



**CONVENTION ON  
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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**HAMDALLAH ZEDAN  
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

**CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

**TO**

**THE WORKSHOP ON THE STRATEGIC PLAN OF THE  
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

**Mahé, Seychelles, 28 – 30 May 2001**

Excellency,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I consider it a great honor and privilege to welcome you to this Workshop on the Strategic Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity, not the least because it gives us an opportunity to visit the scenic island of the Mahé and experience the warmth and hospitality of the people of the Seychelles. Let me take this opportunity to thank you, your Excellency, and the people of the Seychelles on behalf of the participants at this meeting for so graciously inviting us to your country.

Organizing Convention meetings in developing countries is an important way of reaching out to a wider public and supporting our colleagues who have the most challenges and the least resources. This is even more so when it comes to small island developing States. So it is with great pleasure that we are able to hold a meeting not only in such a picturesque country as the Seychelles but also a country which comes from a constituency with so much to offer in international processes to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Excellency,

With your permission, I would like to to make a few brief remarks about the work of this meeting.

The Convention on Biological Diversity sets ambitious goals. Sustainable development of the world's natural resources is a task that will require an enormous commitment from all levels of society. Yet, as with most things in life, the available resources to achieve these aims are finite, precious and limited. Strategic planning is about making the most of limited resources. Clear goals and aims are, as we all know, critical to using these precious resources efficiently.

A crucial element of the Strategic Plan will therefore be the setting of overall objectives and defining the means to achieve them. We will need to ask ourselves questions, such as, what is the Convention's vision for, say, the year 2010 and what route(s) should be taken to make it a reality? What is to be achieved in ten years time, and how will progress be measured? It has been stressed that it is vital that the process for developing the Strategic

Plan provide an opportunity to debate these and other fundamental questions about the nature of the Convention and its programmes before considering the specific elements of a plan. This Workshop has been convened in order to provide this opportunity - away from the pressure of our regular meetings or office routine.

The fundamental and defining fact that should be the focus of our attention must be that biodiversity loss is increasing at an unprecedented rate. And this rate of loss is threatening the very existence of life as we know it and, in turn, poses an immediate threat to global security. Therefore, this Workshop should not focus solely on the Convention process but should at meaningful and measurable biodiversity-oriented targets. We need to think about targets such as slowing the rate of biodiversity loss by, for example, the year 2010; halting the destruction of virgin forests by a certain percentage over a given period of time; understanding and addressing the collapse of amphibians; slowing the rate of the destruction of mangroves; or addressing the destruction of fishing habitats.

Excellency,

This meeting has a number of other purposes of a more pedestrian nature but nonetheless of considerable importance in the development of a plan for the Convention. For example, reducing the number of options is as important as identifying goals. Ultimately, it is my hope that this Workshop will be able to agree upon draft elements of a Strategic Plan – which will be the basis for the discussion at the main intergovernmental preparatory meeting on the Plan next November. If we can end this meeting with a clear and focused set of elements for discussion, then we will have made an important contribution towards the eventual achievement of the objectives of the Convention.

Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am confident that the lovely surroundings that we find ourselves in will be conducive to focusing on these strategic issues. However, as we admire this glorious setting, let it also serve as a reminder of what is at stake and how much we have to lose if fail to harness the full potential of the Convention to address the challenges ahead.

I thank you for your attention.