



**Statement by the Minister of Housing and  
Environment,**

**Hon. Mohamed Aslam**

**Republic of Maldives**

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Mr chairman, distinguished delegates.

Let me begin my statement by thanking the Japanese government and its people for the warm hospitality and the excellent arrangements for this conference.

Mr Chairman, delegates.

I have read in scientific literature that the world in its life time has experienced 5 major mass extinction events of the global biodiversity. These events occurred millions of years before the evolution of humans. The most recent and the most famous mass extinction of the species occurred around 65my ago which wiped out the big reptiles.

One of the contributing common factors of all of these extinctions was dramatic global climate change that resulted from some natural events. The causes of climate change were different for the different events. I read that it is now widely believed among the scientific community that we are now living through the beginning of the 6th mass extinction event of the global biodiversity. The difference between the previous five events and this time is that this time it is largely man made.

It was just last week I heard on BBC that the greatest period of mass extinction the world has ever seen is occurring right now. It is believed that the accelerated rate of extinction of species within the past 50 years is directly related to human activities. The report said that up to 50 percent of the presently existing species may become extinct by 2100. Climate change together with other activities of human beings are the biggest causes of extinction species we are seeing today.

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates,

We meet here in Nagoya just a month to the meeting of the conference of the parties on climate change. As it has been said by many, we can not separate conservation of biodiversity from mitigation of climate change.

It is now obvious to all of us that climate change we see today is a direct consequence of man's activities since the industrial revolution. Burning of fossil fuel is the biggest culprit causing climate change. It is a shame that the governments around the world have so far failed to reach an agreement to significantly reduce carbon emission. People must understand that the effects of climate change are not going to be limited to some few countries around the world. Every country, every society will be affected by climate change.

Mr chairman, distinguished delegates,

When we talk about loss of biodiversity carbon emission is not the only thing we are concerned about. Over exploitation of the natural resources by some

very greedy few are also threatening the ecosystem of the world we live in. A few weeks ago I had the chance to watch the film called END OF THE LINE. It showed a very alarming reality that we are about to face on the global fish stocks. According to WWF we humans are taking far more fish out of the oceans than it can sustain. WWF reports that as many as 90% of all the ocean's large fish have been already fished out.

Coastal communities like the Maldives are feeling the effects of the decline in global fish population. Most noticeably we have seen a 40% decline in our tuna catch within the past 5 years. Such a decline in fishing is having a devastating effect on our economy and on the livelihood of many fisherman. I am sure we had no role to contribute to the decline in our fish catch. The Maldives perhaps is the only country in the world whose entire tuna fishing industry is based on the traditional pole and line fishing.

The Maldives is making every effort it can to survive from the devastating affects of climate change. Maldives is also making a lot of effort to protect and preserve our local biodiversity. We have created 30 marine protected areas. We are in the final public consultation process for making one of the 22 atolls of the Maldives a UNESCO's biosphere reserve. We have just banned shark fishing from anywhere within our EEZ.

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates

I am sure you will understand conservation of biodiversity and mitigating climate change is something that can only be achieved by a collective effort and it is not just for a few governments around the world to do. It will have to be the effort of every individual human being. All of us need to make a slight change to our life style. We need to be a little less greedy. We all must listen to the children of the world as we heard yesterday. We all must make a pledge to our selves on what actions we will take to conserve biodiversity and to mitigate climate change. It is the greed and the life style of the few that is affecting the global biodiversity and causing the climate change.

Mitigating climate change and stopping the loss of biodiversity requires change of habits not just money. I am sure it should become obvious to everyone that when people stop eating shark meat and shark soup there will not be a demand for hunting the sharks. When we reject consumption of endangered species the hunt will stop. It is a shame that we are linking everything, loss of biodiversity or climate change or anything else to the financial costs and benefits. We must break this link and we must start seeing things from the point of view of survival. See things from the point of view of doing the right thing. Not financial loss and financial gains.

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates

Maldives re-iterates its commitment to implement objectives of CBD. We are ready to renew our efforts to work towards the new targets set for 2020.

Full and effective implementation of the objectives of the CBD at all levels has become important than ever before. I request Executive Secretary to undertake a full review of reasons why countries were not able to achieve 2010 targets and to pay particular attention to those issues with a view to providing greater assistance to those countries in need of assistance for the successful realization of the new 2020 targets. By assistance let me reiterate that I am not talking about so much of finance but for changing lifestyle, changing habits, eliminating the reasons for over exploitation of species.

The Maldives will be reviewing its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan setting new time frames and national targets.

Mr. Chairman, we can not continue to fail in dealing with loss of biodiversity and mitigating climate change.

I also call upon the people of the globe, every individual to be part of the solution to the two biggest challenges mankind have ever faced, climate change and loss of biodiversity. Make sure that your governments listen to you. You know how to make your governments listen to you. We all get that opportunity once every 4 years or 5 years when we go for elections.

I thank you