

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**MESSAGE ON THE LAUNCH OF THE
UNITED NATIONS DECADE ON BIODIVERSITY
Kanazawa, Japan, 17 December 2011**

*Delivered by Mr. Kiyoko Akasaka, Under-Secretary-General
for Communications and Public Information*

I am pleased to greet all the leaders and partners who have gathered to launch the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity. Thank you for supporting this important cause.

It is essential for all the world's people to understand not only the value of biodiversity, but what they can do to protect it.

The global rate of biodiversity loss is unmatched in human history. Many ecosystems are verging on tipping points beyond which they will not recover. These trends are being compounded by climate change.

This year, the human family reached seven billion people – a milestone with important implications for collective well-being. Ensuring truly sustainable development for our growing human family depends on biological diversity and the vital goods and services it offers. While the poor suffer first and worst from biodiversity loss, all of society stands to lose from this mass extinction. There are also the opportunity costs: what cures for disease, and what other useful discoveries, might we never know of because a habitat is destroyed forever, or land is polluted beyond all use?

For too long, our natural capital has been seen as an endless reserve, instead of the limited and fragile resource we now know it to be. Fortunately, it is not too late to stem the tide. The twenty Aichi Biodiversity Targets included in the 2011-2020 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity are ambitious but realistic. But achieving them will require greater engagement by all relevant actors and partners.

I commend Japan for its leadership in supporting the Strategic Plan and the Decade. And I thank all who are helping to mobilize global support. Japan Air Lines, for example, which is supporting this event, is making a concerted effort to raise public awareness.

I call on all the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and to all the biodiversity-related conventions, as well as all members of the United Nations system, the private sector, civil society groups and individual citizens and consumers worldwide to rally to the call of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity. Let us work together to live in harmony with nature; let us preserve and wisely manage nature's riches for prosperity today and for the future we want.