



**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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STATEMENT BY

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

TO

THE SEVENTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO

THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

9 February 2004

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Mr. President
Mr. Executive Director
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates

I would like to join the President and the Executive Director of UNEP in welcoming you all very warmly to the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties since the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

May I first take this opportunity to reiterate my deep appreciation to the Government of Malaysia for hosting this meeting and for its' organization. Their generosity and hospitality provide eloquent testimony of the firm commitment of Malaysia to the objectives of the Convention and the broader objectives of sustainable development.

May I also take a moment to thank all those countries that have contributed financially and in kind to the many activities that have taken place under the Convention and to enable the participation of representatives from developing countries and countries with economies in transition in the present meeting. These Parties include: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States of America.

I would also like to express my personal appreciation to the outgoing President of the Conference of the Parties, the other members of the Bureau, the chairs and Bureau members of SBSTTA, ICCP and the various other bodies, who have been a source of support and guidance throughout the inter-sessional period.

Mr. President,

The end of last year marked the tenth anniversary of the Convention and provided an opportunity for taking stock of the progress made. In 1992, we came

to a cross roads. At the time there were those who argued for development alone and those who pointed to its unacceptable impacts. There were those who felt that biodiversity conservation, although desirable in its own right, was a second priority behind economic and social development and poverty eradication. Things changed gradually but significantly over the past ten years. One of the striking aspects of the last ten years has been the change in thinking and perception with regard to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and, most notably, the growing movement to put biodiversity issues at the forefront of efforts to achieve sustainable development and poverty eradication. The prominence given to biodiversity at the World Summit on Sustainable Development is a clear indication of this shift of opinion. For those who are convinced about the role biodiversity plays in the wider issues of socio-economic development and poverty eradication, this is a time of great promise.

It is also a time of great challenges. The endorsement by the World Summit on Sustainable Development of the work done under the Convention was indeed gratifying, as was the recognition at the highest political level of the critical role of biodiversity in sustainable development, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), poverty eradication and the livelihoods and cultural integrity of people. But this recognition brings with it an enormous responsibility for this body: a responsibility to take decisive action and to achieve tangible results.

The Convention started as a set of principles to which we all agreed to adhere. It has evolved into a comprehensive programme of work which is now moving fully into a phase of implementation. We have also set ourselves the target of achieving by 2010 a significant reduction in the current rate of loss of biological diversity at the global, regional and national levels as a contribution to sustainable development, poverty eradication and the MDGs. This target was endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The progress achieved to date provides a solid foundation and ample evidence of the effectiveness of the Convention. But much work still lies ahead if we are to meet the 2010 target, which is only six years away.

This meeting will determine the shape that that work will take, and, ultimately, whether or not the Convention process will achieve its objectives. You have before you the proposed multi-year programme of work of the Conference of the Parties up to 2010, recommended by the Inter-Sessional Meeting on the subject held in March last year. That Meeting sent a clear message that there must now be an enhanced focus on implementation. Accordingly, it is proposed that, with the exception of island biodiversity, no new programmes of work should be developed over the next six years. Instead, the focus should be on review of implementation of existing programmes, the effectiveness of the mechanisms for implementation and progress toward achieving the 2010 target and the MDGs.

You will no doubt appreciate the implications of this shift in approach, which will require increased political support and commitment, the provision of additional financial resources, the strengthening of ongoing implementation measures complemented by new and innovative approaches, as well as increased collaboration and strategic partnerships.

One of the key elements in assessing progress is the use of targets and indicators, as was discussed at the Inter-Sessional Meeting. At this current meeting, you are invited to consider a framework for setting goals, targets and indicators and their application to the elaborated programmes of work (on the biological diversity of inland water and marine and coastal ecosystems). These should be viewed as a flexible framework within which national targets and indicators may be set. They will define what we hope to achieve in the near future and provide ways of measuring our level of success. This will be critical in the pursuit of the 2010 target. Taken together, this will provide us with a collective and quantified vision of the significant global challenge before us.

Mr. President,

In addition to the future work of the Convention, there are three other issues for in-depth discussions on your agenda.

The first is the question of technology transfer and technology cooperation. You have before you the draft work programme on technology transfer recommended by SBSTTA. This draft work programme attempts to operationalize the relevant provisions of the Convention with a view to complementing and underpinning all other activities under the Convention. Technologies present real opportunities to add value to the use of genes, species and ecosystems for development, as well as risks, and both need to be assessed in a balanced manner. And it is up to individual countries to take their own decisions.

Another issue for in depth consideration at this meeting is a programme of work on protected areas. The challenge is to adopt a programme of work that will lead to the establishment and maintenance of an effectively managed, ecologically representative global system of protected area networks, in which the structure and functioning of the full range of ecosystems is maintained, so as to continue to provide benefits and to achieve a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss.

The third issue for in-depth consideration is mountain biodiversity. The draft work programme submitted for your consideration also includes an important challenge: the management of mountain ecosystems must incorporate all relevant facets of life on and near mountains, including the intricate ecological, cultural and socio-economic relationship between upland and lowland areas. The implementation of this programme of work will depend, perhaps more than anything else, on the practical application of the ecosystem approach and the realization of synergies with the other work programmes.

Mr. President,

Following the adoption of the Bonn Guidelines at your last meeting, you now have before you an issue that derives from an express request of the World Summit, namely the negotiation of an international regime to promote and safeguard the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. This matter was taken up at both the Inter-Sessional Meeting

and the second meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing. The recommendations of the Working Group before you include draft terms of reference for the negotiation of an international regime. Achieving consensus on these terms of reference and consideration of related matters is a critical test for the Convention that will show our resolve to follow up on the commitments made by world leaders in Johannesburg.

The role of indigenous and local communities and their traditional knowledge, innovations and practices in the implementation of the Convention cannot be overstated. The results of the third meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions of the Convention are before you for your consideration. This Working Group has made great strides since its inception and plays a vital role in integrating the concerns of indigenous and local communities into the Convention process.

Mr. President,

With the more action-oriented approach for the Convention process, the mechanisms for implementation take on added importance. Let me therefore say a few words about the various items clustered under that heading, namely education and public awareness, national reporting, the clearing-house mechanism and the financial mechanism.

First, a strong foundation has been established for a more effective implementation of the work programme on communication, education and public awareness (or CEPA). Full implementation of the Convention can only be achieved with the support of all stakeholders and the general public. In order to gain more widespread recognition and support for our efforts it is essential to demonstrate how the diversity of life and its sustainable use are key to sustainable development and poverty eradication. While nobody in this room needs convincing of this fact we still need to explain our case better beyond our circle. Those in a position of power and influence must better appreciate that sustaining biodiversity and reducing poverty are closely linked. CEPA activities

are therefore critical elements as we move forward in the next phase of our work and are reflected as such in the Strategic Plan.

National reports continue to be an essential feedback mechanism that is central to the overall assessment of the status of implementation of the Convention. But a number of Parties continue to encounter obstacles in the preparation and submission of their respective reports. This is an issue that you may wish to revisit particularly in light of the 2010 target.

As far as the clearing-house mechanism is concerned, it is focusing more closely on activities pertaining to technical and scientific cooperation, particularly within the context of the thematic and cross-cutting programmes of work under the Convention. It continues to invest in activities to build capacities at the national level, especially in collaboration with Governments and other international organizations and initiatives. It has also developed a number of cutting-edge information-exchange tools to assist Parties and Governments to more effectively implement obligations under the Convention. At this meeting, you have before you proposals to build on accomplishments to date and to further strengthen the clearing-house mechanism as an innovative and catalytic tool.

This meeting is also expected to adopt the terms of reference for the third review of the effectiveness of the financial mechanism. With respect to the broader issue of financial resources for the implementation of the Convention, you are invited to consider the financial implications of the 2010 target, and to decide how best to address the needs of developing countries and countries with economies in transition Parties in this regard.

Mr. President,

As you know, cooperation with other conventions and organizations lies at the heart of the work of the Convention. No one person, institution, group or sector, acting alone, can halt the loss of biodiversity. Bold and inclusive new forms of partnerships are required for optimal effectiveness in both policy and resources to meet the challenge. In an effort to ensure increasing synergies,

avoid duplication and secure contributions to achieving the 2010 target, the Inter-Sessional Meeting proposed the establishment of a global partnership on biodiversity comprising the major biodiversity-related organizations together with the Secretariat. I invite you to consider this proposal and to define the mandate and institutional structure of such a partnership.

Mr. President,

Finally, I am pleased to announce that the Biosafety Protocol now has 82 Parties, and ratifications continue at a brisk pace, providing fresh evidence of the relevance of the Protocol for the safe development of biotechnology, an activity of crucial significance to our future. As you are aware, the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol will be held following this meeting. This marks another important stage in the Convention process.

Mr. President,

May I conclude by inviting you to rise to the challenges facing the Convention, notably as regards the 2010 target, and to show the international community and world leaders that the hopes and expectations they placed in the Convention in Johannesburg were not in vain.

As you do so, I wish to assure you, as always, of the full support of the Secretariat during this meeting and that no effort will be spared to ensure its full success.

I thank you for your attention.