



# Speaking Note

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## **Opening Remarks of Ambassador Olivier Zehnder (max. 5 minutes) for the Webinar on Trade, Biodiversity and BioTrade in ASEAN May 17<sup>th</sup> at 16:00 - 18:00 (Jakarta time)**

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- Dr. Theresa Mundita, Executive Director of ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity,
- Colleagues from UNCTAD and Helvetas,
- Distinguished participants,
- It is my pleasure to meet you albeit virtually. I am glad to join you for this important webinar which is the final part of the first-ever joint project of ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, UNCTAD, Helvetas and the Government of Switzerland through SECO.
- Ladies and gentlemen,
- The loss of biodiversity and climate crisis are often referred to as twin challenges. These two threats are interlinked and together represent one of the greatest challenges of our time.
- Switzerland has been active in addressing these twin challenges. Let me share with you a few examples.



- The first one is our project with Helvetas in the Mekong region called the Regional BioTrade Project. This project links buyers and sellers of BioTrade products and help them & their supply chain to comply with BioTrade principles.
- A breakthrough was witnessed in Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam for BioTrade products, in this case products that are certified by at least one label. The exports of goods from this project have gone up significantly from USD 0.2 million in July 2021 to over USD 60 million in December 2022. There is also an increasing demand from companies to become BioTrade certified, which results from the demand of importers for more sustainably produced products. This ultimately helps to integrate local exporters and producers into the global value chain. It improves their income and job quality.
- Another example is our longstanding collaboration with UNCTAD in the frame of the Global BioTrade Programme. This programme mainstreams BioTrade into national and international agendas. It promotes this policy as an instrument to achieve the dual goal of conserving biodiversity and poverty reduction.
- One of the milestones from this programme was the recognition of BioTrade in several international agreements related to biodiversity, such as the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora.
- And lastly, Switzerland joined 195 nations to sign the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework last year in Canada. This Framework sets ambitious goals. It addresses biodiversity loss, the restoration of ecosystems and the protections of indigenous rights.
- It foresees concrete measures to halt and reverse nature loss.

- This includes placing 30 per cent of the planet and 30 per cent of degraded ecosystems under protection by 2030. If we succeed, the Framework will give a significant push to the protection of biodiversity.
- Ladies and gentlemen,
- The ASEAN region has a lot to offer when it comes to biodiversity. It occupies only 3 per cent of the earth's land but it is home to about 20 per cent of the world's flora and fauna, 35 per cent of global mangrove forests and 28 per cent of coral reefs worldwide.
- This is a blessing, but it also comes with a responsibility, as the relevance of the region for biodiversity conservation is essential.
- That is why sustainable development is always at the core of the partnership between Switzerland and ASEAN. We have achieved many great results together. We contributed to more transparent reporting on SDGs, we strive for a more sustainable management of forests, and the reduction of the impact of natural disasters.
- Last year Switzerland and ASEAN agreed to embark on BioTrade cooperation. We were pleased to have UNCTAD and Helvetas on board for this cooperation as well.
- We started with a webinar in May 2022, to promote the concept of bio-trade to the ASEAN Working Groups in charge of nature conservation and biodiversity, forest products development and the SMEs as well as their partners and stakeholders.
- We then moved forward with conducting two studies. One on how to mainstream biodiversity into trade in ASEAN and another one by Dr. Christine Woda that will be the focus of our webinar today. In this study, Dr. Woda put forward seven intriguing proposals for turning the tide in mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into trade in ASEAN.
- Ladies and gentlemen,

- As you have seen, Switzerland is intensively engaged on the topic of biodiversity conservation, but we are of course always keen to learn more on how we can increase the impact of our projects.
- In that sense, we look forward to the discussion and to hear more about your views.
- I would like to thank everyone that was involved in the study and this webinar, and I wish you a fruitful discussion.