



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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on the occasion of the

AMERICANA 2013

19 March 2013

Montreal Canada

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to address you this morning at this important conference. The global community, through the Convention on Biological Diversity, has signalled its increasing understanding of the role of business in tackling the various serious environmental problems facing us, including the loss of biodiversity.

The slate of business related activities at the recent eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties held in Hyderabad, India, as well as the strong business presence in Rio+20 and at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Korea, showed the extent to which business engagement has become a core element of the sustainability discussion. The decision on business engagement that emerged from the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties reinforced earlier COP decisions and touched on a variety of issues including: the promotion and facilitation of the dialogue between government and business; the reforming of national legislation so that eco-friendly activities on the part of business are encouraged through appropriate policy schemes (such as addressing perverse incentives); encouraging businesses to analyse and address their impact and report on the results; the issues of standards; and sustainable public procurement. The Conference of the Parties, at its eleventh meeting, also saw some important progress on the theme of resource mobilization, with substantial increases from all sources agreed to by the Parties.

This increased mobilization of resources will be significant in helping us achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets by the end of this decade. In addition, the agreement to establish Sustainable Development Goals that arose out of Rio+20 will offer an important guide on how we must move forward to realize a sustainable and secure future.



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However, despite these successes and the growing efforts by business to mainstream the objectives of the Convention and to be sustainable, we still have a very long way to go. The indicators for biodiversity loss, and other environmental problems, continue to point in the wrong direction. Governments are finding it a challenge to fulfill their commitments due to the ongoing global economic instability, and the vast majority of companies have yet to understand the importance of natural capital and the risks associated with biodiversity loss. Unfortunately, time is not on our side on this issue, and we must redouble our efforts if we hope to get on top of this problem. The most important lesson that we learned from the failure of the 2010 targets was that we have to reach out to all sectors of society in order to succeed. All levels of Government, business, academia and civil society must collectively work together, or we stand no chance. The challenges are great, but I believe that the creativity that we have as a species, which manifests itself in business, can rise to this occasion.

The head of the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) project, Pavan Sukhdev, stated: “The importance of business to biodiversity cannot be overstated. The private sector accounts for most of the world's production of goods. What they make and how carefully and efficiently they use earth's resources will determine the future of biodiversity conservation. Conversely, biodiversity is also vital to business - not just to natural resource-based businesses, but to all who benefit from and plan for a safe and resilient operating environment in which to do business.” In other words, conserving biodiversity is not just the right thing to do, it also makes good economic sense. This is not a choice between economics and environmentalism - to my mind they are one and the same. Once we truly understand this on a policy level and in corporate offices, we can begin to correct the market failures that put us in this situation and set ourselves towards a sustainable future. I would like to note that the Secretariat will be hosting a meeting on the Global Partnership for Business and Biodiversity in early October in Montreal that will focus on some of these issues. I invite you to attend as the perspectives of all stakeholders in this room would be most welcome.

It is my hope that this event, over the course of the next few days, will help inform some of the decisions and next steps that we must undertake together in order to address this important issue. I truly believe that through our collective efforts we can change the world and create a more sustainable and prosperous future for ourselves, in part by harnessing and benefitting from the incredible creative power of the business sector. This is what this meeting and its organizer, the Réseau Environment are all about.

Thank you.