



Statement by Mr. Jairam Ramesh, Minister, Environment & Forests, at the Panel on "The way forward in achieving the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the internationally agreed biodiversity goals and targets", High Level Meeting of the 65th session of the General Assembly on Biodiversity on September 22, 2010



Hon'ble Co-Chairmen and distinguished delegates,

It is indeed an honour for me to speak at the first ever high level event on biodiversity of the United Nations General Assembly at its 65th Session.

This now sets the stage for moving biodiversity and the Convention on Biological Diversity to the central place in global environmental discourse and arena, a place that it rightfully deserves, 18 years after the birth of this Convention at the Earth Summit held at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and years after its sister Convention on climate change has been getting all the headlines.

The Convention on Biological Diversity, through its three goals, sets out commitments for maintaining the world's ecological underpinnings, while pursuing economic development. The three objectives – conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of its components, and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of genetic resources, are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

While the global community can take some pride in making strides towards implementation of the first two objectives, it is regrettable that the third objective relating to access and benefit sharing, or ABS as it is called, remains largely unfulfilled.



May I take this opportunity to urge the Ministers of member states to provide the much needed urgent political impetus at this stage of negotiations, to be able to arrive at a practicable and implementable ABS protocol which provides for a balance between access and compliance provisions and which holds the sanctity of domestic legislation? As a major victim of bio-piracy in different ways, India believes that the ABS Protocol is a key missing pillar of the CBD.

Biodiversity and ecosystem services are considered largely as public goods, their loss therefore goes unaccounted for in the present economic system, and therefore can continue unabated. We hope and expect that the TEEB study, led by Pavan Sukhdev, the final report of which would be launched at CoP-10, would be able to address this anomaly. The key messages from the TEEB reports being released in phases, including the one for local and regional policy makers, which I had the honour to release in New Delhi earlier this month, have already sharpened awareness on the value of biodiversity. I hope in due course, this study may facilitate development of cost-effective policy responses and better informed decisions.

My government is committed to inclusion of biodiversity as an integral part of the growth process, since this is the only path whereby we can sustain high economic growth. The debate today is no longer on development versus environment, since biodiversity is an essential ingredient of inclusive growth. GDP must be redefined as Green Domestic Product and not stand for Gross Domestic Product.

Another important matter that is awaiting the final approval is the establishment of an Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem

Services. The IPBES, proposed to be set on the lines of IPCC, aims to provide a science-policy interface on biodiversity, especially in the backdrop of the looming ecological crisis owing to widespread loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. The expectation is that this step too will motivate political action.

India as you know is a megadiverse country with very strong science base in terms of manpower and institutions. We would therefore be happy to host the secretariat of IPBES, as and when it is established. The IPBES secretariat could be modelled on the lines of the Global Development Network (GDN), the headquarters of which are located in New Delhi.

As you may be aware, India has offered to host the eleventh CoP to the CBD to be held in the 20th anniversary of the Rio Summit in 2012. We are looking forward to your support in this endeavour.

A few days back, at the invitation of the UNGA President, Switzerland, the eleven past, present and future Presidencies of CoP have adopted a Geneva Ministerial Biodiversity Call for Immediate Action, which I had the honour to cochair. We have recognised the inextricable linkages between the issues of climate change and biodiversity loss, and have specifically proposed that implementation of voluntary REDD/REDD+ mechanisms should be done to enrich biodiversity. We look forward to clinching a forestry agreement at the forthcoming Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC at Cancun.

There are also extremely important issues relating to the linkages between the CBD and the TRIPS Agreement under the WTO that need to be addressed and finalized soon.

Thank you.

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