



STATEMENT BY

MR. BRAULIO F. DE SOUZA DIAS

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

at the opening of the

FIRST REGIONAL WORKSHOP FOR AFRICAN LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

ON THE PREPARATION OF THE FIFTH NATIONAL REPORT AND GLOBAL

BIODIVERSITY OUTLOOK AND REGIONAL POLICY SCENARIOS

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**Convention on
Biological Diversity**

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
United Nations Environment Programme
413 Saint-Jacques Street, Suite 800, Montreal, QC, H2Y 1N9, Canada
Tel : +1 514 288 2220 Fax : +1 514 288 6588
secretariat@cbd.int www.cbd.int



Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends,

This is the first of a series of workshops organized by the CBD Secretariat in collaboration with partners to support Parties to the Convention in their preparations of the fifth national report. It complements and builds on capacity building workshops on National Biodiversity Strategies and Actions Plans, on indicators for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and on synergies between conventions. I want to welcome you all to this event which is being made possible through the financial support from the Government of Japan and the technical input on the use of scenarios, provided by the Government of the Netherlands.

I am particularly pleased that the UNEP Regional Office for Africa is hosting this workshop jointly with the CBD Secretariat. As you know, the focal points appointed by UNEP to its regional offices to support the work of the multilateral environmental agreements have been a tremendous help in enhancing synergies amongst conventions and in generating closer dialogue and interactions with individual countries. I also thank UNON for providing the venue for this meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The fifth national report will provide the main source of information for taking stock of the progress made in the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. The mid-term review of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets will be undertaken at the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in November 2014. This review at COP 12 will provide the basis for Parties to decide on the measures to be taken to achieve the Aichi Targets by 2020.

Obviously such a review will not be possible or meaningful without a significant number of fifth national reports submitted by Parties in time. And it will depend on a frank and open discussion - first within each country and subsequently at the meeting of the Conference of the Parties - to analyse how much progress is truly being made, where the main stumbling blocks lie, and how to can navigate around them. You will be aware that the deadline for submission of your fifth national report, as agreed by COP 10, is only just over one year away. Bearing this in mind, I wish to strongly urge all the Parties, particularly those present here, to initiate a process to prepare this report as early as possible.

The fourth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO 4), another focus of this workshop, will provide a basis for the mid-term review of the implementation of the Strategic Plan for 2011-2020 and its 2020 Aichi Biodiversity

Targets, drawing on information from the fifth national reports and other sources. It is anticipated that GBO 4 will consist of several products to be published for COP 12 and during 2015, so as to also coincide with the evaluation of the Millennium Development Goals and to enable an analysis of the contribution of biodiversity towards their achievement. Again, the timely submission of fifth national reports and other contributions and inputs from Parties will be crucial for the preparation of GBO 4.

We are already in year three since the adoption of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. By 2014, when the fifth national reports are due and when COP 12 undertakes its evaluation, we will be almost half way into the implementation of the Strategic Plan and we need to know where we stand, which measures have been taken and what is being set in motion so as to achieve the desired outcomes by 2020. The third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook showed that the world community had failed to achieve the 2010 Biodiversity Target, set earlier in 2002. We cannot afford to fail again. We have to urgently do those things that require immediate action - and we have to put the measures in place now that will turn around trends in biodiversity, particularly those that are slow to respond. The sessions on the analysis of policy options and scenarios, which is graciously offered by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, should support your analyses of which mix of measures and policies might be most effective in achieving the outcomes you are aiming for within your respective countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Africa is rich in biodiversity and biological resources, and we know that these are essential for the development of the continent. We also understand that poverty is a key underlying factor leading to the loss of biodiversity: unsustainable farming practices, overgrazing, illegal logging and poaching; practices that degrade ecosystems and curtail future development options. Other factors affecting the health of Africa's ecosystems are driven primarily from outside: unsustainable large-scale industrial production of commodities, unsustainable off-shore fishing by foreign fleets, the effects of climate change, or pollution from mining and drilling operations that may not adhere to desirable environmental standards. Clearly, capacities and resources for implementation of the CBD and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011-2020) are limited but let that not be an excuse to give up and do nothing. We absolutely have to begin addressing the root causes of biodiversity loss. We need to find allies to do so and we need to find solutions that are economically sensible, as well as result in positive outcomes for biodiversity. We can no longer afford to ignore the values of biodiversity in the national balance sheets. UNEP's work on the economics of biodiversity and ecosystem services and

the green economy and the tools being promoted as part of a transition towards sustainability should be a key for the development of sustainable solutions to address biodiversity loss, solutions that do not limit but are aligned with the countries' development aspirations. Together we need to demonstrate and implement ecosystem-based solutions to our environmental and economic challenges. Let this workshop be a contribution towards that thinking.

Having said all this, I sincerely hope that this workshop will be helpful to you all for preparing the fifth national report and contributing to GBO 4. As I have emphasized at a number of meetings under the Convention including COP 11, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Convention and the Strategic Plan need to be strengthened at various levels because they are crucial for policy making processes including national biodiversity planning and decision making. I encourage you to see the national report as an extension of the process on updating your NBSAP in which you are all engaged, a process in which all relevant stakeholders can participate and which can be used to mobilize public support and actions for the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

In conclusion, I wish you very productive discussions over the next few days. I look forward to receiving your fifth national report before or by March 2014 and, as always, the Secretariat stands ready to support your efforts in this process.

Thank you.