appreciated.

Yesterday, two additional meetings took place here in Montreal. These were the informal consultation on the proposed global strategy for plant conservation and the meeting of the informal advisory committee of the clearing-house mechanism.

Mr. Chairman,

As has been said many times in the past, cooperation with other institutions, both intergovernmental and non-governmental, is critical to the success of the Convention. Two of the items on your agenda focus on specific areas of cooperation with sister conventions, namely the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals.

With regard to climate change, the Secretariat participated in the meetings of the climate-change-convention Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technical Advice and the Conference of the Parties in November. At those meetings, the Secretariat circulated a paper focusing, in particular, on the potential impacts – both positive and negative -- on biological diversity of activities proposed to address climate change. The climate-change SBSTA will address the issue during the resumed sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the climate change convention next July. Both secretariats are committed to a coordinated cooperative approach to the matter, possibly through an informal joint working group of secretariat officials and members of the bureaux of the two subsidiary bodies and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). In this respect, I am pleased to inform you that the Chair of the climate-change SBSTA will attend and address this meeting tomorrow or on Wednesday. We will also have the pleasure of hearing this morning a keynote address by Dr. Robert Watson, an eminent climate-change scientist and Chair of IPCC and Co-Chair of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

Elements for a joint work programme with the secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species have been developed as a part of an evolving partnership between the two conventions, and to highlight the importance of migratory species considerations in biodiversity conservation. These elements are before this meeting for your consideration.

Current collaboration also includes an ongoing joint work plan with CITES and collaboration with IUCN, which has produced a joint publication on the management of bleached and severely damaged coral reefs (presented as an information document at this meeting).

A memorandum of cooperation was signed with the secretariat of the Global Programme of Action on the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) to facilitate the implementation of our programme of work on marine and coastal biological diversity. In addition, the regional seas programmes expressed strong interest in joining hands with the Convention on Biological Diversity at the Third Global Meeting of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans held in Monaco last November. Their commitment is especially welcome as they are key actors in the implementation of our programme of work on marine and coastal biological diversity.

Our cooperation with the Ramsar Convention has continued. The River Basin Initiative under the joint work plan is now at the establishment phase. In collaboration with the secretariat of the World Commission on Dams, the Secretariat has reviewed the Commission's final report and extracted some elements that SBSTTA might wish to consider recommending for introduction into the programme of work on biological diversity of inland water ecosystems. A side-event will be held later today in which the secretariat of the World Commission on Dams will provide the background and the rationale behind the recommendations in the report and their linkages with the programme of work on inland waters.

In addition, I participated in a meeting convened last month by UNEP on coordination of convention secretariats with a view to promoting collaboration among, and provision of programmatic support by UNEP to, multilateral environmental conventions. This can be seen as a part of a larger effort by UNEP to streamline the operations of environmental conventions, agreements and memoranda of understanding.

One important focus of the Secretariat's activities since the last meeting of the Conference of the Parties has been education and public awareness. Work is proceeding on a number of fronts:

- First, there is the formal process of developing a programme of work within the CBD-UNESCO Consultative Working Group of Experts on Biological Diversity Education and Public Awareness. A side-event on the progress made by the Working Group will be held in the course of this meeting;
- A newsletter *The CBD News* has been launched and is available at the current meeting;
- A number of brochures have been published to inform the general public about the Convention and the various related activities;
- The Secretariat has revamped its website to incorporate new technical innovations better designed to deal with the exponential growth of information;
- The clearing-house mechanism is developing new ways to more effectively foster scientific and technical cooperation, with an emphasis on capacity-building;
- Finally, the International Day for Biological Diversity has been moved to a new date – 22 May. This year's theme for the Day is invasive alien species, and I invite you all to extend the message in your countries.

Mr. Chairman,

It is indeed a welcome development that SBSTTA is evolving into a sort of “science park” and is striving to base its work on the best available science and knowledge.

By way of illustration, the focus of this week’s meeting will be on invasive alien species. As the second leading threat to biodiversity, after habitat loss, invasive alien species represent a major challenge to the international community. The environmental costs can be devastating and the economic costs huge.

In order to enrich the scientific discussion of this issue at the current meeting, a number of leading experts have been invited to give presentations on various aspects of the problem. Poster sessions will be launched today. Here, I would like to express my appreciation to all those experts and countries that responded to our call for poster papers. The Secretariat has also launched a new technical publication series, with several current information documents relating to invasive alien species becoming the first to be published as a part of this series. The large number of side-events planned for the meeting is a testimony to the increasing interest in the Convention and the growing prestige and vitality of SBSTTA as a forum for scientific discussion. This success, however, brings with it its own problems — while the Secretariat will try its utmost to accommodate all requests for side-events, please bear in mind that even in a facility as well equipped as this one, space is limited.

Forty-nine Parties have responded to the call by the Conference of the Parties to submit thematic reports on invasive alien species. These thematic

reports are an invaluable source of information for assessing the status of action by Parties and the constraints faced. I look forward to a similar solid base of thematic reports to support the preparations for the future consideration of the issues of benefit-sharing and forest ecosystems by SBSTTA and the Conference of the Parties.

I would like to take this opportunity to urge Parties to submit their full national report by 15 May this year, as requested by the Conference of the Parties. These reports are all the more important this year as work proceeds with the development of a Strategic Plan for the Convention.

Mr. Chairman,

Before I conclude, I want to express my gratitude to New Zealand and the United Kingdom, who contributed financially to the organization of this meeting; to the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties, who authorized the use of the budgetary surplus to offset the shortfall in funds to finance the participation of developing countries and countries with economies in transition; and to the staff of the Secretariat for their hard work in the face of a continuous race against time to cope with an ever increasing workload. Allow me to assure you that the Secretariat stands ready to assist you in your endeavours.

I wish you a successful and constructive meeting!