



STATEMENT BY

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EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

at the

SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NUTRITION (ICN2)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

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Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Biodiversity is essential for sustainable food production systems, food and nutrition security and healthy diets. For example:

- it underpins the functioning of ecosystems and therefore the sustainability and quality of food grown;
- it is the key source of genetic material to improve the dietary benefits of crops and livestock and of many micro-nutrients;
- it is a major component of food cultures and traditional food systems; is a socioeconomic determinant of health; and strengthens resilience against shocks (such as pest and disease outbreaks, extreme weather events, economic crises).

The loss of biodiversity, and associated traditional knowledge, undermine the ability of developed and developing countries alike to achieve food and nutrition security.

The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity has considered the conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity since its first meeting in 1994.

Notably, at its eight meeting, in 2006, the COP adopted the *Cross-cutting Initiative on Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition* based on the rationale that existing knowledge warrants immediate action to promote the sustainable use of biodiversity in food security and nutrition programmes and as a contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

At the same meeting the COP urged Parties and other Governments to integrate biodiversity, food and nutrition considerations into their national biodiversity strategies and action plans and other national plans and activities, including national plans of action for nutrition and strategies for achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and invited the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (now Bioversity International), the World Health Organization, the Standing Committee on Nutrition of the United Nations, and other relevant organizations and initiatives, taking into account on-going work, to implement the cross cutting initiative on biodiversity for food and nutrition.

The cross-cutting initiative includes agreed actions such as:

- Integrate biodiversity into national biodiversity, food and nutrition policies, strategies and action plans.
- Strengthen coordination between relevant agencies
- Develop and document knowledge on linkages between biodiversity and nutrition
- Integrate biodiversity, food and nutrition issues into research and policy instruments
- Conserve and promote wider use of biodiversity for food and nutrition
- Strengthen public awareness of the links between biodiversity, food and nutrition, and the importance of biodiversity conservation to meeting health and development objectives, including the elimination of hunger.

The rationale for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011 – 2020, adopted at CBD COP-10, includes that biodiversity provides for food security and human health. Aichi Biodiversity Target 14 refers to safeguarding and restoring ecosystem services that contribute to human health. “Trends in nutritional contribution of biodiversity” is adopted as an indicator of progress towards this target. Aichi Biodiversity Target 13 refers specifically to the genetic diversity of cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and of wild relatives, including other socio-economically as well as culturally

valuable species, are maintained, and strategies have been developed and implemented for minimizing genetic erosion and safeguarding their genetic diversity.

The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture recognizes “diets” as an ecosystem service. The AFROFOODS Call for Action (2009) also noted that the degradation of ecosystems and the loss of biodiversity greatly contribute to increases in poverty and malnutrition in Africa and recognized that returning to local crops and traditional food systems is a pre-requisite for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for food and nutrition.

The ongoing preparation of the first State of the World’s Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture is an important contribution to assessing the linkages between biodiversity and food and nutrition.

Decisions taken at CBD COP-12, recently concluded in Korea, included:

- to consider biodiversity and health linkages in the preparation of national strategies and action plans, including national health strategies
- the relevance of the cross cutting initiative on biodiversity for food and nutrition for the linkage among biodiversity, food, nutrition and health was reiterated
- the relevance of the inter-linkages between biodiversity and human health for the post-2015 United Nations development agenda and the sustainable development goals was emphasized
- progress in the preparation of the report *Connecting Global Priorities: Biodiversity and Human Health, A State of Knowledge Review*, developed by the Secretariat of the CBD and the World Health Organization and other partners, was welcomed and Parties and other relevant stakeholders were invited to consider the information in this report when implementing national biodiversity strategies and action plans and

national strategies, plans and programmes for human health

- and the Executive Secretary was requested to monitor the results of this second International Conference on Nutrition and to report on possible points of cooperation with the Convention and to continue his efforts under the joint work programme between the Secretariat and the World Health Organization, including reporting the results of collaborative work on biodiversity and health to the 68th World Health Assembly, as well as to the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting.

Conserving biodiversity is essential for sustainable food security and nutrition. This week, around 6,000 people attended the IUCN World Parks Congress in Sydney, Australia, a once-in-a-decade event where FAO and CBD participated along with various other international organizations, governments, NGO's and Civil Society Organisations. The Parks Congress recognized the role of protected areas in providing nutritious food for millions of people, as well as ecosystem services and *in situ* conservation of genetic resources that are fundamental for sustainable agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

Based on this background I would expect that biodiversity be explicitly recognized in the outcomes of this conference, for example, by recognizing that biodiversity is essential to food security and nutrition through its role in the provision of food, its quality, and the diversification of diets, and as a source of food in times of crisis, as well as being a key component of traditional food systems and food cultures.

The Cross-cutting Initiative on Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition already contains elements that might be easily incorporated into a framework for action on nutrition.

I stand ready to assist you in all these respects. Thank you Chair.