

Briefing on implementing the Sustainable Development Goals:  
Trade in Biodiversity-based goods and services

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Opening remarks by Joakim Reiter Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD

*AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY*

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today it is well known that the extinction of species is happening and that we , humans, are to blame. But what we sometimes ignore, or chose to ignore, is the magnitude and the speed at which extinction is happening today.

According to some scientists, the current pace of plant and animal loss implies that **20 to 50 per cent of all living species** on earth may disappear within this century!

Let me just repeat: by the turn of this century 20 to 50 per cent of all living species could be gone, forever.

This means that your grandchildren will never see some plants or animals that are well known to you—except, of course, in a museum or a natural history book.

By altering, so suddenly, environmental conditions on our planet, a large proportion of species will not be able to survive.

The world you see today could look very different tomorrow.

The drastic changes in biodiversity can significantly hinder the ability of future generations to grow and prosper. But the loss of biodiversity does not only affect our world tomorrow; it affects our world today.

70% of the world's poor directly depend on biodiversity resources for their food, fuel, medicine, shelter and transportation.

Around 1.6 billion people depend on forest and non-timber forest products for their livelihoods.

And more than 3 billion people depend on coastal and marine diversity.

In sum, any quest for sustainable development has to follow a path that preserves biodiversity-- without excuses.

However, and despite our efforts and international conventions<sup>1</sup>, biodiversity loss continues to take place. The reasons are well known: overexploitation, degradation, illegal harvest and trade, pollution and climate change, just to name a few.

We need to do something to protect diversity and trade must do its part.

Trade can create incentives to protect biodiversity, while also increasing family income, particularly for rural or marginalized communities.

And there is an opportunity for us to take: the growing size of industries and demand for biodiversity-based goods and services.

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<sup>1</sup> The Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, CITES

Let me share with you some figures.

The natural cosmetics industry is estimated to be worth around US\$ 26 billion; the natural beverages industry around US\$ 23 billion; and the botanical industry around US\$ 85 billion.

By 2050 sustainable global business opportunities in natural resources could, according to some estimates, amount to 2 to 6 trillion US dollars. And, the industry is expected to grow even further in the next 25 years.

The increased value of these industries provides incentives to preserve biodiversity rather than destroying it.

**And this brings me to the issue of BioTrade.**

BioTrade is an answer to markets demand for biodiversity-based products and services sustainably produced. And it ultimately creates important incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity goods and services.

BioTrade guarantees that social, environmental and economic sustainability is met by respecting determined Principles and Criteria along the value chain.

Just to give some examples of the benefits and potential of participating in BioTrade.

- UNCTAD's BioTrade Initiative has benefited producers, farmers and hunters managing over 19 million hectares in 21 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

- The turnover of BioTrade companies and organizations reached 5.2 billion US dollars in 2013.
- Under the Andean BioTrade project almost 30 000 beneficiaries improved their working conditions and quality of life; their sales increased on average by 65% between 2011 and 2014, reaching 310 million US dollars.
- PhytoTrade Africa supports 56 member companies and its suppliers in nine countries in Southern Africa, benefiting over 12,500 individuals, of which nearly 80% is women.

These are only few impressive examples and success stories. But the results are still below the market potential for BioTrade goods. There is more we can do.

And this is why I am pleased to announce today the launching of the Third Phase of the BioTrade Facilitation Programme.

This will enhance trade of BioTrade products, increasing the economic value of preserving biodiversity, offering poor people a viable economic opportunity from nurturing their biological resource endowments.

I am also pleased to announce that UNCTAD will implement this programme in collaboration with the CBD secretariat, CITES, PhytoTrade Africa and the Union for Ethical BioTrade.

I want to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Government of Switzerland for its generous and continuous financial support to UNCTAD's BioTrade Initiative.

Preserving biodiversity is a global challenge that we should not undertake alone. And I am glad we can create this partnership to make trade a means to both preserve biodiversity and foster sustainable development, more broadly.

Thank you very much.