

## **Statement by Ms. Svandís Svavarsdóttir,**

### **Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources, Iceland**

Delivered at High Level Segment of COP-11 to CBD, Hyderabad, India, 2012

Ladies and gentlemen,

At our meeting in Nagoya we made some achievements, which we need to build upon. We adopted a progressive and ambitious Strategic Plan with the twenty Aichi targets, which must be translated from words to action in this decade.

In Iceland, we are strengthening our strategies dealing with biological diversity. The targets have a special meaning for Iceland in addressing the restoration of degraded ecosystems. Iceland has suffered from loss of woodlands and vegetation and concurrently soil erosion since settlement. The targets have put renewed drive in our efforts and we are finally reducing the rate of degradation. We have also plans to increase efforts on wetland reclamation and on control of invasive alien species.

Work on nature conservation has been strengthened in recent years in relation to implementation of the Convention, but nature and biodiversity are still undervalued assets in Iceland. Tourism has grown significantly in Iceland, with wilderness and nature being the main attraction. Increased touristic pressure leads to stress and further wear of biodiversity and landscapes. It is one of our main challenges in the near future to make sure that growing tourism contributes to conservation of biodiversity, through new financial resource mobilisation as a part of the green economy.

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The news from the Arctic this year should ring the alarm bell. The Arctic sea ice is at a record low this fall and is shrinking faster than almost anyone predicted. Even more disturbing are the changes due to ocean acidification, which is a direct threat to the seas' web of life. Climate change is a threat to biodiversity in all aspects, not just a future challenge; it is happening now.

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Human diversity is one of our greatest assets in shaping policy and taking actions for biodiversity. Over 190 States are now Parties to the Convention, weaving its principles and decisions into their national systems of law and governance. We are however not taking full advantage of all those who could and should contribute to our common task. I am referring especially to the role of women. One of the main topics of our discussions here in Hyderabad is "Biodiversity for Livelihoods and Poverty Reduction". This is a fundamental issue, as we must see biodiversity not as an isolated issue, but as a foundation of human livelihoods and well-being. Women are often those most involved in tasks such as collecting food, firewood and other necessities of life, and those who feel most acutely the effects of degradation of ecosystems. Yet, women everywhere are underrepresented in decision-making on environmental and economic issues.

Women's contribution to the economy and livelihoods are undervalued and women often lack basic rights, including economic rights and sexual and reproductive rights. This is plain

wrong and also unwise. We need all possible resources to fight the huge challenges of degrading biodiversity, ecosystem services and changing climate. Women empowerment is one of the most effective ways to conserve biodiversity and ecosystems.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The spirit of Nagoya is giving us hope that we manage to mobilise resources necessary to implement the targets. We must also face the challenges presented to us by an ever-increasing appetite for growth on a planet of finite resources. We have sent robots to Mars and satellites to the ends of our solar system but still we have a limited knowledge about the life in the oceans and deepest forests. The CBD is the foremost global forum to protect biological diversity, and use it wisely to improve human wellbeing for future generations. I wish all of us luck in this noble task, and in finding practical ways to put our strategies into action in the UN Decade on Biological Diversity.

Thank you, / Shukriya.

Check against delivery.