



**CONVENTION ON  
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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**STATEMENT BY**

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**CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

**TO**

**THE MEETING OF THE AD HOC OPEN-ENDED  
WORKING GROUP ON REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF  
THE CONVENTION**

**Montreal, Canada, 5-9 September 2005**

Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

I would like first, on behalf of all of us, to extend our condolences to the people and the Government of the United States for the unprecedented devastation and loss of life as a result of one of the worst natural disasters Hurricane Katrina.

May I also express my deep appreciation to those countries that contributed funds to enable the organization of the meeting and the participation of representatives from developing countries and countries with economies in transition. They include Canada, Denmark, Norway and the United Kingdom, [to be updated as necessary]. As I have noted in the past, such voluntary contributions are essential to ensuring the broad geographical representation necessary for successful meetings of the Convention.

Mr. Chairman,

Given the task you have ahead of you, I would like to take a few moments to review the evolution of the Convention and the rationale for this meeting.

Three distinct phases can be identified in the evolution of the Convention. The **first phase** was its conception and negotiation was the result of an increased recognition of the importance of biodiversity and its economic value, especially in the light of the unprecedented threats that it was facing. It was widely acknowledged that, despite the large number of biodiversity-related agreements in force at the time, there was a need for a broader framework, one that was not limited to particular species or ecosystems or to their conservation only. The

Convention on Biological Diversity was the first global agreement to cover all aspects of biodiversity, including its role in sustainable development. It sought to balance the interests of both developed and developing countries, and this balance is reflected in its three objectives: the conservation of biodiversity; the sustainable use of its components; and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the use of genetic resources. At this junction, please allow me to pay tribute to those who guided the negotiation process and, in particular, the former Executive Director and father of UNEP Mostafa Tolba, R. Olembo, Viet Koester and V. Sanchez.

After the Convention's entry into force in 1993, there followed the **second phase**, what might be called a policy-making phase, in which the Conference of the Parties embarked on the operationalization of its provisions, through an often difficult process of consensus-building on matters of policy, priority-setting and mechanisms for implementation. It adopted multi-year programmes to guide its work, established a series of thematic programmes of work, developed principles, guidelines and tools related to cross-cutting issues and, in 2000, adopted the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. It also focused on the mechanisms for implementation, including the financial mechanism, the clearing-house mechanism, cooperation with other organizations and outreach and public awareness activities.

After establishing the substantive and institutional framework of the Convention, Parties shifted their focus from policy development to implementation—the **third phase** in the evolution of the Convention. In 2002, the Conference of the Parties adopted the Strategic Plan, including the 2010 target of achieving a significant reduction in the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional, and national levels. This target was endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development later in 2002, where Governments also recognized the critical role of the Convention in the overall sustainable development and poverty eradication and in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In the Strategic Plan, the 2010 target is supported by a

number of specific goals and objectives. It also identifies obstacles to implementation, and flags the need for better methods to evaluate progress in the implementation of the Convention.

Responding to this need, the Conference of the Parties adopted decision VII/30, which includes a framework to evaluate global progress towards the 2010 target, and sets out measures to assess and improve national implementation. In the same decision, the Conference of the Parties established this Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group i) to consider progress in the implementation of the Convention and the Strategic Plan, and achievements leading up to the 2010 target; ii) to review the impacts and effectiveness of existing processes under the Convention; and iii) to consider ways and means of identifying and overcoming obstacles to the effective implementation of the Convention, particularly at the national level.

At the same meeting, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to inform this Working Group of ongoing work to enhance cooperation between the major biodiversity-related organizations and secretariats and to explore options for a flexible framework between all relevant actors, such as a global partnership on biodiversity, to enhance implementation through improved cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

Based on the above decisions and the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan, your agenda has been divided into four main items. The **first item** is assessing progress in the implementation of the Convention, including progress towards the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan, towards the goals and targets of the 2010 framework, and in the implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans. You are also invited to identify obstacles to implementation and define ways and means of overcoming them. As Parties hold primary responsibility for the implementation of the Convention within their own countries, particular emphasis should be placed on identifying and addressing

obstacles to national implementation. One obstacle that you may wish to address is the adequacy of the funding currently available to tackle the challenges ahead.

The **second item** on your agenda, review of the impacts and effectiveness of existing processes under the Convention, involves assessing the institutional framework and operations of the Convention. In conducting your assessment, you have the opportunity to suggest improvements to the overall functioning of the Convention to ensure that existing processes are sufficient to respond to the challenges ahead. In this context, I would like to draw your attention to two specific operational issues, namely the role of the Secretariat in facilitating the implementation of the Convention and the means of ensuring that SBSTTA and the various expert groups that report to it provide the best possible—and apolitical—scientific advice for decision-making by the Conference of the Parties.

The **third item** on your agenda is cooperation with other conventions and relevant organizations and the engagement of the full range of stakeholders in the implementation of the Convention. Given the limited resources available for biodiversity-related initiatives, optimizing the use of those resources through cooperation is essential to achieving the 2010 target and the longer-term objectives of the Convention. Such objectives, however, cannot be achieved by environment agencies and organizations alone. All sectors and stakeholders must be engaged in the implementation of the Convention. Cross-sectoral integration of biodiversity-related issues at the national level can be achieved by working with other ministries, business associations, and civil society organizations, as well as with indigenous and local communities. At the international level, stakeholder engagement could be increased through the type of global partnership on biodiversity proposed by the Conference of the Parties, and through initiatives targeted at particular stakeholders, in particular development agencies and the private sector. The Business and the 2010 Biodiversity Challenge, for example, seeks to enhance the engagement of the private sector by encouraging business and industry to minimize their negative and promote positive impacts on biodiversity.

The **fourth** and final substantive **item** on your agenda involves assessing the mechanisms and processes for monitoring progress in the implementation of the Convention, including the 2010 framework, the Global Biodiversity Outlook, reviews of programmes of work, national reports, and a potential process for reviewing progress towards the four goals of the Strategic Plan. Strengthening and developing clear links between these processes and mechanisms is essential to defining the cohesive, results-based monitoring and reporting framework necessary for the success of the Convention. Fundamental to such a framework is an effective national reporting process – one that is simple, indicative, and provides adequate and accurate information to assess progress against the goals, targets and objectives of the Convention. The format alone, however, cannot guarantee a successful reporting process. Parties must also be enabled to submit reports in a timely manner.

Mr. Chairman,

In your consideration of each of these issues, I wish to encourage you to take a holistic view to improving the implementation of the Convention building on the many achievements already accomplished as reflected in the Special Issue of the CBD News made available to you.

You would agree with me that the Secretariat has played a critical role in these achievements and many more: the successful translation of the provisions of the CBD into programmes of work on thematic and cross-cutting issues with defined measurable targets; the adoption of the Biosafety Protocol; the negotiations of the international regime on access and benefit sharing; the evolution of SBSTTA into a recognizable intergovernmental scientific body; the release of the first edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO) and the publication of the Convention's Handbook and the technical series; CBD News; engaging the scientific community and journals devoted to issues discussed under the Convention; forging strong partnerships with relevant organizations; making the Convention a forum for the indigenous and local communities; the prominence of the Convention and biodiversity at the World Summit on Sustainable

Development (WSSD); and the active presence of the CBD at meetings of the General Assembly as well as the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). In recognition of these efforts and accomplishments, and as a strong indication of the Parties' confidence in the CBD process and its programmes of work, funding to the Secretariat has substantially increased over the years. The Secretariat has expanded from a few offices and few people to a full team of reinvigorated and dedicated staff, including an administrative and financial structure, capable of effectively responding to the needs of the Parties. The Secretariat managed to set up its own conference services division and is capable of organizing its own meetings resulting in significant cost savings; actually up to 50 per cent. In listing these notable achievements, it is only right to acknowledge the efforts and hard work of the Secretariat's staff over the years.

In your consideration of each of the items on your agenda, it is important not to lose sight of the **key challenges** facing the Convention: the need to translate the 2010 target into national goals and targets; the need to mainstream biodiversity in all economic sectors; the need to engage stakeholders, including civil society at large, indigenous and local communities and the private sector; the need to improve the effectiveness of national reporting; and, ultimately, the need to overcome the obstacles to implementation identified in the Strategic Plan and, in particular, to meet the capacity-building needs of Parties and to generate the necessary additional financial resources and the political will for effective action.

In preparing for this meeting, great efforts were made to identify ways to streamline the Convention processes and propose actions that would enhance the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the Convention. While none of the proposed actions are revolutionary, taken together, they could radically improve the implementation of the Convention.

The proposed actions are discussed in the notes that you have before you. These have been prepared based on the results of previous reviews, external reviews, submissions from Parties and organizations, and national reports.

This week, you have an opportunity to mould the Convention into a more focused, functional instrument by taking a common sense approach to this review. I encourage you to make recommendations to the Conference of the Parties to align and improve processes that will contribute to the long-term success of the Convention. This means taking measures to improve processes, while bearing in mind the need to have continuity in order to review implementation and effectiveness in the long-term.

Furthermore, I encourage you to consider your recommendations collectively to ensure that the suggested tasks and timelines are feasible and complementary, as adequate time and resources are preconditions to effectiveness.

In the twelve months leading up to the COP-8, we will have held eleven weeks of open-ended intergovernmental meetings, not to mention numerous technical expert groups and workshops. I think that it is fair to say that this number of meetings is stretching the capacity of Parties, the Secretariat and partner organizations. In order to avoid such overburdening in the future, I wish to reiterate my request to you to take a step back and to discuss openly and frankly all possibilities that may be put on the table to improve the Convention's effectiveness.

Mr. Chairman,

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of this meeting and the agenda you have ahead of you, especially in light of the findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and the need to achieve the 2010 target and the Millennium Development Goals. I therefore encourage you to make every effort to work together to overcome obstacles to the implementation of the Convention, streamline and improve the effectiveness of Convention processes, and enhance cooperation and stakeholder engagement at the national, regional and global levels. This is not only critical for achieving the 2010 target and the objectives of the Convention; it will also help sustain and build support for the Convention,



particularly among the less engaged stakeholders and sectors. I am confident that you will rise to the challenge and I look forward to being able to attend next week's World Summit on assessing progress towards the Millennium Development Goals with clear evidence that Parties, other Governments and stakeholders are committed to, and have already made progress towards, ensuring that the Convention achieves its objectives and plays its full part in the broader sustainable-development agenda.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, I would like to assure you of the full support of the Secretariat in your deliberations and wish you all the best for a successful meeting.

Thank you.