



**Statement by the Executive Secretary of the Convention
on Biological Diversity**

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**Convention on
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Distinguished participants, colleagues and friends,

Thank you very much for your kind invitation to attend and address this important conference.

Biodiversity is, of course, central to this conference. Indeed, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological diversity, at its eighth meeting in 2006, highlighted the importance of biodiversity for food and nutrition and also adopted the *Cross-Cutting Initiative on Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition* and expressed its gratitude to the FAO, Bioversity International and the Government of Brazil, among others, for its development. The COP invited these organizations, together with the World Health Organization and the Standing Committee on Nutrition of the United Nations, to promote the implementation of this the cross-cutting initiative.

The outcomes of this conference are to support, among other things, new or improved strategic approaches to address food security and nutrition in an integrated and cross-sectoral manner. Therefore, I would like to offer some perspectives on this.

“Forests for food security and nutrition” should be placed in the context of what is happening more broadly regarding our food systems. The challenges we face are relatively well known and include:

- Loss of natural biodiverse forests and other ecosystems due to conversion and degradation;
- Decreasing genetic resources for food and agriculture;
- Loss and degradation of soils;
- Increasing competition for land, water and other natural resources;
- Diminishing ecosystem services in food production landscapes; in particular loss of pollinators and natural disease and pest regulation and decreasing capacity to support water, nutrient and carbon cycling;
- Land-use conflicts between large-scale agriculture, commodity production, food production, small-scale and family agriculture and indigenous and local communities;
- Increasing over reliance on a narrowing food base; and
- Increasing off-farm impacts, including on water, Greenhouse Gas emissions, soil erosion, siltation, pollution and depletion of biological resources in natural ecosystems.

These challenges apply to all our major food production systems, including from forests.

The challenges are very significant, but there are reasons to conclude they are not insurmountable. Mostly they can be met, in varying ways, by harnessing the benefits of biodiversity, or improved ecosystem services, through partnerships built on win-win outcomes for a broad range of stakeholders. The main constraints to doing this are not technical but involve breaking down political, socio-cultural and institutional barriers to change and compromise.

Opportunities to meet these challenges include:

- Increased emphasis on sustainable food production and consumption and nutrition security;
- Increased attention to forests and other ecosystems as sources of food
- Going beyond “gross production” to include:
 - resilient production
 - diverse production systems
 - resilient and equitable local food economies

- Improving food production efficiency at all scales;
- Growing more and more diverse food with less consumption of resources and impact;
- Creating resilient and diverse landscapes and seascapes;
- Conserving and enhancing ecosystem services; and
- Seeking and mainstreaming “win-win” solutions

The topic of this conference clearly needs a broad-based approach, taking into account the ecosystem approach and the landscape and seascape setting. For example, achieving more productive and sustainable agricultural systems is a pre-requisite to sustaining forest ecosystems in order to reduce the impacts of land-use change on forests and therefore on forest foods.

As already known to this audience, forests, and trees within farming systems, provide multiple benefits within this landscape setting. For example, when forested areas are integrated into landscapes, forests can also support pollinators for crops, help regulate water and erosion, store carbon and provide improved local climates for livestock and farmers. Forests are also a very important source of medicinal plants, for both direct use by local communities or marketing to other consumers and as a genetic resource upon which medicines can be commercially developed. This forges strong links with the health sector in addition to through food and nutrition benefits.

Forest foods themselves are extremely diverse and can have high nutritional values. For example, forested wetlands, including mangroves, support some of the most diverse and productive fisheries known. All of these are locally important and some are regionally significant. Examples include the forested floodplains of the Amazon, Mekong and Congo River basins. There is high inter-dependency between the forests and the fish. For example, many fish eat fruits and nuts falling from trees along rivers or in flooded forests and, in turn, support forest ecosystems through nutrient cycling and seed dispersal. Some species even feed on decaying logs. These fish underpin small-scale family fishing operations through to large commercial enterprises. Fish provide probably the highest quality of animal protein, but are also important regarding micro-nutrients. Fish also illustrate ecosystem inter-dependencies. For example, salmon in Alaska and British Columbia spawn in forested streams. As adults migrate from oceans through coastal zones, where most fisheries are based, they transfer nutrients vital to support upland forests. These interdependencies between fish, forests and fisheries can span thousands of kilometres. They also provide a good example of cross-sectoral interests. For example, the North American salmon fishery is a primary motivation for forest protection in parts of Canada and the USA. In Cambodia, rights to forests on the Tonle Sap lake have traditionally been allocated to fishing operations that have vigorously defended forests against logging and farming interests.

I look forward to hearing at this conference many more examples of the importance of forests, and trees in farming systems, to food security and nutrition. In all of these I am confident that biodiversity, landscapes, ecosystem services and partnerships will be common themes.

The desired broader landscape or ecosystems setting of forests for food security and nutrition is well reflected in the approach adopted at COP-10 of the CBD of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011 – 2020) and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. There is no one target which specifically addresses forest, food security and nutrition. Instead, the targets are designed to collectively build a better overall strategy within which the sub-topic of forests, food security and nutrition can flourish. For example, target 7 refers to achieving sustainable management of areas under agriculture, forestry and aquaculture. Target 6 for sustainable fisheries. Target 5 refers to reducing the loss of forests and other ecosystems. Target 13 refers to minimizing genetic erosion

and safeguarding genetic diversity, including in forests. Targets 14 and 15 refer to maintaining and restoring degraded ecosystem services, including with regards to water and carbon storage and contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation. The important role of Access and Benefit Sharing is captured in target 16 which is particularly relevant to forests in view of the high diversity of genetic resources they support. The importance of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices, again very important regarding forests, is addressed in target 18. The targets also include those designed to strengthen the enabling environment, including raising awareness of the values of biodiversity and mainstreaming these, implementing plans for sustainable production and consumption and re-aligning incentives and subsidies – which is a particularly important factor with regards to food production and land-use. I am confident that this framework represents a way forward that will help us avoid past mistakes of a fragmented and sector based approach which has discouraged partnerships that deliver win-win outcomes across the board and substantially increase overall system efficiency, resilience and benefits.

The importance of traditional and local communities in the management of biodiversity and as beneficiaries of its sustainable use has been a cornerstone of the CBD since its inception. Articles 8(j) and 10(c) of the Convention refer to the obligation of Parties to respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities and promote their wider application and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge, innovations and practices. One objective of the Programme of Work on Forest Biodiversity (decision VI/22) is to enable indigenous and local communities to develop and implement adaptive community-management systems to conserve and sustainably use forest biological diversity. A goal of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas (decision VII/28) is to enhance and secure involvement of indigenous and local communities and relevant stakeholders in the designation and management of protected areas. Throughout these, and other, topics the importance of indigenous and community conserved areas has been increasingly recognised.

At COP-11, in decision XI/19, the Parties considered relevant safeguards for biodiversity regarding REDD+. The COP noted that relevant technical guidance for achieving benefits for biodiversity and indigenous and local communities is available or under development and called for activities to provide benefits for biodiversity and for indigenous and local communities. Particular emphasis was placed on building synergies between national biodiversity strategies and action plans, and national strategies or action plans of the UNFCCC. Relevant guidance developed under the CBD includes: voluntary guidelines on biodiversity-inclusive impact assessment, the ecosystem approach, the conduct of cultural, environmental and social impact assessments, and guidance for ethical conduct concerning traditional knowledge, innovations and practices.

Moving on to what we might do in practice, I would like to highlight some opportunities to sustainably increase the contribution of forests to food security and nutrition.

We can do more to promote local stewardship of forest management and use, accompanied by improved focus on pro-poor forestry measures and small and medium scale forest enterprises. In my view it is at this scale that the greatest overall benefits are on offer. But whatever the scale, forest management must be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

We already have good examples of approaches that integrate forests into sustainable landscapes. Some of the showcase examples include the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage

Systems. These, and other, examples offer us practical demonstrations of how local communities have the knowledge, and motivation, to put land use on a sustainable footing to deliver multiple benefits. This experience is relevant to all landscapes.

In most countries policies remain fragmented. Given this constraint, we need to better integrate forests into national food security and nutrition strategies and plans. Likewise, we need to integrate food and nutrition into national forest strategies and policies, into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and into national poverty eradication and development plans. Of course, ideally all of these policy areas, and others, should be integrated under a common sustainable development policy that must be landscape and seascape based.

Forest related investments need to be assessed much more broadly and look at how to optimize returns on investments by sustaining the full suite of forest related services on offer.

My example of fisheries illustrates the important need to improve our knowledge base. Few governments have adequate data particularly for these kinds of fisheries. Consequently, these weaknesses are reflected in the FAO Fisheries Statistics which are based on national data. A similar situation exists with many other forest foods. If we cannot monitor we cannot manage. The Economy of Ecosystems and Biodiversity studies (TEEB) have recognized the crucial importance of natural ecosystems in providing goods and services for the poor. I hope this conference can identify ways we can improve the knowledge base, especially at national level. However, the priority is to have better informed decision making at local level. This is best achieved by participation of those that have the information – which also avoids the costs of trying to collect and externalise it. We need stronger partnerships that enable local knowledge of resources, their values and management options, to be fully considered in order to build more sustainable and beneficial outcomes.

The problem of weak inter-sectoral and inter-agency collaboration has existed for a long time. Institutional change is notoriously difficult to achieve. There is no one-size fits all solution. But I do believe that the way forward will be built on identifying the common ground and moving from conflict to mutually beneficial outcomes. I believe that the topic of forests, food security and nutrition presents us with great opportunities to get our institutions working better together.

Finally, I would like to add that faced with such significant challenges it is often easy to overlook the good progress that has been achieved. Each country, organisation or institution represented here today can claim its successes. I would particularly like to acknowledge the contribution of our hosts, the FAO, in this regard. We have excellent experience of what works and does not based on practice. We have a formidable amount of knowledge in local and traditional forestry and farming systems which we can learn further from. We have a strong base to upscale and mainstream these successes.

Distinguished guests, colleagues and friends. Forests, food security and nutrition is an important agenda. I look forward to this conference identifying practical ways to move this agenda forward.

Thank you.

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