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Opening Statement

Second Committee Joint Briefing by UNEP, WIPO, UNESCO and CBD on the implementation of the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, including actions undertaken to promote access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilities and associated traditional knowledge

New York, 30 October 2013

Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Biodiversity is the foundation upon which human civilization has developed and depends. This was reaffirmed by Member States at Rio+20, where they recognized the intrinsic value of biodiversity. Biodiversity also has ecological, genetic, social, economic, scientific, educational, cultural, recreational and aesthetic values. It plays a critical role in maintaining ecosystems that are the essential foundations for sustainable development and human well-being.

Excellencies,

In 2010, world leaders agreed to a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss. But it has not happened yet. Instead, mounting evidence points to an increase in the rate of loss of land, freshwater and marine biodiversity. The loss is now happening faster than at any time in human history and is showing no signs of slowing.

As the global population has exceeded 7 billion, and as people aspire, justifiably, for better standards of living, the wave of environmental change continues to increase.

The increase is driven by ever expanding human activities which touch on virtually every component of our biosphere and the global climate system. The world is increasingly globalized, industrialized, commercialized and interconnected. At all levels of development, the human impact on the environment is a function of population, consumption and the impact of the technology used for production.

The sheer scale of these interactions between people and the environment, and the increasing complexity of social and economic systems driving these interactions, calls for more cooperation in multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approaches.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the main reasons the 2010 Biodiversity target was not achieved, was inadequate mainstreaming of biodiversity considerations into broader policies and strategies. If we are to reverse the tide so that by 2020 we will celebrate real successes on the Aichi Targets, we have to work harder together, with a sense of urgency.

The UN system is well placed to demonstrate institutional cooperation and support mainstreaming biodiversity considerations.

As you know, starting in 2016, the newly established High Level Political Forum will review the implementation of sustainable development in all countries and the UN system. This will enable greater accountability and focused on action on the ground. The new Forum will have to tackle the severe consequences of the continuing loss of biodiversity on human wellbeing, especially for the poor and vulnerable groups in society.

Next year, the Third International Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States will be held in Apia, Samoa. Small Island Developing States are among those with the most alarming rate of biodiversity loss. Islands see the impacts of climate change and invasive species far before they are visible on larger land masses. Of the 724 recorded animal extinctions in the last 400 years, about half were island species. At least 90% of bird species that have become extinct were on islands. As the Secretary-General for the 2014 SIDS Conference, I invite you to participate in its preparations and to utilize the opportunities it will provide as a platform to take forward the objectives of the CBD and its Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing.

Dear Colleagues,

As we prepare for the post-2015 development framework, we need better understanding of the interactions between humans and the environment. The scale and complexity of these interactions are enormous. But with collective effort and political commitment we can turn the tide. We can put in place better policies to help societies mainstream the management of risks, such as those relating to climate change and the degradation of ecosystem services. We can also more fully harness opportunities, such as the use of ecosystem services, and integrate them into economic and social processes.

I am therefore very pleased to be here for this joint briefing by UNEP, WIPO, UNESCO, UNCTAD and CBD on the implementation of the objectives of the Convention on Biodiversity, including actions undertaken to promote access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilities and associated traditional knowledge. I am sure this joint briefing will illustrate that opportunities for improved mainstreaming exist and that

public institutions, such as the UN, can help the private sector, households and individuals to act together.

Thank you.
