



Permanent Mission
of the Federal Republic of Germany
to the United Nations
New York



Germany 2011|2012

Candidate for the United Nations Security Council

Speech by Dr. Norbert Roettgen,
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**at the High-Level Plenary Meeting
of the UN General Assembly
on Biodiversity**

New York, 22 September 2010

Mr President,

Secretary-General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this International Year of Biodiversity, the loss of species and habitats is continuing at a dramatic pace. Second by second, minute by minute, we are destroying the natural foundations of our lives.

During the time of my speech alone, more than half a football field of German land will have been converted into transport and settlement areas. Globally, in the same period of time, the equivalent of 170 football field will have been deforested. More than 900 tonnes of fish will have been taken from the world's oceans; one more species might even have vanished from our planet forever.

And - we let it happen. We let it happen even though we value these plants and animals, as part of our world, and even though we know that biological diversity is vital to feeding the us humans. Biological Diversity is the foundation of our very own survival.

So far, around 7000 plant species have been cultivated for human nutrition worldwide. Every day, without a second thought, we use numerous "services" provided by nature and thus by biodiversity: clean air and water, fertile soils, pollinating insects, natural coastal protection, CO₂ storage in forests, wetlands, soils and the seas. Providing these services without nature, without biodiversity – if at all possible - would be extremely costly and involve major technological efforts.

Conserving biological diversity is therefore not a luxury - it is necessary insurance, an investment in our future and our lives.

The conservation of biological diversity does not yet receive the same amount of attention as the issue of climate change, but attention is a precondition for political action.

Conserving biological diversity worldwide requires committed and long-term action. And it requires cooperation among the international community. At today's high-level meeting, let us send a signal and make a global pact for biological diversity!

Let us do this,

- by recognising the value of biological diversity for human well-being and for the global economy, and by integrating it into our economic policies, instruments and accounting;
- by massively reducing our ecological footprint and restructuring production, trade and consumption;
- by making greater use of biological diversity as a basis for sustainable innovations, and ensuring equitable sharing of the benefits resulting from the use of genetic resources;
- by strengthening the global network of protected areas, particularly those at sea, to give nature space to retreat;
- by improving the knowledge of biological diversity and making it available to political decision-makers in a suitable form;
- and, not least, by significantly strengthening the financial foundations for tackling these challenges at the national and international level.

In the framework of our Presidency of the 9th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity we have striven, together with all our partners, to actively promote this process. Most recently in Geneva in an unprecedented meeting with all previous and future Presidencies of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, we adopted a Call for Action addressed at the participants here today.

In the spirit of this Call for Action, let us lay the foundations here in New York and at the upcoming 10th Conference of the Parties to halt the loss of biological diversity in the coming decade. Let us endeavour to restore what has been lost.

Thank you.