



STATEMENT

OF

**MR. BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS,
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY,**

ON THE OCCASION OF

**FOURTH GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS'
MEETING**

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NYIPYITAW, MYANMAR



**Convention on
Biological Diversity**

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Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, I am pleased to be able to join all of you today in Naypyitaw. I wish to start by expressing my appreciation for the growing role of our host country, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, as an important partner in many international fora, including as a Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Cartagena Protocol, and the Nagoya Protocol, which I am convinced signals a strong commitment to protecting biodiversity and pursuing sustainable development.

We are all connected to biodiversity in one way or another. Biodiversity is the source of our health and security, our habitat “living space”, and our humanity, and as such, its role in sustainable development is fundamental.

Many of our production sectors depend significantly on the health and resilience of the ecosystems and their underpinning biodiversity, including the sectors associated with water supply, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, health, energy, transport, and tourism. However, our current management of these ecosystems is all too often deficient, thus undermining the provision of other ecosystem services that are essential for economic and social well-being. Think about the water we drink and use; the soil and land that nurtures our food, fiber, and fuel; the plants and animals that offer us discoveries in medicine; our genetic diversity that helps us adapt and build more resilience against climate change and natural disasters; the ways ecosystems deliver cultural and leisure benefits; and much more.

To shift our focus to approaches that reinforce the value of ecosystems and biodiversity will require profound changes in the way economic decisions are taken in the different parts of society. This is one of the important messages of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, which was adopted under the Convention in 2010 and was subsequently recognized by the United Nations General Assembly as being relevant to all UN agencies and processes, including the other biodiversity-related conventions.

The Strategic Plan recognizes that in order to effectively address the unprecedented loss of biological diversity, we need to give more focus and attention to underlying drivers of that loss. The myriad policy and economic decisions, made day-in day-out, do not always take into account their impact on nature and its diversity. This can lead to the widespread decline in the overall benefits we derive from ecosystems and biodiversity. The Strategic Plan therefore calls for integrating biodiversity issues into broader policies, strategies, programmes, and actions, including decision-making in economic sectors. In short, we need to achieve what we call the “mainstreaming” of biodiversity.

One important precondition in achieving this mainstreaming is to have more reliable and systematic information on the trends of biodiversity and ecosystem services as it relates to different economic sectors, including statistical information. It is precisely for this reason that Aichi Biodiversity Target 2 of the Strategic Plan, under its mainstreaming objective, calls for the incorporation of biodiversity values into national accounting. We have been working closely with international partners such as the UN Statistical Division and the Wealth Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services (WAVES) Initiative, to support natural capital accounting and valuation. I wish to invite the governments of the countries of the Greater Mekong Sub-region to participate in these efforts and to forge partnerships accordingly.

Collaborative efforts to protect biodiversity already underway among the region's governments are very encouraging. From decreasing deforestation and forest degradation to achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets through Integrated Coastal Management, the countries of the Greater Mekong have already signaled their willingness to work in partnership and, including through the CBD LifeWeb Initiative, to jointly seek financing for projects that help achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. This is one of several initiatives in which the CBD Secretariat collaborates with the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity to advance the implementation of CBD Decisions and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets in south Asian countries. Other initiatives with the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity include public education and awareness, access and benefit sharing of genetic resources and collaboration through the ASEAN Heritage Parks Programme.

The Memorandum of Understanding on Biodiversity Cooperation that has very recently been signed between the Cao Bang Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Viet Nam, and the Guangxi Environmental Protection Department, China, is an excellent example for such cooperation. The MoU establishes the long term joint management of the Sino-Viet Nam Karst Landscape shared by the two countries, which is home to many endemic primate and other species, including the Cao Vit gibbon (*Nomascus nasutus*), the world's second rarest ape.

Emerging from the CBD's Twelfth Conference of the Parties, three initiatives, spearheaded by the Republic of Korea, provide important additional opportunities for collaboration in your region.

First, the Peace & Biodiversity Dialogue Initiative will establish and strengthen collaboration across national boundaries on protected areas. In this context, we look forward to supporting transboundary initiatives in this region and working in partnerships with the governments, our UN partners and others, such as the Asian Development Bank, who have a long history of developing innovative partnerships through their work on transboundary biodiversity landscapes.

Second, the newly launched BioBridge Initiative will assist CBD Parties to meet their international and national obligations by facilitating technical and scientific cooperation. BioBridge will facilitate the linking of needs among Parties with technical support provided through effective partnerships between countries and national, regional and global organizations and institutions that are ready to assist.

Third, the Forest Ecosystem Restoration Initiative will assist Parties to identify priority areas for restoration activities and to assess degraded areas and the associated costs and benefits of these activities. The initiative will also assist Parties in the implementation of appropriate restoration activities; including designing and putting in place the complex governance arrangements that are typically needed for effective forest and ecosystem restoration.

Our office will be in touch over the coming months with more specific information on how to participate in these initiatives, and I wish to invite you to consider establishing enhanced cooperation in these areas.

Ladies and gentlemen, there are great opportunities for economic development in the Greater Mekong Subregion, but we need to work better together to ensure that the development is sustainable and equitable. Together we can halt the loss of biodiversity and ensure that ecosystems are protected, connected and where necessary, restored so that we can achieve our vision of a prosperous and sustainable world.

Thank you