

Statement by the United States of America

High Level Segment on Biodiversity

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Thank you. It is my honor to be with you today as we celebrate this International Year of Biodiversity to talk about biodiversity and the challenges we face to protect it. Over the past few decades, we have come to better understand the critical role that biodiversity plays in human survival and well-being.

Unfortunately, we have also come to understand that the loss of biodiversity is accelerating at an alarming and unacceptable pace, consequences of which are irreversible on any time scale meaningful to humanity.

Therefore, let us also reflect upon our collective failure to realize our goal to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. Climate change, exponential growth in natural resource use, and a continually growing population all intensify the pressures on biodiversity.

We can and must do better. We can no longer afford to view biodiversity as a luxury. This week, as we commemorate a decade since the Millennium Summit and the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals, let us also agree that development at the expense of the very infrastructure of life upon which human progress depends will be short-lived.

We must do things differently. Albert Einstein once wrote that, "We cannot solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them." So as we look at new ways to tackle the loss of biodiversity, we should keep a few key principles in mind:

First, biodiversity begins at home. Much of the value of biodiversity is realized at the local level and we need to find ways to integrate biodiversity into local planning.

Second, governments cannot protect biodiversity on their own. All people have a stake in biodiversity, and, therefore, we must all be involved in protecting it.

Third, the next generation of solutions will require creativity, innovation, and most of all, decision-making based on science and scientific analysis.

To this end, the United States believes that the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services is an important step forward and we look to this body, the General Assembly, to agree to a resolution this session.

The United States invests more than \$300M every year to support biodiversity worldwide and we invest billions of dollars domestically to protect biodiversity in the United States. While this is a testament to our commitment to biodiversity, it is not enough to talk about what we spend. What matters is what we achieve.

So how can we move forward to more effectively protect biodiversity?

First, we need to put biodiversity into the mainstream of politics and policy as a crucial element of sustainable economic development, poverty eradication, and human well-being.

Second, we must identify specific strategies, tools, and ways of measuring effectiveness, backed by robust science and practical economics. We must also build capacity in all societies to put these into practice.

Third, we need to greatly broaden participation to include local communities, the poor, indigenous people, and women and youth. We need to reach every child, male and female, as the future leaders for the environment.

There is a saying, attributed as an ancient Native American proverb: "We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children." As we look to the future, we have an opportunity today to dedicate ourselves to biodiversity as a priority in all our work. We have much to learn from each other, from our history, and from the natural world in which we live. ~~I look forward to continuing this dialogue with all of you.~~