

**19 May 2015**

**Goodwill message\* from Dr Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity**

**\*Transcribed from an audio recording**

Dear participants, it is my pleasure to welcome you all to this meeting of Mobilising Biodiversity Data for Sustainable Development in Africa. I'm pleased that the Convention Secretariat has been able to participate in this workshop organised by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) in close collaboration with other partners including UNEP-WCMC.

As you know the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its twenty global Aichi Biodiversity Targets, including Target 19 on sharing information and knowledge, were adopted at the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity held in Nagoya, Japan, in 2010.

Parties to the Convention have been translating these targets into national targets as part of their updated and revised national biodiversity strategies and action plans, which we call NBSAPs. Forty-five revised NBSAPs have now been received by the Secretariat and this number is expected to double by June and triple by the end of the year. I would also like to draw your attention to the fact that the Secretariat maintains a target database on its website.

Biodiversity-related information is vital to identify threats to biodiversity, to determine priorities for conservation and sustainable use, and to enable targeted and cost-effective action. Given this, progress towards Target 19 can contribute toward to the attainment of the other Aichi Biodiversity Targets. This target is a general commitment by CBD parties to increase the amount and quality of biodiversity-relevant information and technologies available, to make better use of these in decision making, and to share them as widely as possible.

Last October the flagship publication, Global Biodiversity Outlook 4 (GBO-4), revealed that data and information on biodiversity are being shared much more widely through a range of national, regional and global initiatives. Also GBO-4 revealed recent trends which include networks to promote and facilitate free and open access to digitized records from natural history collections and observations including through citizen science initiatives, collaboration to build a complete catalogue of the world's species, and the development of DNA barcoding as a means of identifying species. However, much data and information remain inaccessible and capacity is lacking to mobilise them in many countries.

Therefore, I think that we have to do better and that we can do better. How often do we hide behind a perceived lack of knowledge, lack of data, lack of baselines and of monitoring information? Yes access to credible data is a challenge everywhere, but have we really done enough to mobilise data that is available but hidden in various institutions of which only partial or aggregated published information is accessible and raw data is needed for additional analysis and monitoring. Have we really consulted the best scientists and holders of knowledge in all the regions to seek their advice and get their assessments? Are we really collaborating with organisations and networks that maintain regional and

global databases and contributing systematically to these databases, and are we really investing in efforts to link our national datasets with those from other countries?

I see plenty of opportunities for us to advance from a scientific and technical perspective our ability to monitor biodiversity, understand change and support policymaking to plan for and support positive outcomes in accordance with the objectives of the Convention and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

For instance, I would like to suggest that we transform the Global Biodiversity Information Outlook, launched by the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) in July 2012 into a framework for a continuous partnership or initiative for the implementation of Aichi Target 19 and to pave the way for further mobilised data useful to countries for both scientific advances and for decision-making at the political level. I trust that you will have fruitful and interesting scientific and technical discussions during this session and I look forward to receiving an update from my staff on the good progress made from this workshop. Thank you for your attention.