

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Address by
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at the opening of the Second Meeting of the Working Group
on the Review of the Implementation
of the Convention on Biological Diversity

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Chairperson,
President of the Eighth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity,
President of the Ninth Conference of the Parties,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
CEO and Chairperson of the Global Environment Facility,
Executive Secretary,
Distinguished Colleagues of the UN specialized agencies and programmes,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you on behalf of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization to the UNESCO Headquarters premises in Paris and to this second meeting of the Working Group on the Review of the Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Last week, we had the honor and the pleasure to host the 12th session of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention, in which some of you also participated. I received many positive feedbacks on this important meeting, which has successfully tested a new format for the work of SBSTTA, which aims at reinvigorating its scientific nature and scope of work. I am confident that the fact that SBSTTA ‘came back’ to UNESCO, twelve years after having held its first meeting in these very premises, in this very room in fact, has helped with rejuvenating the SBSTTA and at the same time reinforcing its ties with UNESCO – the UN agency in charge of science-related matters.

We are here today for a different but complementary reason: assessing the efficiency of tools that have been identified as key in supporting the process of implementing this important Convention. UNESCO has contributed to the implementation of the Convention since its very inception. Therefore, without wishing to anticipate any of the possible outcomes of this week’s meeting, let me put forward to your attention what UNESCO considers to be unique means for successfully implementing the CBD, based on its longstanding experience with the CBD:

- The first is Communication, Education and Public Awareness – CEPA. Only yesterday morning, in UNESCO, the Informal Advisory Committee on CEPA of the CBD, of which UNESCO is a member, met. We were very pleased to see that indeed the CBD programme of work on CEPA is increasingly moving from design to implementation. Parties will recall that UNESCO was mandated by the related COP V decision to implement a Global Initiative on Communication, Education and Public Awareness jointly with the CBD. We are happy to say that UNESCO’s work on CEPA, according to many Parties, was instrumental in developing the CBD programme of work in this area. UNESCO now looks forward to working with the CBD Parties and Secretariat towards effectively mainstreaming biodiversity through CEPA, which is indeed one of the most important issues – because of its crosscutting

nature – to be addressed under the Convention. Succeeding in relation to communication, education and public awareness on biodiversity will result in successfully mainstreaming the main messages of the Convention and in making significant progress in the fulfillment of its objectives.

- The second issue which, in UNESCO's view, is crucial to effectively implementing the CBD is the Ecosystem Approach. Last week, SBSTTA reiterated the importance of UNESCO's work in this area. I strongly encourage Parties to use the only three intergovernmentally-recognized networks of sites for implementing the Ecosystem Approach. These are: the World Network of Biosphere Reserves and the World Heritage Sites, under – respectively – UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme and UNESCO's World Heritage Convention; and the List of Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, for which UNESCO provides the legal depositary. Together, these internationally designated sites amount to well over 2000 sites and extensive areas including 20% or more of the global protected area coverage and 20% of the world's protected areas. These are sites where Parties to the Convention must make a concerted effort to implementing the ecosystem approach and relevant actions of the various work programmes adopted by the COP during last several years. These are 'living laboratories' for implementing the Ecosystem Approach and, therefore, for effectively implementing the CBD.
- Thirdly and finally, let me also make reference to what I consider to be a priority and key tool for synergy and efficiency in the context of the UN system as a whole: partnerships. The UN reform calls upon effective partnerships to be developed by the various UN specialized agencies, programmes and the Multilateral Environmental Agreements, especially in relation to the so called 'One UN' approach, which essentially advocates for more efficient assistance at country level. In light of the policy-making nature of the Convention, it is logical that it needs to rely on strategic partnerships with sister organizations dealing with substantive issues. In the case of UNESCO, we look forward to a continued yet re-enforced collaboration with the CBD on scientific, technical and technological matters, particularly focusing at the country level and directly benefiting Parties.

Chairperson, Presidents of the COP, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, CEO and Chairperson of GEF, Executive Secretary, Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish you a very productive and successful second meeting of the Working Group on the Review of the Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, here at UNESCO in Paris.

Thank you.