



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**High-level segment of the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the  
Convention on Biological Diversity  
Cancun, 2 December 2016**

**Keynote Address by  
Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary  
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

Mr. Secretary Pacchiano,  
Distinguished members of the presidium,  
Distinguished Ministers,  
I greet with special affection the Secretary of Tourism, the Secretary of Agriculture and the other representatives of the Government of Mexico,  
Distinguished heads of delegation and representatives of Party States,  
Dear colleagues and representatives of United Nations entities,

First of all, I would like to thank the Secretary of the Environment of Mexico, Rafael Pacchiano; the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias; and the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Program, Erik Solheim, for inviting me to participate in the opening of this high-level segment of the thirteenth Conference of the Parties.

I also pay special recognition to Braulio Dias for his extraordinary job at the helm of the secretariat and I wish him the best in the future. I also congratulate the new Executive Secretary on her appointment, and I express my willingness to work with her and her team.

I am grateful for the words of recognition from all previous speakers for my contribution during the COP 16 presidency. In fact, it is true that for me personally, it is particularly significant to be here today in my capacity as Executive Secretary of the Convention on Climate Change.

It was here in Cancun where, with the help of governments, civil society, the private sector, the scientific community – and I take this opportunity to greet Dr. Sarukhán and thank him for his invaluable support – we laid the foundation of the Paris Agreement,

which was adopted in December 2015 and entered into force less than a month ago, in a record time.

The Paris Agreement sets a roadmap for fighting climate change and a guide to the global transition towards a low-carbon and resilient world. This agreement and the goals of protection of biodiversity and ecosystems established in the framework of this process will enable us to achieve a sustainable future, with wellbeing for all, and will allow us to protect and preserve the natural wealth of our planet.

Indeed, the interrelation between climate change and biodiversity has been widely documented and recognized by science. This linkage must now be reflected more clearly in the intergovernmental negotiation process and in our decisions. As several of the preceding speakers have pointed out, this requires efforts, resources and the complementarity of decisions. We must promote measures to limit or avoid negative impacts on ecosystems and biodiversity and, at the same time, combat climate change.

Coastal ecosystems are a clear example – the mangroves, marshes and seagrasses so prevalent here in the Caribbean. They can absorb up to half of the global emissions from transport. By protecting biodiversity in these ecosystems, we combat climate change and, at the same time, contribute to food security and to economic opportunities for coastal communities, especially in tourism here in the Caribbean.

Similarly, land rehabilitation and restoration is crucial to biodiversity. We must not forget that the earth is a huge carbon repository. Healthy and resilient soils are fundamental for facing drought and degradation and for sustainable development. Land lends security and stability to communities, particularly the most vulnerable.

We must bear in mind that this deterioration not only has an effect on the environment, but also on the economy and social stability of countries.

Solutions based in nature are effective tools in the fight against climate change and achieving biodiversity conservation objectives.

Dear friends, the convergence between the fight against climate change and the protection of biodiversity requires that different sectors of our societies work together on both fronts, as several of the previous speakers have pointed out.

That is why I also welcome that not only actors in the field of biodiversity, but also agriculture, fisheries, forestry and tourism deliberations during this High-level Segment. I also greet with affection Taleb Rifai, who is a great friend of Mexico and has largely contributed to what Mexico has achieved in terms of sustainable tourism.

All these issues relate to biodiversity and climate change, and link to the ministries of finance and planning. Indeed, we must ensure that development is conceived only in a sustainable way and that it addresses the needs of biodiversity conservation and the fight against climate change.

Undoubtedly, we must increase the synergies and cooperation between the three Rio Conventions – Biodiversity, Climate Change and Desertification – within the framework of implementing Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, as my friend Helen Clark, UNDP Administrator, just pointed out.

The challenge is to achieve a balance between the needs of societies and the imperative of a healthy planet for present and future generations. I am convinced that the work beginning today will contribute to achieving this noble and important goal.

I offer you my personal collaboration and that of the secretariat staff of the Convention on Climate Change so that together we can find practical solutions and ambitious and lasting agreements.

Thank you, and I wish you all success.

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