



## Speech by Zhang Xinsheng, IUCN President on International day for Biological Diversity 2013

*23 May 2013 - Speech by IUCN President, Zhang Xinsheng, at an event held at the Beijing Botanical Garden to celebrate International Day for Biological Diversity.*



Mr. Chairperson  
Excellency Vice-Minister Li Gan Jie,  
Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by expressing my sincere thanks for inviting me to participate in this event.

I am very pleased to be with you here today to commemorate the International Day on Biodiversity - an extremely important day for the earth, and for its people. Biological diversity is the miraculous result of life's evolution over billions of years. Biodiversity and the ecosystems services that it provides underpin our economies and our civilizations. Healthy biodiversity is not a luxury - it is the foundation of all life on earth.

Yet largely due to human behavior, the rich ecosystem that we depend on is in crisis. Habitat degradation, invasion of alien species, overharvesting and pollution is leading to the dramatic extinction of species as IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species shows. This is alarming. In addition the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment indicates that in the past 50 years, 60 percent of the world's ecosystems are degraded. Loss of biodiversity reduces our food, medicine, clean air and water. The ecosystem that human beings rely on is fragile.

The protection of biodiversity and ensuring that our use of nature is sustainable is a global mission. To meet this challenge, China and 193 other countries joined the Convention on Biological Diversity, to set common goals and targets and to make strategies and action plans to meet them.

In October 2010, 20 Aichi Targets were agreed on at the Convention on Biological Diversity's COP 10 in Japan. The Aichi targets define a roadmap and timeline for global bio-diversity protection, and this has become the guiding tool for the parties to take actions at national levels to implement the convention. At the COP11 held during October 2012 in India, the parties underlined their determination again, and agreed to increase resources to reverse the downward trend of bio-diversity loss and achieve the 20 Aichi Targets. Developed countries promised that the investment should be doubled by 2015. The United Nations has furthered these ambitions by declaring 2011-2020, the Decade on Bio-diversity, as the critical 10 years to ensure the survival of our natural systems.

China has very rich bio-diversity of its own. The 2012 IUCN Red List, cites over 5,000 plant and animal species living in China, and nearly 1,000 species of these are under threat. China has a leading role to play in biodiversity conservation. Without China's active participation, it will be impossible to protect biodiversity globally and ensure that we live sustainably.

To implement the Convention of Biological Diversity, China has created its Strategy and Action Plan for Biodiversity Conservation, which defines the overall goal, strategic objectives and prioritized actions of bio-diversity

conservation in China in the next 20 years. A national committee has been set up to coordinate biodiversity conservation work to ensure its implementation.

I would like to make a special note of China's progress in establishing protected areas because the theme of this year's biodiversity commemoration day in China is "bio-diversity and protected areas". The percentage of the protected areas in China's territory is far beyond the average level of countries in the world. China's progress is already recognized by international organizations and other countries.

IUCN has biodiversity conservation at its core. With its large world-wide network of Members and Commissions, spanning all sectors of society, united in a common goal of conserving nature and its bio-diversity, IUCN contributes knowledge products, such as the Red List of Threatened Species and the World Database on Protected Areas, for countries to assess the situations of their bio-diversity and share with protected status, and then take actions. Cooperating with the governments, research and development institutions and other experts, IUCN is actively championing the nature-based solutions approach for sustainable nature resource management and bio-diversity conservation.

On this important day, we appeal to the world to continue to establish new protected areas and improve their management, to take actions that implement the Convention of Biological Diversity, and ensure the achievement of the 20 Aichi targets. IUCN will fully support China and the world's conservation action plans with good science, experts and all the resource we have in the field of bio-diversity conservation.

I thank you for joining us to commemorate life on earth today and for many years to come.

Thanks for your kind attention.