Statement delivered by Mr. Narinder Kakar, Permanent Observer of IUCN to the United Nations.

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Agenda Item 19 – Sustainable Development, 4-5 November 2013

Mr. Chairperson,

The UN Conference on Sustainable Development – Rio+20 provided us the basis for continued progressive actions for attaining sustainable development, by emphasizing the need to streamline it into the post-2015 development agenda. Since then, important steps have been taken to give momentum to the formulation process of this agenda, in order to lay the foundation for a sustainable future. These steps include, inter alia, the establishment of the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, and the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As IUCN President Mr. Zhang Xinsheng pointed out at the Inaugural Session of the Forum, the world faces two major challenges at the moment:

- The ongoing crisis with millions of people continuing to struggle to find decent jobs, and many governments struggling to provide acceptable standards of living to their people; and
- The continuing degradation of our physical environment manifested especially in the loss of biodiversity and the deterioration of the ecosystem services which are essential for supporting our societies and our economies.

The High-Level Political Forum should provide the political momentum needed for strengthening the institutional governance for sustainable development, integrating its three dimensions in a balanced manner. This is achievable if the political will is there and the required means of implementation put in place. Our collective experience from the Commission on Sustainable Development and the MDGs assessments should guide the process. In the same vein, we can hope that the Opening Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals would provide us with a framework that serves as a successor arrangement to the MDGs and the broader post-2015 development agenda which could be pursued universally.

Following Rio+20, IUCN’s once-in-four years World Conservation Congress was held in Jeju in the Republic of Korea in September 2012, where practical discussions were held on how we
move forward, keeping in mind the framework provided by Rio+20 and integrating it with IUCN’s mandates. IUCN’s programme for the period 2013-2016 is driven by three important features of life today viz. (i) Global consumption and production patterns are destroying our life support system at persistent and dangerously high rates; (ii) There is a need for more effective and equitable governance of nature’s use; and (iii) We—the people, communities, governments and private actors—are not fully utilizing the power of nature and the solutions it can provide to global challenges such as climate change, food security, and socio-economic development, among others. IUCN calls this approach “nature-based solutions”.

The IUCN Programme aims to mobilize and unite communities working for bio-diversity conservation, for sustainable development (in all its three dimensions) and for poverty eradication, in efforts to halt biodiversity loss, to ensure equity in the use of nature’s benefits and to deploy nature-based solutions for tackling global problems of sustainable development. In that context, we must encourage a strong science-policy interface in all the activities.

At the joint briefing to this Committee last week on the implementation of the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, it was highlighted that bio-diversity is the foundation upon which humanity depends. Even though the 2010 Nagoya meeting called for curbing the loss of biodiversity by 2020, biodiversity continues to be lost and ecosystem services continue to be degraded—on land and in marine habitats. The main reason identified for this lack of progress is attributed to ineffective mainstreaming of biodiversity into development and poverty reduction policies. It is hoped that governance modalities will be streamlined with a view to accelerating action for implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Targets.

IUCN stands ready to put its expertise to support the UN System in the global effort to advance sustainable development around the world, in particular through:

- IUCN’s science and knowledge base, generated by a strong technical resources base made of a globally distributed network of expert thematic Commissions, Members and Secretariat;
- IUCN’s capacity to bring together government and non-governmental actors and unite them around a convergence of common interests; and
- IUCN’s experience of working on the frontline to devise and deliver nature-based solutions that work for people and for nature.

We believe that a sustainable future can be attained if we recognize the interconnectedness between man and nature and the need for inclusive economic growth for elimination of poverty. The Sustainable Development Goals process and the post-2015 development agenda must address these challenges.

Thank you.