



STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR JOHN W. ASHE, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP OF 77, AT THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE NINTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (BONN, GERMANY, 28 MAY 2008) (Bonn, Germany, 28 May 2008)

Acting President,
Ministers,
Executive Secretary,
Colleagues,
Distinguish delegates.

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We are gathered here in this beautiful German city of Bonn on what may seem at first blush to be another Conference of the Parties. Nothing could be further from the truth. This is not just another COP. This is our last formal meeting of the Parties before 2010, the year in which the international community agreed to Johannesburg Biodiversity Target that aims to substantially reducing the rate of the loss of biodiversity. This then makes this session of the COP a very special one indeed.

Acting President,

COP 9 affords us the unique opportunity to assess whether concrete, measurable and demonstrable progress is being made towards achieving the 2010 biodiversity target. We are approximately 24 months away from the target date and as developing countries look into the future they see a gathering storm, a storm that is largely not of their own making. And as is true with nearly every human induced environmental disaster, the member States of the Group of 77 and China stand on the frontline and will suffer the greatest consequences.

Looking into the future we are alarmed by the fact that biodiversity, for which we are the main repositories, continues to be lost at all levels, and most ecosystem services are in decline. The 2010 target was supposed to arrest this decline. Sadly, it has not. We must therefore ask ourselves the following questions:

1. Are we there yet? The short and only answer to this is No.
2. What collectively can we do here in Bonn to increase our joint commitment to meeting the target?

With so much at stake, the Group of 77 believes that international community has very little choice but to act now and decisively so.

Acting President,

In addition to the loss of our biodiversity, we developing countries have to try and address the adverse effects of climate change. The twin threats posed by climate change and biodiversity pose a clear and present danger to the member States of the Group of 77. We therefore call for precise and decisive action from international community. With 2010 just around the corner, the world expects nothing less from us.

The challenges facing developing countries in halting the loss of biodiversity and/or mitigating the risks of these losses, particularly in least developed, landlocked developing, small island developing states and Africa in general, call for enhanced South-South cooperation for sustainable development. This vehicle, which serves as a complement to the more traditional North-South cooperation, remains an important force for the successful preservation of biodiversity. South-South cooperation is therefore one of the key modalities for enhancing the implementation of this vital convention so that it may better serve the legitimate development needs of the developing countries.

Acting President,

Now more than ever, the Group of 77 and China calls for the urgent implementation of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, in a mutually supportive manner. Indeed conservation of biological diversity cannot be achieved without the sustainable use and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefit arising from genetic resources. All three pillars of this convention are not only important to the development of developing countries, but provide important tools in our fight against poverty.

We also take note of the recent decision of the G8 environment ministers at their Kobe meeting, where they adopted, for the first time, a call for action for biodiversity and for making it a key item on the agenda of the upcoming G8 Summit. The Kobe Call for Action for Biodiversity includes a road map for achieving the 2010 Target, We call upon the G8 heads to make available the necessary means of implementation so as to ensure that the set of agreed measures on the sustainable use of biodiversity, on enhancing the world's protected areas, as well as engaging the private sector and mobilizing the scientific community to achieve the strategic objectives of the Convention, do contribute to the collective goal of meeting the 2010 target.

Acting President,

In 2002 when the Johannesburg Summit adopted the 2010 Target, the greatest challenge then was how to address the causes of the looming ecological crisis. Six years later that challenge is still with us and is ever more urgent. Climate change is a huge contributor to the loss of biological diversity as it impacts coral reefs, forest ecosystems, wetlands and migratory species. Beyond any shadow of a doubt, we need to enhance our collective efforts to adapt and mitigate climate change as well as mitigate the risks from the biodiversity losses already incurred due to climate change.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon perhaps said it best when he observed that, "the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity is an essential element of any strategy to adapt to climate change".

In conclusion, Acting President, the Group is of the view that the theme of this COP, agriculture and biodiversity, is indeed a fitting one. Developing countries are being forced to choose between biodiversity protection and the sustainability of their agricultural and by extension, their economic development. What is frequently overlooked is the sober realization that agricultural reform in the majority of developing countries is not profit driven: it is foremost a question of survival. Over the past twelve months, global food prices have soared 40 percent, while food reserves are at 30-year lows. Linkages between biodiversity and climate change, fighting hunger and food production are crucial to achieving both the 2010 target and the MDGs

Finally, I wish to thank the Executive Secretary and his staff for the excellent job they are doing with the institution we have set up. The Group of 77 and China is of the view that a well-managed and

