Distinguished guests,
Esteemed partners, Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

On behalf of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), I wish to also warmly welcome you to this morning session and thank the CBD secretariat for the opportunity to co-organize it within the Business and Biodiversity Forum, as well as to all our partners and speakers. I also take this opportunity to thank the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO for its continued support in implementing BioTrade all these years.

The cooperation between CBD and UNCTAD secretariats dates back to COP3 in November 1996, when UNCTAD launched its BioTrade Initiative to promote trade and investment in biological resources as its contribution to the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention: conservation, sustainable use, and fair and equitable sharing of benefits. This long-standing partnership was formalized in October 1997 and since then, BioTrade activities were always anchored to the Convention’s objectives.

BioTrade promotes trade that contributes to livelihoods and safeguards biodiversity by implementing social, environmental and economic sustainability criteria, also known as the BioTrade Principles and Criteria.

These Principles and Criteria are used at the sector, value chain and company levels from the collection, production, transformation, and commercialization of goods and services derived from biodiversity. It is exactly these principles that differentiate BioTrade from other trade and biodiversity initiatives and bio-businesses.

Under BioTrade, we seize (sees) the linkages between sustainable trade and investment in biodiversity as an engine for economic growth and development, while creating incentives for conserving and sustainably using biodiversity.

Mainstreaming biodiversity into the global economy is also an essential part of our work as the UN Trade agency by building the business case for biodiversity, and working closely with private
stakeholders in implementing BioTrade. This is not an easy task and includes a collaborative approach with governments, businesses, academia and civil society in creating an enabling environment to foster entrepreneurship in biodiversity-based sectors.

I would also like to take this opportunity to announce that with the financial support of SECO, in May 2018 we launched our new Global BioTrade programme - Linking trade, biodiversity and sustainable development. It focuses on building partnerships, sharing knowledge and upscaling BioTrade, thereby advancing the implementation of the SDGs.

The experiences and lessons learned from this journey are being shared today in the first panel on fostering sustainable sourcing and trade of biodiversity-based products to achieve the SDGs.

This panel, jointly organized by UNCTAD and CAF, encourages an active dialogue and exchange of experiences on the benefits and challenges related to implementing BioTrade and sustainable sourcing practices in support of the SDGs.

Thank you, Valerie for sharing with all of us the description of Panels 2 and 3.

In closing, allow me to express and reiterate UNCTAD and CBD’s appreciation to CAF, the ABS Capacity Development Initiative and the UEBT for co-organizing this morning's sessions. I would like to give our special thanks to all the panelists for accepting our invitation and to all of you [the audience] for attending. Again, our thanks to the government of Switzerland and SECO for their continued trust in UNCTAD and BioTrade partners.

I will now pass the floor to the Ambassador of Switzerland to the Arab Republic of Egypt, His Excellency Mr. Paul Garnier for his welcome remarks.