



Achieving the  
**2010**  
Biodiversity  
Target

Secretariat of the  
**Convention on Biological Diversity**

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CBD

## STATEMENT

by

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at the

**THIRD ASSEMBLY OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT  
FACILITY**

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Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

President Nelson Mandela made it plain: “The challenges that face conservation and sustainable development have clearly been identified. We need to deal with inequality and divisions.” One of the great challenges is to address the underlying causes of the unprecedented ecological crisis looming on the horizon and to achieve lasting harmony with our life-support systems for the benefit of present and future generations.

The second Global Biodiversity Outlook recently released by the Convention provides additional documented evidence that supports the findings of the landmark Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. The message rings loud and clear: two thirds of the services provided by nature to humankind are in decline worldwide. Humans have made unprecedented changes to ecosystems in recent decades. These changes have weakened nature’s ability to deliver its vital services. Human activity is putting such strain on the natural functions of Earth that the ability of the planet’s ecosystems to sustain future generations can no longer be taken for granted.

Just four years ago, in September 2002, in this great mega-biodiverse country, 110 Heads of States and Governments took the historical commitment to achieving by 2010 a significant reduction in the current rate of loss of biological diversity. This commitment was reaffirmed by 154 Heads of States and Governments attending the 2005 World Review Summit in New York . The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment concluded that to attain this 2010 biodiversity target will require an unprecedented effort.

It is fitting therefore that this third Assembly of the financial mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity—the convention on life on Earth—should take place in the third most biologically diverse country in the world. South Africa occupies only two per cent of the world’s land surface, but is the home to nearly 10 per cent of the world’s plants and seven per cent of the world’s reptiles, birds and mammals. The fact that we are gathered here, in the cradle of humanity, highlights, as President Thabo Mbeki mentioned at the World Summit for Sustainable Development, our common obligation to respond with all seriousness and with a sense of urgency in the interests of all humanity and our common planet.

South Africa has responded with a sense of responsibility and urgency in addressing its biodiversity agenda. This rainbow nation establishes in its constitution that: “Everyone has the right to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations.” The recently adopted biodiversity strategy and action plan will contribute to translating this constitutional right into reality. This major instrument, which was developed through a two-year participatory process, will also contribute to the achievement of the Johannesburg biodiversity target. South Africa has already 4022 protected area including 192 marine protected area. This number will increase very soon. Indeed South Africa has established the target for protected area by 2010 of 8% for land protected area and 20% for its coastline. I would like therefore to pay tribute to the Government and people of the Republic of South Africa under the able leadership of H.E. President Thabo Mbeki for their continued commitment and

contribution in advancing the sustainable development agenda. The fact that this meeting is being held while South Africa is chairing the Group of 77 is of high political significance..

It was also with a true sense of urgency and responsibility that the 134 Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the 188 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity held their meetings in Curitiba—the ecological capital of Brazil—in March this year. The historic third meeting of the Parties to the Biosafety Protocol, held with the participation of more than 1,000 delegates, will be remembered for the achievement of consensus on a longstanding and long overdue issue on requirements for documentation accompanying living modified organisms that are intended for direct use as food, or feed, or for processing. A number of other important decisions from the meeting also deserve equal attention, including, the most comprehensive recommendation for guidance to the financial mechanism to date.

In this respect it should be said that, through its \$60 million biosafety programme, GEF has played a crucial role in facilitating the entry into force of the Biosafety Protocol and in assisting 127 Parties prepare their national biosafety frameworks and in piloting their implementation in 12 countries. GEF has also made a distinct contribution in assisting all eligible Parties to access the Biosafety Clearing-House. The continued support of GEF during its fourth phase will be vital for the implementation of the Protocol.

The eight meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention was also historic. This landmark event was attended by more than 4,000 delegates including some 1,200 non-governmental and indigenous and local community organizations, making it the largest ever gathering in the life of the Convention. Its High-level Segment was also the largest ever gathering of ministers under the Convention. More than 122 Ministers and other Heads of Delegations attended the first ever interactive ministerial dialogue in the life of the Convention and discussed issues related to poverty alleviation, food security, access and benefit-sharing and the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target.

From the decision of the President of Brazil to place 6.4 million hectares of the Amazon rain forest under direct environmental protection, to the “Micronesia Challenge” launched by the President of Palau and the Vice-President of Micronesia aiming at protecting 30% of the marine areas and 20% of the forest across Micronesia, from the establishment of a ministerial women and biodiversity network to the first task force of 10 Heads of Agencies to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target, from the largest number of side-events to the largest biodiversity gathering of children, from the first ever meeting between the CEOs of private companies and the Ministers in charge of biodiversity, to the partnership established with eight major botanical and other scientific institutions, the biodiversity message resonated through the largest ever world-wide media coverage, and the substance of that message is that a new era of enhanced implementation of the

Convention was born in Curitiba. This new phase in the life of the Convention on life on earth calls for an enhanced support of its financial mechanism.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The enhanced phase of implementation of the Convention coincides with a new phase of the GEF. The successful conclusion of the fourth replenishment was applauded by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, and I would like to pay tribute to all donors for their substantial and continued support to the financial mechanism of the Convention. This new phase of the GEF will need to respond to the challenges of operationalizing the new system of allocating scarce financial resources. These unprecedented challenges come at a time of increasing expectations and demands on this essential mechanism for financing sustainable development, and at a time when the conventions for which GEF operates the financial mechanism are entering a new operational phase requiring sustained financial support.

Indeed, the fourth phase of GEF coincides with the timeframe remaining for achieving the global target of significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. The importance of a successful conclusion of the GEF fourth replenishment to the 2010 biodiversity target cannot be overstated. To this end, a strategic alliance between the Convention and its financial mechanism is essential. Let's ensure that through your decision the third GEF Assembly be here in Cap Town known as the Mother City be remembered by generations to come as the birth place of such a strategic alliance. To this end I would like to pledge my full commitment in my capacity as the Executive Secretary to spare no effort to establish an enhanced phase of collaboration between the Convention and the GEF family.

I would like also to pledge my full cooperation to your new CEO/Chairperson, Ms Monique Barbut whose leadership and commitment to the cause of sustainable development is an asset to the GEF and to the environment community as a whole. Let me also in concluding pay tribute to Mr Len Good for his contribution to the new phase of the GEF.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.