



Sign to the World

Statement by Hans Friederich
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8 October 2010, Genk, Belgium

Mr. President,
Mr. Commissioner,
Madam Minister,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the privilege of representing the world's oldest and largest global conservation network and to speak on behalf of its more than 1,100 members – big and small, sovereign states and NGOs – who are all united by a common vision of a just world that values and conserves nature.

At the turn of the millennium, world leaders made an unprecedented commitment to ensure environmental sustainability and to make 'sustainable development' an overarching framework for all development efforts by signing up to the Millennium Development Goals.

IUCN has been working on the development paradigm for many years, and especially since the 1980 World Conservation Strategy which stressed the interdependence of conservation and development, thus first giving currency to the term 'sustainable development'.

The concept is now commonplace, but it seems as though 10 years after nearly 200 nations agreed to integrate environmental sustainability into all major policy decisions, we are still trying to make the case for it, rather than getting on with the actual task in hand. The Millennium Development Goals will be measured in 2015 and we therefore have five years to make a difference.

Groundbreaking research and practical experience on the ground tell us that the key to not just one but several MDGs may well be found in rethinking the relationship between biodiversity, ecosystems – or simply what nature provides – and human wellbeing.

- Food security and livelihoods of the poor directly depend on functioning ecosystems like forests, mangroves and coastal areas.
- Achieving global water and sanitation targets can only be done by sustaining ecosystems that ensure the supply of clear, safe water, whilst improved management of local watersheds can reduce child deaths from water-borne diseases.
- By providing sustainable energy alternatives we can reduce the time that children, especially girls, spend collecting firewood instead of studying.
- Empowering women to manage natural resources sustainably can contribute to improving food safety and security, as would alleviating the hardships of other vulnerable groups, especially children, and indigenous peoples.

- Climate change, recognized as a threat and challenge for achieving development, is closely linked to the need for robust ecosystems. By acknowledging the role of healthy nature in extreme events such as droughts and floods, we improve our resilience and capacity to adapt to climate change.

In other words: investing in nature is investing in development and, at the same time, investing in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

For millennia, we have enjoyed the services of nature for free. The findings of the ongoing Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity Study (TEEB) show the value, in financial terms, of the benefits we obtain from nature. The Convention on Biological Diversity's post-2010 Strategic Plan includes a target to integrate the values of nature into national accounts. If this can be achieved it will help a genuine mainstreaming of biodiversity in all departments of government.

The Convention's 10th Conference of Parties in Nagoya later this month will discuss this Strategic Plan, its vision for 2050 and 20 proposed targets for 2020 which call for effective and immediate action to eventually halt the loss of biodiversity. Unlike the 2010 target, the new 2020 targets aim to address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss as well as the direct pressures on biodiversity. IUCN has helped to raise awareness about the loss of species through its Countdown 2010 campaign, and we are committed to maintaining the momentum through a new, global campaign that will take effect next year.

Unfortunately there is a persistent and critical shortage of financial resources to implement the Convention. IUCN emphasises that it is feasible to mobilize significant resources for implementation of the Strategic Plan. However this can only be achieved by using a variety of instruments and by mobilizing resources at all levels, from national to international, and from all sources, both public and private, including innovative finance mechanisms.

IUCN asks governments to keep in mind the inextricable links between climate change and biodiversity loss. Healthy ecosystems help us mitigate and adapt to climate change and contribute to the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals.

It is not too extreme to observe that failure to agree a strong plan could prove catastrophic for the future of life on this planet. IUCN urges the governments meeting in Nagoya to adopt a courageous and robust Strategic Plan and invest now in what is necessary to eventually halt biodiversity loss, so avoiding the larger costs of inaction as demonstrated by the TEEB study.

If so the Nagoya conference could represent a different kind of tipping point – a positive one that would guarantee a future for all life on earth.