



STATEMENT BY
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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

ON THE OCCASION OF

THE CAPACITY-BUILDING WORKSHOP FOR WEST ASIA AND NORTH AFRICA
ON ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION TO SUPPORT
ACHIEVEMENT OF THE AICHI BIODIVERSITY TARGETS

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Convention on
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**Excellency,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It gives me immense pleasure to extend a warm welcome to you all to this capacity-building workshop for West Asia and North Africa on ecosystem conservation and restoration to support achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. This is a region of great historical importance – the Fertile Crescent – the cradle of agriculture and of civilization. Farming technologies and human society initiated in this region and have led to many benefits here and worldwide, but 10,000 years of agriculture has also taken its toll on ecosystems.

It is heartwarming to see here experts from the countries of this region, from indigenous and local communities, the League of Arab States, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and its regional office, the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for West Asia, many non-governmental organizations, and the Government of the Republic of Korea. This gathering validates the importance, which your countries and the organizations you represent accord to ecosystem conservation and restoration and to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its twenty Aichi Biodiversity Targets. I thank the Government of Japan through its Japan Biodiversity Fund, and the Government of Germany for generously providing the necessary financial support for this workshop, and I thank the Government of Jordan for actively supporting this workshop as our kind host.

I also welcome here the delegates who are attending this workshop through the generous support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the collaboration of the FAO Regional Office of the Near East. As we seek to foster a greater exchange of views and coordination between sectors, some delegates attending the FAO 21st Session of the Near East Forestry and Range Commission have stayed on to discuss issues of deforestation, degradation, integration, restoration potential, and the management of protected areas.

With its experience toward achieving Aichi Biodiversity Targets, Jordan makes for an appropriate setting for our work and for enabling follow-up support for actions and targets identified at this workshop. Jordan has some concrete results to showcase, including the protection of 30 per cent of territorial waters which directly contributes to achieving aspects of Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 on protected areas. We also seek to learn about the experience of Jordan in implementing an integrated ecosystem management approach in the Jordan Rift Valley.

The tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Nagoya in 2010 adopted the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and twenty Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Three of these can be considered as area-based targets - they set quantitative global targets to: halve the rate of loss of natural habitats, restore at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems, and protect at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland waters and 10 percent of coastal and marine areas as part of improved protected area networks with connectivity across the landscape. There is a need for a coherent approach to these targets, and actions taken to achieve them contribute to the achievement of many more.

Making use of the work conducted in response to decision XI/16 on restoration, as well as information and support from partner agencies, global initiatives, and from Parties, the Secretariat approach to capacity building entails engaging Parties by providing and requesting information and encouraging discussion prior to and during subregional workshops, as well as encouraging follow-up support for Parties post-workshop through the Life Web Initiative, partner agencies and peer-to-peer exchanges in subregions.

There is certainly a global momentum building for ecosystem restoration. *The Bonn Challenge*, a global movement to restore 150 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by 2020, has already accumulated nearly 50 million hectares in pledges for restoration. Building on this, the *Hyderabad Call*

for a Concerted Effort on Ecosystem Restoration made in October 2012 by concerned stakeholders, (Governments of India, the Republic of Korea and South Africa, SCBD, UNCCD, UNFCCC, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, GEF, UNEP, UNDP, UNFF, FAO, IUCN, and SER) called for coordinated long-term efforts to mobilize resources and facilitate ecosystem restoration activities for the benefit of all.

As countries chart their own courses towards achieving the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, they will be looking for the most efficient and innovative solutions to meet both their social development needs and biodiversity conservation goals. This workshop aims to provide the necessary capacity to help countries in setting realistic and achievable national targets and ways and means for achieving those targets including tools and resources and linkages to capacity building activities.

Excellency,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are approaching the CBD COP 12 in October this year which marks the mid-way point to the year 2020. This is an important year to identify where we are in the biodiversity agenda, and make course corrections as necessary. It is time to take real actions towards achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Time is running fast and we cannot spare any second or any minute, otherwise our goals and targets will slip away. COP 12 will be graciously hosted by the Republic of Korea and this meeting will assess implementation of the Strategic Plan, including through the launching of the fourth Global Biodiversity Outlook. Rest assured that all you do will count, no matter whether your actions are big or small. Only collectively can we achieve our global goals and targets.

Let me take this moment to extend my wholehearted appreciation to our regional and global partners who are represented here as key partners who significantly contribute to conservation and restoration work on the ground and who further reiterate their support by being with us here today. I extend a special thanks to the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for West Asia and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for their notable efforts in making this workshop happen. Thank you to all our partners for participating and sharing your expertise with us. For gains to be made toward achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, it will require strategic partnerships between the Parties, the Convention and our regional and global partners. We will work together in this spirit of collaboration.

This is therefore the context of the present workshop, which aims to provide practical, hands-on tools and training toward reaching these goals. I once again welcome you all and look forward to open discussions and concrete and practical outcomes.

Thank you.