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Biodiversity and Climate Change

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Perspective from CBD

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Climate Change is one of the most important environmental challenges facing mankind. This is a well established and recognized fact. Through the Kyoto process, Japan has made a unique contribution in assisting the international community to initiate its collective response in meeting this challenge. The unprecedented loss of biodiversity and its impact on life on Earth is also one of the most important challenges facing humanity. Unfortunately, this reality is not well known. To address this gap, Japan's leadership is also required. I am therefore very pleased and honoured to attend this International Symposium on the National Biodiversity Strategy of Japan and would like therefore to thank the Japan Committee for IUCN for this timely initiative.

Biological diversity is the result of millions of years of evolution on Earth. It comprises the totality of life forms on Earth. Ecosystems provide the essential requirements for life, protection from natural disasters and diseases and the very basis for human culture. We are now, however, facing an unparalleled extinction of biodiversity. Never since human beings first appeared, has anthropogenic change to our planet's natural functioning been as destructive as it has been over the last half-century. Pressure from human activities on the natural functioning of the planet has reached such an extent that the ability of ecosystems to meet the needs of future generations is now seriously—perhaps irreversibly—jeopardized.

The findings of the recent Millennium Ecosystem Assessment—a study conducted over four years by more than 1,395 experts from over 95 countries—are a wake-up call: Out of the 24 ecosystem services studied under the Assessment, 15 are in decline.

Over the last century, species extinction rates rose by a factor of 1,000. Over the last 500 years, the annual rate of extinction of species was about 1,000 a year. Today, between 15,000 and 50,000 species will disappear annually. Twenty per cent of known bird species have already disappeared. Forty-one per cent of mammals are in decline and 28 per cent are under direct threat.

Until recently, forests covered 47 per cent of the Earth's land surface. Since then, they have totally disappeared in 25 countries and, in a further 29 countries, 90 per cent of



forest cover has been lost. Every year, 10 million hectares of forest—an area four times the size of Belgium—are being lost. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Africa lost 4 million hectares of forests between 2000 and 2005. In the Caribbean, the average hard-coral cover has fallen from 50 to 10 per cent over the last three decades. Some 35 per cent of mangroves have been destroyed in the last twenty years.

Since the dawn of history, humans have used more than 7,000 plant species to satisfy their needs. Today, only 150 plants are used, and most of us use only 12 species. Of the 8,000 species of apple that could be found in the United States of America up to the last century, 95 per cent no longer exist.

Between 1950 and 1980, more land, such as forest, savanna, and natural grassland was converted for the growing of crops than in the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries combined. Today, four out of every ten people live in countries with a serious shortage of drinking water. In 2025, two thirds of mankind—more than 5.5 billion human beings—will be in a similar situation. In 20 years, available water reserves will be three times less per inhabitant than in 1950.

The “ecological footprint” of mankind now extends 20 per cent beyond the biological capacity of the planet. We are consuming more natural resources than can be regenerated. Mankind is living beyond the means and capacities of our planet. Thus, if everyone was to have the same standard of living as the United Kingdom, we would need three and a half planets. If we all wanted to enjoy the same consumption patterns as American citizens, we would need five planets.

It is for this reason that the 110 Heads of State or Government attending the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in September 2002 committed themselves to achieving a substantial reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. This commitment was reiterated by the 154 Heads of State or Government attending the World Review Summit of the United Nations General Assembly held in New York in September 2005. At the meeting in Gothenburg in June 2001, the Heads of State, of the European Union decided to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010.

The 1,395 experts of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment while reviewing for four years the health of the ecosystems concluded unanimously that achieving the 2010 biodiversity target is possible but requires unprecedented efforts at global, regional and national levels. In Curitiba in March last year, the participants to the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties responded to this urgent call for action.

It is no exaggeration to say that Curitiba, will forever be remembered as the birthplace of the renewed commitment of the international community to achieving the 2010 biodiversity target through an enhanced phase of implementation of the three objectives of the Convention on life on earth namely: the conservation of biological diversity, its sustainable use, and the access to genetic resources and fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from genetic resources. Implementation of the Convention calls for an active engagement of all the stakeholders. Never in the history of the

Convention has the COP attracted such an impressive number of participants. In addition, an unprecedented number of side events, totaling more than 200, were organized.

The enhanced phase of the implementation of the Convention calls for the active engagement of policy makers at the highest level. For the first time in the Convention's history, the High Level Segment included an interactive dialogue, comprising 122 Ministers and Heads of Delegation, which greatly helped to facilitate the adoption of 30 major decisions, including an agreement on the negotiating framework and firm timeframe to finalize, by 2010, the negotiation on an international regime for access and benefit-sharing of genetic resources.

Curitiba also represented the first time that, together with the President of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, a President and two Vice Presidents attended a COP meeting. Because some of the greatest treasures remaining on the planet are the fragile ecosystems of islands, the Micronesia Challenge initiative was launched at COP-8 by the President of Palau and the Vice President of Micronesia. This initiative aims to place 30% of the marine areas and 20% of the forest across Micronesia under environmental protection. I call on other leaders of the world to support the Global Island Partnership. The launch of the Micronesia Challenge coincided with the adoption of a new programme of work on island biodiversity. This represents the first time that the uniqueness and fragility of island biodiversity have been addressed through a specific work programme, and in a manner that will provide for new partnerships. The overall purpose of the programme of work is the significant reduction of island biodiversity loss by 2010 and beyond as a contribution to poverty alleviation and the sustainable development of islands, particularly small island developing states.

The third meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety attended by 1300 participants and preceded COP-8, heralded a renewed spirit of consensus and international cooperation in promoting the safe use of modern biotechnology. A major breakthrough was achieved regarding the issue of detailed requirements for documentation accompanying shipments of living modified organisms intended for direct use as food or feed, or for processing.

The enhanced phase of implementation of the Convention calls for the balanced implementation of the three objectives of the convention and the operationalization of the objective on access and fair and equitable sharing of the benefit. In Curitiba, another important accomplishment was the adoption of a structured framework and a timeframe for the further elaboration and negotiation of an international regime on access to genetic resources and benefit sharing. Parties instructed the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing to complete its work prior to COP-10, to be held in 2010.

History was also made at Curitiba in the form of a new alliance of some of the world's top research centres and agencies specializing in biodiversity, whose combined financial resources represent some half a billion United States dollars a year. This agreement will help boost developing countries' scientific, technical and policy skills in the area of biodiversity through innovative education and training initiatives. History was also made at Curitiba through the establishment for the first time of Heads of Agency

task force whose members committed themselves to join forces for achieving the 2010 biodiversity target.

The role of indigenous and local communities is crucial for the success of the three objectives of the Convention. To this end, the Parties in Curitiba adopted criteria for the operation of a voluntary funding mechanism to fund the participation of representatives of indigenous and local communities. COP mechanisms were also developed to ensure effective participation of indigenous and local communities in the elaboration and negotiation of an international regime on access and benefit-sharing relevant to traditional knowledge, innovations, and practices associated with genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their use.

The enhanced phase of implementation of the Conventions calls for the engagement of all segments of the civil society including women. In Curitiba, twenty-two women environmental ministers decided to establish a network on women and biodiversity. The enhanced phase of implementation of the Convention calls for the active engagement of the private sector. In Curitiba, Parties adopted for the first time a decision on engaging the private sector by addressing private-sector participation in Convention processes, strengthening and disseminating the “business case” for biodiversity, and by undertaking the compilation and development of good private sector biodiversity practices. For the first time a ministerial working breakfast between CEO of companies and Ministers of the environments was organized at the margins of the High level segment of the Curitiba meeting. More than 300 participants attended this meeting.

The enhanced phase of the Convention also calls for mainstreaming biodiversity into the development agenda. Parties invited the Secretary-General of the United Nations to integrate 2010 biodiversity target into the Millennium Development Goals. The Secretary-General responded to this call by recommending such a course of action to last year United Nations General Assembly. In September last year, 400 participants adopted the Message of Paris on integrating biodiversity into Europe development cooperation. At its meeting, last December, the European Union Council welcomed the Message of Paris and invited the European Commission to report on the main priority actions identified in the Message of Paris.

In Curitiba an inter-sessional process for the in-depth review of the implementation of goals 2 and 3 of the Strategic Plan of the Convention dealing, respectively, with improved financial, human, scientific, technical, and technological capacity to implement the Convention. This concerns the implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans; and the integration of biodiversity concerns into relevant sectors. Particular emphasis was placed on the implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans, with Parties adopting voluntary guidelines for the review and updating of both.

Article 6(a) of the Convention calls on Parties to develop national strategies, plans or programmes or equivalent instruments. Thirteen years after the entry into force of the Convention, some 133 countries have finalized their biodiversity strategies, plans or programme. Therefore about three quarters of Parties have so far fulfilled this

commitment. I am very pleased to note that Japan was among the very first countries to prepare and adopt its biodiversity strategy.

In adopting its decision VI/27 A, the Conference of the Parties at its sixth meeting requested Parties “to implement national biodiversity strategies and action plans; and to periodically revise them in the light of the experience of implementation.”

Indeed, to preserve its 90,000 species inhabit its lands and ocean areas, Japan has established, among others, Forest Ecosystem Reserves and Forest Tree Genetic Resources Preservation Forests, as well as "Green Corridors" to ensure migratory pathways for species. Japan's Forest Tree Breeding Center is currently preserving 28,000 forest tree genetic resource samples and is planning to search and collect an additional 14,000 forest tree genetic resource samples by 2010.

Japan's 2002 national biodiversity strategy and action plan includes goals such as preventing the extinction of species, promoting conservation and restoring nature throughout the country, including in its mountains, cities and ocean areas. To this end, Japan intends to devote 50 or 100 years to building up a verdant national land area in which all citizens can enjoy daily interaction with a wide variety of thriving life forms. According to the national biodiversity strategy and action plan, some actions taken include the analysis of the present socio-economic and biological conditions of the existing administrative systems for conservation. In addition, some regulations exist in regard to the objectives of the Convention, such as: the Natural Park Law, the Wildlife Protection and Appropriate Hunting Law, and the Species Conservation Law. Furthermore, Japan has achieved its goal of promoting the conservation of ecosystems, species and gene biodiversity in regard to wetlands by having 11 additional sites listed under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, bringing the total number to 33.

As far as marine and coastal areas are concerned, Japan has been working on restoring about 2,100 hectares of lost marsh and tideland by 2007. Japan has also undertaken significant work in the monitoring and restoration of coral reefs. The 65 Marine Parks Zones constitute an important asset to the conservation of marine and coastal living resources.

The national biodiversity strategies and action plans and the national reports under the Convention are two essential tools that can be used to transform initiatives into actions and evaluate progress. Therefore, I am delighted to see that Japan will submit a third national biodiversity strategy and action plan, which integrates the 2010 biodiversity target. I am also delighted to note that, in doing so, Japan has decided to convene this International Symposium. I applaud this initiative and wish you the best success in the elaboration and achievement of new strategy.

The adjustment of Parties' biodiversity strategies will make contribution to the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target. To this end the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to be held in Bonn, Germany, in May 2008 will be crucial. As a host of this meeting, Germany decided to play a unique leadership role by convening an international workshop in Potsdam in December last year. Early this year, the

biodiversity agenda of the European Union “triple presidency” from January 2007 to June 2008 was adopted by Germany, Portugal and Slovenia.

Taking advantage of its own triple presidency of the European Union, the G-8 and the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, Germany intends to put biodiversity at the highest political level.

In order to keep the momentum, the host of the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in 2010, will be crucial. The tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties will be of a strategic importance. It will coincide with the Johannesburg target and also the deadline agreed for the finalization of the negotiation of the international regime on access and benefit sharing. The tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties will also coincide with the celebration of the International Year on Biodiversity proclaimed last December at the sixty-first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Indeed on 8 December 2008, the 61st session of the General Assembly decided to proclaim 2010 as the International Year on Biological Diversity.

Therefore COP-10 needs a leader. I am extremely pleased to learn that Japan, is offering to host what can be already considered as an historical meeting in the life of the convention. Japan, with its unique experience in protecting its 90,000 species which inhabit its terrestrial and marine areas has such much to offer as a leader and as a country which has succeeded to demonstrate that economic growth can be achieved while protecting the environment. Japan indeed has established 770 protected areas, accounting for 14% of its total land area and including 11 wetlands of international importance and 4 Biosphere Reserves. In addition, Japan also has set up 187 marine protected areas.

The offer to host COP-10 is another demonstration of Japan’s commitment to the implementation of the Convention. Japan has adopted its biodiversity strategy in less than two years after the entry into force of the Convention and is now embarking on revising it to integrate the 2010 biodiversity target. It is one of the very few countries that have done so. The decision to host COP-10 is yet an additional commitment of Japan to the multilateral cooperation for sustainable development. Through the Kyoto process, Japan has made a unique contribution in advancing the climate change agenda with what we hope will be known as the Nagoya process, Japan will make a unique contribution in furthering the biodiversity agenda. Another country has indicated its interest to host COP-11 to be held in 2012, twenty years after the opening for signature of the Convention in Rio de Janeiro and ten years after the Johannesburg summit.

I sincerely hope that in Bonn, in May 2008 a Triple presidency of COP comprising Germany, Japan and the host of COP-11 will be established.

Thank you for your kind attention.