



STATEMENT BY

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

at the opening of the

**REGIONAL WORKSHOP FOR THE CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES ON THE
PREPARATION OF THE FIFTH NATIONAL REPORT**

and the

**REGIONAL WORKSHOP FOR THE CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES ON THE
CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM**

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Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the two CBD regional workshops taking place this week in Saint Lucia: one on the preparation of the fifth national report, and one on the clearing-house mechanism.

First of all, I would like to thank the Government of Saint Lucia, particularly its Ministry for Public Service, Sustainable Development, Energy, Science and Technology, for hosting these events and for kindly making all the necessary arrangements, including facilitating your arrival to this beautiful venue.

I would also like to thank the Government of Japan for its generous financial support which has allowed the Secretariat to convene these workshops as well as many other capacity-building workshops, such as those on National Biodiversity Strategies and Actions Plans, on indicators for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and on synergies between conventions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are already in year three since the adoption of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets in October 2010 in Nagoya at the tenth Conference of the Parties (COP 10).

The third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook, launched in 2010, showed us that the world community 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 measures that are slow to respond.

To do so, we need to know where we stand, which measures have been taken and what is being set in motion in order to achieve the desired outcomes by 2020. This is why COP 10 decided to undertake the mid-term review of the Strategic Plan and progress towards the achievement of the Aichi Targets at COP 12 in October 2014 in Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea. This review will provide the basis for Parties to decide on further measures to be taken to achieve the Aichi Targets by 2020.

The fourth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO 4), to be launched at COP 12, will provide a basis for this mid-term review. GBO 4 will draw on information from the fifth national reports and other sources. It will also draw on the evaluation of the progress made in implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which will enable an analysis of the contribution of biodiversity towards their achievements.

As the fifth national reports will provide the main source of information for assessing the progress made in the implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), they are crucial for the preparation of GBO 4 and for the mid-term review.

This is why COP 10 decided to set the deadline for submission of the fifth national reports to 31 March 2014, which is just over six months from now. Bearing this in mind, I strongly urge all Parties that have not already done so to initiate a process to prepare their fifth national report as soon as possible to ensure that this report be submitted in time in order to be a useful substantive contribution before COP 12 to both GBO 4 and the mid-term review.

It is precisely because the fifth national reports are so critical that the Secretariat has been convening a series of workshops to support Parties in the preparation of these reports.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The main purpose of the national reports and the Global Biodiversity Outlook is to disseminate relevant information and knowledge about the status of implementation, so that Parties can make sound decisions for the future of biodiversity in their countries. At this juncture, I would like to emphasize the link with the Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM) whose mission is, among other things, to contribute to the implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan by facilitating information exchange and knowledge sharing.

At the national level, national clearing-house mechanisms have a major supporting role to play in identifying relevant information and knowledge and in making it accessible to those involved in the implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans.

Establishing and maintaining an effective national clearing-house mechanism is a challenging undertaking which is likely to occur step by step depending on available resources and capacity. The starting point for each country is to understand the benefits that it can gain from a national clearing-house mechanism, and to adopt a sound approach for its governance, development, and maintenance. This is the key to long-term effectiveness and sustainability, and it will be discussed during the workshop on the clearing-house mechanism.

Strategically, it is important for those in charge of a national clearing-house mechanism to understand the big picture in their country. Holding the workshop on the clearing-house mechanism in parallel with the workshop on national reporting is therefore a great opportunity because it enables the organization of joint sessions for topics of common interest.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The forthcoming meeting of the Convention's scientific advisory body (SBSTTA 17) will focus on scientific and technical needs to achieve the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and on setting national biodiversity targets. SBSTTA 17 will provide an opportunity to share information about these targets, monitoring their progress, and related difficulties.

The SBSTTA Bureau recommended that regional capacity-building workshops be used to help prepare the region for upcoming major meetings. In response to this request, in the workshop on national reporting, a session will be dedicated to introducing SBSTTA 17 and to discussing the potential benefits of that meeting for the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Caribbean region is rich in biodiversity, particularly in the marine environment. This biodiversity, the legacy of a unique evolutionary history, is essential for the well-being of the region. As recognized in the Caribbean Challenge Initiative Leaders Declaration on Marine and Coastal Resources, the vast marine and coastal resources of the Caribbean region play an essential role in providing income, livelihoods, food security, shoreline protection, social benefits and overall economic prosperity for the people of the Caribbean.

The Caribbean region has traditionally led by example. In this light, I was very pleased to see the second phase of the Caribbean Challenge Initiative launched at a recent summit of the CCI (May 2013, British Virgin Islands), which is designed to accelerate and expand efforts to safeguard the region's marine and coastal environment, further promote sustainable use of these resources through new commitments to conservation action and/or scaling up of existing actions, including financial commitments, and engage the private sector and partners.

We are also aware that many Parties in the Caribbean region have limited resources with which to address the biodiversity challenges they are currently facing. Unsustainable coastal development, land and sea-based sources of pollution, unsustainable fishing and climate change all exert significant pressures on the marine and coastal environments and on biodiversity in the region. Clearly, capacities and resources for implementation of the CBD and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011-2020) are limited, but let us not use that as an excuse to give up.

In these challenging times, we must seek ways to learn from each other, share our experiences and collaborate to tackle the joint challenges we are facing. In this respect, I was encouraged by the business leaders' commitments made at a recent summit of the Caribbean Challenge Initiative. They signed a Corporate Compact committing to working together with governments to ensure that the beautiful marine and coastal areas in the region are protected, and also announced funding commitments of a total of 75 million USD to support marine and coastal conservation.

While the challenges are large, there are many tools and ongoing initiatives to assist Parties. A few examples of these are UNEP's work on the economics of biodiversity and ecosystem services and the green economy, the World Bank's Wealth Accounting and the Valuation of Ecosystem Services (WAVES) project, as well as the pilot testing of the new Experimental Environmental and Economic Accounting guidelines under the UN Statistics Division. Tools such as these enable us to work on a transition towards sustainability and provide 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.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I sincerely hope that the two parallel workshops taking place this week will help you in preparing your fifth national report, contributing to GBO 4 or developing your national clearing-house mechanism. As I have emphasized on several occasions, including at 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 planning process, a process in which all relevant stakeholders should participate, and which can mobilize further support for implementation.

In conclusion, I wish you very productive discussions over the next few days. I look forward to receiving your fifth national report by March 2014 and to seeing more effective national clearing-house mechanisms. As always, the Secretariat stands ready to support your efforts.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.