

Address by Her Excellency Buyelwa Sonjica, South African Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs, on the occasion of the High Level Meeting of General Assembly as a contribution to the International Year of Biodiversity, New York, 22 September 2010.

'The way forward in achieving the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the internationally agreed biodiversity goals and targets.'

It is a great honor and privilege to address you in this panel, which forms part of the High Level Segment of the General Assembly as a contribution to the International Year of Biodiversity. This occasion is of special significance in the history of the United Nations and the global efforts towards halting biodiversity loss. The theme under discussion, which is 'The way forward in achieving the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the internationally agreed biodiversity goals and targets', presents a useful approach in expanding the strategic focus of the Convention on Biological Diversity. It further presents opportunities to reflect on synergies with other Multilateral Environmental Agreements as well as key programmes with implications on biodiversity at various scales.

Distinguished guests, South Africa's vision is to conserve biodiversity across the region and to sustain the country's economic and social development in harmony with the developmental, spiritual and cultural values of its people. This vision is befitting, given the fact that South Africa is the third richest mega biodiverse country in the world and home to unique biodiversity which includes an entire plant kingdom namely the Cape Floral Kingdom.

Chairperson, as a developing country, South Africa's over-riding priorities is poverty reduction, and socio-economic development. In this context, its immediate priorities include the urgent delivery of basic human development services to the poor and the most vulnerable. This includes ensuring access to housing, water, sanitation, food security, energy, transport, education and public health services, all of which are dependent on biodiversity and the natural capital. Continued loss of biodiversity will ultimately undermine the government's programmes to deliver on its MDGs and development efforts. Chairperson, South Africa is undertaking a number of activities aimed at making an economic case for biodiversity. In this regard, we are proud to announce that South

innovative mechanisms whose intentions and purposes will be to supplement existing mechanisms.

Chairperson, South Africa welcomes the ongoing process that is underway pertaining to the intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services (IPBES). South Africa notes that the envisioned platform shall seek to strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long term human well being and sustainable development. This platform may further offer enhanced opportunities for strengthening synergies with all biodiversity related Multi-lateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). The expeditious finalisation of this process is therefore desirable.

Chairperson, South Africa noted, with appreciation, the key outcome of the UNFCCC COP15, which recognizes the role of the importance of natural systems in mitigating climate change effects. We also note the pledges of support to initiate Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation in developing countries (REDD) programmes to mitigate climate change, through carbon sequestration and storage. South Africa also supports REDD-plus which generally goes beyond reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation to include forest conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks, sustainable land management and agriculture as an important mechanism.

South Africa, given the developmental context, and limited technical capacity, therefore calls for increased collaboration between the CBD, the UNFCCC, and other multilateral agreements addressing aspects of climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity, ecosystem services and development, and would include engagements with the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), UN Forum on Forests, and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. It is therefore imperative that the CBD COP10 in Japan adopt a decision to establish of a cross-sector expert group to develop a joint work programme on biodiversity and climate change between the CBD, the UNFCCC and other relevant conventions and institutions. South Africa is of the view that this will allow for more efficient use of resources and actions will support the coordinated

development of resilience in natural systems and human society to deal with the inevitable effects of climate change. In addition, the Joint Liaison Group (JLG) between the secretariats of the CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC which was established in 2001 with the aim of enhancing coordination between the three Conventions, should continue to be the mechanism of choice for enabling the necessary synergies. I thank you.

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