



STATEMENT BY

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ON THE OCCASION OF

**THE LAUNCH OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE ON BIODIVERSITY IN
EUROPE**

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Life in harmony, into the future
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COP 10 / MOP 5

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is no better place for the European launch of the UN Decade on Biodiversity than Geneva, the seat of the European headquarters of the United Nations and the host of the interim secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Moreover, there is no more important celebration this year, for Europe has always been a leader in the fight to save life on Earth and the force behind the very existence of the Convention on Life on Earth.

When a decade ago the countries of the world agreed on the target of slowing biodiversity loss worldwide by 2010, the countries of Europe went one step further: in the Gothenburg strategy on sustainable development, they decided to stop biodiversity loss in Europe by 2010.

At the same time, they recognized their critical role within the international community. To quote from the Gothenburg strategy: “The European Union has a key role in bringing about sustainable development, within Europe and also on the wider global stage, where widespread international action is required.”

However, last year Global Biodiversity Outlook 3 warned that despite some progress, neither of the global nor the Gothenburg Target had been achieved. Responding to this warning at the historic high-level segment of the 65th session of the UN General Assembly devoted to biodiversity, Swiss economist and Assembly president Joseph Deiss stated:

“We can no longer ignore the continuing destruction of the ecosystems that not only provide us with material services such as food, medicine and carbon sinks, but also sustain humanity in our spiritual and emotional wellbeing. Fortunately, strategies exist for protecting and preserving our planet’s rich biodiversity. We now need countries to implement these strategies.”

Mr. Deiss conveyed the same message the following month to 18,000 plus participants attending the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit, where the 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets were adopted along with the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing.

I am glad to say that the countries of Europe took the lead at the summit. For example, substantial financial resources were announced by France, the European Union and Norway in support of the Aichi Targets, with nearly USD 110 million being mobilized in support of projects under the CBD LifeWeb Initiative for protected areas.

Moreover, European leadership has now extended beyond the summit. Earlier this year the European Commission translated the Aichi Targets and into a new European biodiversity strategy to halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the EU by 2020. The new European plan includes six main targets:

- Full implementation of EU nature legislation to protect biodiversity
- Better protection for ecosystems and more use of green infrastructure
- More sustainable agriculture and forestry
- Better management of fish stocks
- Tighter controls on invasive alien species
- A bigger EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss

I commend the EU for being so proactive. Such initiative is exactly what it will take if we are to forge a new road ahead.

And indeed, forging a new road ahead is precisely what the UN Decade on Biodiversity is about. Over the course of the next ten years, biodiversity must be mainstreamed throughout government and all sectors of society through communication, education and awareness-raising, appropriate incentive measures, and institutional change. By 2020, citizens and governments without exception should be firmly committed to the preservation of our biological heritage.

With this in mind, I would like to ask the European Union to continue to be a leader during these critical opening years of the decade. A first wave of biodiversity capacity-building workshops is underway to help countries translate the Aichi Targets into national objectives. If we are to stay on track for achieving the Targets by 2020, revised National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs) must be completed no later than COP-11 in October 2012, to be held in Hyderabad, India. Moreover, 50 ratifications of the Nagoya Protocol are required before 19 July 2012 to allow the first meeting of its governing body to be held back-to-back with COP-11.

As the President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso has said, “Either we take concerted action to reverse biodiversity loss as soon as possible, or we compromise our own future and that of generations not yet born.”

There is no better message to spread as we enter this critical decade.

Thank you for your kind attention.