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Statement

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Honorable Ministers, friends, colleagues,

I am very happy to be back in Mexico, and in particular to Cancun where the Mexican government so graciously hosted our last GEF Assembly two years ago.

Since that time, the world has seen two important agreement come into place—the 2030 sustainable development goals, and also the Paris Climate agreement, which as you all know very much was the result of what happened here at the Moon Palace back in 2010 under the great leadership of Patricia Espinosa.

I would like to use this occasion to recognize the huge effort of the past 25 years by countries under the CBD to dramatically expand the coverage of protected areas both on land and in oceans. This is a great achievement of the CBD, and we would be in a much worse shape today in its absence.

At the same time, we must also recognize that our efforts have not been sufficient. We are still losing biodiversity at alarming rates. Some researchers have argued that we have entered the 6th extinction phase.

The continued loss of biodiversity is part of a broader pattern of unsustainable pressure on our global commons such as the climate, forests, water, land and oceans. We are pushing these vital Earth systems to their limits, and this is why they have such a prominent role in the SDGs—they are the non-negotiable foundation for our future progress and prosperity.

We have reached a dangerous point, and we now need a fundamental transformation in our key economic systems if we are to avoid devastating consequences in the future.

For example, the future of biodiversity is closely tied to our collective ability to transform the food and agriculture system. Agriculture expansion has already created a massive footprint across natural ecosystems. With the world's population rising to nine billion by mid-century and a larger share of people join the middle class, there is no other option than to disrupt the food system through measures such as supply chain interventions, accelerated adoption of certification

schemes, and sustainable intensification of agriculture production systems.

The GEF has already started on this journey with initiatives such as taking deforestation out of global commodity supply chains like soy, palm oil and beef that are that are responsible for 70% of tropical deforestation.

We are also working to enable the private sector to become a positive force in mainstreaming biodiversity through de-risking of investments in profitable large-scale agroforestry projects via the Moringa Agroforestry Fund.

We will build on these experiences in our next replenishment. We need to continue our efforts to strengthen biodiversity mainstreaming, and the Cancun Declaration on Mainstreaming Biodiversity can serve as an important guidepost in that regard. We can also learn from the Mexican Government's wise decision to invite not only ministers Environment to the COP, but also ministers of Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry and Tourism—this is mainstreaming in practice.

To conclude, let us squarely face up to the fact we humans no longer live on a big planet with boundless resources; in fact, we are a giant force on a small planet. It is urgent that we leverage evidence, new technology, political leadership, and coalitions to bring about transformations in our economic system.

This is the task ahead of use here at the CBD COP.

Before I close, let me say how much I have enjoyed working with Braulio in the past four years; you have been always pushing us to think big. Let me also take the opportunity to welcome and congratulate Christiana on her appointment as Executive Director for the CBD secretariat.

Thank you very much.