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BRIEFING ON AFRICAN PARTICIPATION IN
THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BIODIVERSITY,
OCTOBER 2010 IN NAGOYA, JAPAN
(Item Proposed by the Gabonese Republic)

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. During the Pan-African Conference on “Biodiversity and Poverty Reduction in Africa: What Opportunities for Africa?”, which held in Libreville on 17 September 2010, African Ministers in charge of questions of the environment and the economy adopted an important declaration called the Libreville Declaration.

2. The Ministers specifically requested His Excellency Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, host country of that conference, to submit that Ministerial Declaration to the Sixty-Fifth Session of the United Nations General Assembly, in September 2010, in New York and to the Tenth Meeting of the Conference of State Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, in October 2010, in Nagoya.

3. H.E. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic and Head of State, in that capacity, took the floor at the Nagoya Conference on behalf of Africa to underscore the crucial importance of Africa’s biological diversity.

4. Green development on the continent, the need to reach a deal on access to genetic resources and (benefits) sharing, the Strategic Plan (2011-2020) and resource mobilisation constituted the core of the statement by the President of the Gabonese Republic.

5. In light of the stakes for the continent in this issue and the need for monitoring, the Gabonese Republic deemed it necessary to place this item on the agenda of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU).

II. BIODIVERSITY STAKES FOR AFRICA

6. Africa is endowed with about 40% of existing global biodiversity and hosts 8 of the 34 world’s richest biodiversity sites. This wealth is visible continent-wide through the nature and variety in animal, plant and aquatic species.

7. Biological diversity is not only a factor of wealth for African States and humanity as a whole, but also one for the survival of African populations. In fact, it provides the necessary food items for consumption and ensures the stability and durability of our States.

8. Furthermore, biological diversity is a very high value-added economic resource and a supplementary asset for Africa within the framework of its economic development and poverty alleviation efforts. This is aptly illustrated by the economy and green growth roadmap adopted at the Libreville Pan-African Conference in September.

9. It is time to solicit ownership by the African Union of the problem of biological diversity, especially as some advances have been recorded in the area by the continent, namely:

- the very recent adoption in Nagoya of the Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit Sharing (ABS);
- the ten-year Strategic Plan on Biological Diversity (2011-2020);
- the Resource Mobilisation Plan, as well as the 40 other decisions in areas of strategic and crucial interest for the continent, such as technology transfer, capacity building, south-south cooperation on biological diversity, establishment of a scientific and policy Inter-governmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the green economy, inter-relation between biological diversity and climate change, etc.

10. Africa's best weapon and main asset for negotiation remains its immense natural resource potential. Food for populations, eco-tourism, conservation of forest, river and ocean riches, protection of arable land, traditional medicine and limiting wanton exodus will function properly only through the protection of our biological diversity.

11. The natural balance between species, as well as the stabilisation of global climate are only be possible thanks to the significant biodiversity on our territories.

12. In contrast, human and economic development in Africa coupled with the dramatic consequences of global warming and desertification have, and will continue to have, a negative impact on our continent's biodiversity.

13. Recent studies show that, each year, species disappear in Africa and the world and that land become poorer as well. Commitments made in Johannesburg in 2000 at the Summit on Sustainable Development in respect of reducing by half the global biological diversity loss by 2010 have not been met. The future consequences for our populations and our States are hardly measurable. It is undeniable that if we could measure and circumscribe it, we will then be able to envisage policies to control this phenomenon.

14. The challenge of biological diversity is that it is not only a humanitarian gesture on our part, but that it is first of all a matter of survival of the planet; it is an action to protect present and future generations of Africans.

15. Preserving our biological diversity means protecting not only our States, our economies, our populations, but also safeguarding, in the long run, our natural riches, which are essential elements of our economies and our future development.

16. Faced with these challenges, more and more countries and international bodies are organising themselves and examining this problem. Various meetings and summits

have led to the elaboration of texts and regulations that enable the preservation of biological diversity and the limitation of its loss.

III. PROSPECTS

17. The Pan-African Conference on Biological Diversity and Poverty Alleviation in Africa which held in Libreville, Gabon, from 12 to 18 September 2010, pursuant to a decision of the Conference of African Ministers of Environment (AMCEN), laid the bases for a common African platform that permitted it to go to the Conference in Nagoya, Japan, as one entity, and to defend a common position.

18. The outcomes of Nagoya, particularly the adoption of a Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefits Sharing (ABS), as well as the ten-year Strategic Plan on Biological Diversity (2011-2020) indicate, more than ever, the necessity for African countries to go beyond having a common position, to adopting a structure and mechanism for coordination in the like of the structures put in place by Africa within the framework of negotiations on climate change.

19. Aware of the fact that the biodiversity challenge, in the first place, cuts across borders, and taking into account the huge advantage and potential that Africa can reap from the Nagoya Protocol and the ten-year Strategic Plan (2011-2020), as well as the set of decisions from Nagoya, and bearing in mind that Africa obtained nearly 80% of its demands in Nagoya, African States are thus invited to cooperate and work together to capitalise on and draw benefits from the positive outcomes of Nagoya and to ensure their materialisation.