



**STATEMENT BY
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ON THE OCCASION OF

**THE SUB-REGIONAL WORKSHOP FOR WEST ASIA AND NORTH AFRICA ON
CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CBD PROGRAMME OF
WORK ON PROTECTED AREAS**

DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

16 APRIL 2012

**Excellency,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It gives me immense pleasure to extend a warm welcome to you all to this Sub-Regional Workshop for West Asia and North Africa on Capacity-building for Implementation of the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA).

It is heartwarming to see here participants from these two regions, representatives from indigenous and local communities, IUCN, as well as a number of NGOs and UN agencies. This august gathering validates the importance, which your countries and the organizations you represent accord to protected areas and to the CBD programme of work on protected areas. I thank the European Union for generously providing the necessary financial support for this workshop, and the Government of the United Arab Emirates and the UNEP regional office for West Asia for so actively supporting this workshop.

The beautiful city of Dubai and the desert of the United Arab Emirates is a wonderful setting and I am confident it will provide the necessary impetus for our deliberations. This is the first time a CBD capacity building workshop on protected areas is being held in West Asia and I extend my deepest gratitude to Saif Mohamed Al Shara and to the Government of the United Arab Emirates for their active role in making this happen.

The seven emirates that make up the United Arab Emirates harbour some rare and endangered wildlife species, including the Arabian leopard, caracal and Blanford's fox, which are threatened by hunting and development. It is heartening to note that the Government of the United Arab Emirates has taken action on this front through the Federal Environment Agency 1999 Environmental Law, with one section dedicated to protected areas. Within this legislation each Emirate is encouraged to assess its land and coastal/marine resources, formulate plans for establishing protected areas or upgrade current plans, and help implement the law.

According to the WDPA, in West Asia and North Africa an average of 4.35 per cent of the terrestrial area of country Parties is protected, and an average of 2.68 per cent of territorial marine waters are protected. So there is some work to be done to protect the biodiversity of this area. In addition, we cannot rely upon simply declaring protected areas, as we remember the critically important qualitative aspects of target 11 – ecologically representative, effectively and equitably managed, including areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, and well-connected, and integrated into the wider landscape and seascape.

The tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Nagoya in 2010 adopted the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. As the elements of Aichi Target 11 incorporate the tenets of the PoWPA, further effective implementation of the PoWPA holds the key for achieving Target 11. PoWPA implementation also contributes toward achieving Targets 1, 2, 5, 10, 12, 14, 15 and 18. As countries chart their own courses towards achieving the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, they will be looking for the most efficient and innovative solutions to meet both their social development needs and biodiversity conservation goals. This workshop aims to provide the necessary capacity to help countries in setting realistic and achievable national targets for the PoWPA and ways and means for achieving those targets including tools and resources and linkages to capacity building activities.

The establishment of comprehensive, ecologically representative, effectively managed and financially secured protected area networks is a critical strategy not only for biodiversity conservation, but for securing ecosystem goods and services, enabling climate change adaptation and mitigation, helping countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals and a key investment in environmental sustainability. An ecologically representative network of protected areas is the cornerstone of a national

biodiversity strategy and action plan. Recognizing these critical roles of protected areas, the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in February 2004 committed to a comprehensive and specific set of actions known as the Programme of Work on Protected Areas. By emphasizing the equitable sharing of costs and benefits, recognizing various governance types, and by giving prominence to ecological representation, management effectiveness and multiple benefits, the PoWPA is the most comprehensive global plan of action for effective implementation of protected areas and is considered as a defining framework or “blueprint” for protected areas planning for the next decades. CBD Parties hailed PoWPA as the most implemented of CBD programmes and a successful initiative. I am pleased to inform you that the Secretariat is making sincere attempts to help countries in implementing the PoWPA through initiatives such as organizing sub-regional capacity building workshops, creating a user-friendly comprehensive website and making available e-learning modules on various themes of protected areas in five languages including Arabic.

Excellency,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are well into the year 2012. As you appreciate, 2012 is an important year in the history of sustainable development. The world community will gather again in Brazil to reflect what we have achieved toward sustainable development over the past two decades and to develop a roadmap for our future green-development, sustainable development, the only way to our sustainable future. In 2012, CBD will be 20 years old. We need to build on achievements of the past two decades. 2012 is the second year of the Strategic Plan and the United Nations Decade for Biodiversity. After many flashes of media and awareness campaigns of 2010 and 2011, it is time to take real actions towards achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Time is running fast and we cannot spare any second or any minute, otherwise our goals and targets will slip away. In 2012, COP 11 will be held in India which will provide further guidance for implementing the Strategic Plan, particularly on resources needed. Rest assured that all you do will count, no matter whether your actions are big or small. Only collectively can we achieve our global goals and targets.

Let me take this moment to extend my wholehearted appreciation to our regional and global partners who are represented here as key partners who significantly contribute to the implementation of the programme of work on protected areas and who further reiterate their support by being with us here today. Thank you for participating and sharing your expertise with us. For gains to be made toward achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets it will require strategic partnerships between Parties, the Convention and our regional and global partners. We will work together in this spirit of collaboration.

This is therefore the context of the present workshop, which aims to provide practical, hands-on tools and training toward reaching these goals. I once again welcome you all and look forward to open discussions and concrete and practical outcomes.

Thank you.