



STATEMENT BY

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EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

of the

CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

on the occasion of

THE 3rd NATIONAL FUNGUS DAY OF EGYPT

Port Said, Egypt

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*Distinguished Delegates of the Arab Society for Fungal Conservation,
Distinguished Keynote Speakers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is my great pleasure to help launch the celebration of the third National Fungus Day of Egypt at the Ashtoum El-Gamil Protectorate, a prime wetland protected area, where migratory birds rest their wings on their long journey between Africa and Europe.

I would like to thank the Ministry of the Environment of Egypt, the Arab Society for Fungal Conservation and the organizers of today's celebration.

I'm sorry I can't be there in person, but I'm looking forward to being in Sharm El-Sheikh in November for the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. One hundred and ninety six Parties, other governments and relevant organizations, including indigenous peoples and local communities, will consider progress in the implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and measures to strengthen our collective stewardship of the Earth's biodiversity.



Ladies and Gentlemen,

Biodiversity is composed of ecosystems, species and genetic material. Our life has been supported by the interactions of the components of biodiversity as a result of species evolution, and our future well-being depends on healthy biodiversity.

Fungi play important roles in many aspects of human life - including food, medicine and farming. Essential to the sustainability of biodiversity, fungi are fundamental to the success and health of almost every ecosystem on Earth. For example, fungal communities play key roles in the nutrient cycle; mycorrhizae, or microscopic fungi, establish a symbiotic relationship with the roots of plants that enable them to survive; and retaining organic materials in soil is indispensable for agricultural production.

Yet despite this, fungi are understudied taxa. We need to further promote mycological research to understand the kingdom Fungi, which comprises a vast variety of organisms, ranging from the tiny *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* to the five-kilometer long *Armillaria ostoyae*. Taxonomic experts suggest that there are about 1.5 million species worldwide, of which only about 5 per cent have been described by taxonomists. Thus members of the Arab Society for Fungal Conservation can play an important role in increasing awareness, interest and support for research and conservation of fungi at the national and regional level.

Activities such as the celebration of Egyptian Fungus Day are crucial for raising awareness about the importance of conserving fungi and their contribution to the proper functioning of ecosystems and human well-being.

I wish you fruitful discussions on fungi conservation and I look forward to meeting you at the UN Biodiversity Conference in November.

Thank you for your kind attention.
