

**Statement of the Executive Secretary
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For the
High-level Roundtable on
“The role of ecosystem services in sustainable development”
At the 2008 ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review
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While visiting Asia this week, the United Nations Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr Ban Ki-Moon stated that: “Natural disasters, climate change, the food crisis and the surge in fuel prices are the top priority issues faced by the United Nations.” All these four priority challenges are directly linked to biodiversity and addressing them requires the speedy implementation of the three objectives of the convention on biological diversity.

The “Value of Nature”, a report issued last month in Bonn at the Ninth United Nations Conference on Biodiversity by the secretariat in partnership with the Friends of Protected Areas Work programme, demonstrates that forest protected areas in the Lao Peoples Democratic Republic provides up to 79% of the non rice food consumption. Fuel wood serves as the primary energy source for more than three quarters of the population and non-timber forest products alone comprise nearly half of the household subsistence and cash income. They contribute directly or indirectly to three quarters of per capita GDP providing more than 90% of employment and representing almost 60% of exports and foreign exchange earnings. Mexico’s protected areas store 2,446 MtCO₂, equivalent to 6 years of Mexico’s CO₂ emissions at the 2004 year rate. However, up to 25% of global Greenhouse Gas emissions results from the conversion of forests and other ecosystem, including mangroves. Communities that were protected by mangroves and other coastal plants escaped the 2004 tsunami with little damage while neighbouring villages without such protection were completely destroyed

Last week while visiting Singapore, I learned that a 44 year Australian citizen decided to put on auction in the internet his life. The day after, he was surprised to learn how much his life was worth. He decided not to do so. Indeed human life is priceless. All kinds of life, animal or vegetable is also priceless. Every human being, even we, the “*Homo Urbanus*”, seemingly “removed” from nature, cannot survive without the many services that nature provides. For us modern “*Homo Sapiens*” it is a matter of life or death.

- 75% of the world’s poor live in rural areas and depend directly on biodiversity for their survival and well-being.

- 1.6 billion people, most of them poor, depends on forests product for their livelihood;
- Fuel wood, fishing provided by mangrove protected areas represent up to 58% of household income of the people of Cambodia;
- Natural resources represent 92% of the total export earning of African countries ;
- 3 billion people rely on marine and costal biodiversity for their livelihood;
- Since its establishment in 1995, the Apo Islands marine protected areas in the Philippines facilitated a tenfold increase in fish catch in surrounding areas;
- Forests and mountain ecosystems provide renewable water supplies to at least 4 billion people
- A third of the world's largest cities rely directly for their drinking water on surrounding protected areas;
- 90% of Quito's drinking water comes from the Condor Biosphere reserve;
- 2,7 million people in Peru use water that originates from 16 protected areas;
- New York City avoided spending 6-8 billion US-\$ on purification plants by investing 1-1.5 billion US-\$ for protection and restoration of the upstate watershed where most of New York City's water came from;
- Thirty-five per cent of world crops depend on pollinators such as bees
- Pollination services of protected areas in Cape Town in South Africa are worth US\$ 400 million annually.
- 25% of all prescribed medicine in the developed words contains medicinal plants. In Germany, 50% of the drugs used today are based on medicinal plants

This is the value of ecosystem services to sustaining life on earth. Sustaining the services that nature provides is a matter of life or death. However, never since human beings first appeared on Earth has anthropogenic change to our planet's natural functioning been so destructive as it has been over the last half-century, resulting in an unparalleled loss of biodiversity on Earth. The current rates of biodiversity loss are estimated to be up to 100 times the natural extinction rate. Some 60 per cent of ecosystem services are being degraded as a result of human activity. Pressure from human activities on the natural functioning of the planet has reached such a level that the ability of ecosystems to meet the needs of future generations is now seriously—perhaps irreversibly—jeopardized.

It is for this reason that the leaders of the world decided at the World Summit on Sustainable Development to reduce significantly the lost of biodiversity by 2010. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment concluded that this strategic target is achievable but requires unprecedented efforts at local, national, regional and international level. Indeed meeting the planetary challenges of the unprecedented loss of biodiversity in a warmer and increasingly urbanized planet calls for the active engagement of all the citizens of the world. It also requires a paradigm shift in the relation with Mother Nature, as well as societal changes of a structural and systemic nature.

One cause of the unprecedented loss of biodiversity is false perception that nature and its services are infinite. This illusion is at the origin of the inability of current policies and economic systems to incorporate the values of biodiversity effectively in either political or market systems. We cannot protect what we do not know, and we cannot protect what we do not value. Based on the approach of the Stern report on the cost of inaction on climate change,

Germany with the support of the European Commission commissioned “The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity”(TEEB) -- a study overseen by Pavan Sukhdev. The TEEB study seeks to undertake a comprehensive economic valuation of global ecosystem services – using the benefit transfer logic – based on a spatially explicit assessment of the provision of ecosystem services in biophysical terms under different scenarios. Presenting a preliminary report to the 100 ministers who attended the High level segment of the 9th United Nations Conference on Biodiversity held last month in Bonn, Mr. Pavan Sukhdev emphasized that, “We have a tilted economic compass. We need to replace it”. Thus the importance of today panel discussion at this meeting of the new and revitalized ECOSOC. .

Economic valuation tools and incentives for conservation of ecosystems such as Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) are keys to displaying the true value of the natural world. Indeed TEEB has already estimated the value of ecosystem services provided by Protected Areas to be between 4.5 and 5.2 trillion dollars. More than either the car, steel, or IT industries. It is for this reason that 10 years ago the Parties to the Convention initiated action aimed at promoting and disseminating best practices on issues related to ecosystem values and valuation tools. Two years ago in Curitiba, the Parties took a decision on the application of valuation tools including the provision of concise policy guidance on their utilization. Last month in Bonn, the 5000 participants at the United Nations Conference on Biodiversity, decided to put more emphasis on further studies on payments for ecosystem services at local, regional and international levels, on: their advantages, potential limitations and risks; their cost-effectiveness; their potential implications for biodiversity and indigenous and local communities; and their consistency with other international obligations. If the current degradation of ecosystems is to be changed, governments need to promote policy- and decision- making based upon the consideration of ecosystem services – not formal economic values.

As Ecological Economist Herman Daly has stated, “Current economic growth has uncoupled itself from the world and has become irrelevant. Worse, it has become a blind guide.” I will dare to paraphrase Mr. Daly by stating that “Current modern society has uncoupled itself from the real natural world. Worse, it has become blind to mother nature”. Green business is the business of tomorrow and tomorrow starts today. Protecting biodiversity is good business and biodiversity is a business case for the companies of the world. It is for the reason that the 191 Parties launched, two years ago, a major programme on “Business and Biodiversity”. Since then the Paris Message on Biodiversity and the European Development Cooperation agencies was adopted in November 2006. One year later, it was followed by the Lisbon Declaration on European Business and Biodiversity and in April this year by a Forum on German Business and Biodiversity. A similar forum was held in June in Montreal on Canadian Business and Biodiversity. It will be followed very soon by a similar forum organized by Japan, the host of the 2010 Nagoya Biodiversity Summit on Japanese Business and Biodiversity.

Biodiversity is also good business for the 6.7 billion citizens of the world and in particular, the poor. As Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland stated “ You cannot tackle hunger, disease and poverty unless you can also provide people with a healthy ecosystem in which their economies can grow”. Indeed, 60% of the GDP of Seychelles is based on marine biodiversity products including tourism. Cousin Island Special Marine Reserve and Praslin National Park in Seychelles generated US\$ 600,000. Tourism has indeed emerged worldwide as the world’s largest economic activities representing US\$ 633 billion. This growth is in part driven by growing interest in eco-tourism. In Costa Rica 72% of tourists visit a national park. 14 millions

tourists last year visited the natural parks of Mexico generating US\$ 660 million. Such activity has generated US\$ 364 million incomes for Namibia and 20% goes directly to the poor.

It is for this reason that in partnership with France and Germany, a major initiative was launched last at the Bonn Biodiversity meeting on “biodiversity for development and poverty alleviation” as a major contribution for achieving Goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals which includes the 2010 Johannesburg biodiversity target.

As we cannot value what we don't know and with a view of raising public awareness on ecosystem services values and the implications of biodiversity loss, a major initiative was launched in Bonn by the secretariat for the preparation and broadcasting by BBC International of a TV miniseries called ‘Nature Inc.’, which will showcase important global ecosystem services and their economic value. The series, which is sponsored by Swiss watch maker Audemars Piguet, will be broadcast in the second half of 2008, directly after the BBC World News. It will be also broadcast by all interested Television Stations of the world free of charge thanks to the decision of BBC to waive its copy right policy for this major initiative for the celebration of the 2010 International Year on Biodiversity.

Indeed you cannot protect if you don't have an interest to protect. However, this interest cannot be valued only in monetary terms. There is indeed a close link between biological diversity and cultural diversity. The cultural and spiritual value of biodiversity are part of the national identity of the people of the world and are a core value of indigenous and local communities of the world. It is for this reason that the protection of the knowledge and know how of 300 millions indigenous peoples is a strategic objective of the Convention on Biological Diversity. A number of events on spiritual and cultural dimension of biodiversity are being planned for the celebration of the 2010 international Year on Biodiversity.

The celebration of the 2010 international years on biodiversity calls on all the organs of the United Nations system to make their contribution for achieving the 2010 biodiversity strategic Target and beyond. To this end the Bonn biodiversity meeting has recommended the convening of one day high level segment of the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly to be held in September 2010. I sincerely hope that in doing so the supreme body of the United Nations Organization will have before it the contribution of the Annual Ministerial Review of the new and Revitalized ECOSOC including its innovative Development Cooperation Forum to be held in July 2010 under the theme “biodiversity for development and poverty alleviation”, the same theme selected for the celebration on 22 may 2010 of the International day on Biodiversity.

In celebrating the 2010 biodiversity events as a universal family of people and nations with I hope the United States of America as a Party to the Convention on Life on Earth , let's us all be inspired by the wisdom and vision of Theodore Roosevelt who said “ To waste, to destroy, our natural resources, to skin and exhaust the land instead of using it so as to increase it's usefulness, will result in undermining in the days of our children the very prosperity which we ought, by right, to hand down to them amplified and developed”. The “Green wave initiative one child, one school, one tree: a double gift for nature and children” launched in May in Bonn by the secretariat in partnership with Germany is inspired and guided by this moral and ethical generational responsibility.

I thank you for your kind attention. .