



STATEMENT BY MR. BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

on the occasion of the

**THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FUNGAL CONSERVATION IN
THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH OF AFRICA**

18-20 October 2016

Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

While often overlooked, fungi play a pivotal role in the food web, nutrient and energy cycling, and long-term carbon sequestration in soil. They are essential to the health of ecosystems and need to be given more attention in both research and conservation efforts. In this light I would like to congratulate the Arab Society for Fungal Conservation and its partners for taking the initiative of organizing this first international conference on fungal conservation in the Middle East and North of Africa. Initiatives such as these are crucial for raising awareness about the importance of conserving fungi and their contribution to the integrity and proper functioning of ecosystems and human well-being.

In 2010, the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and twenty Aichi Biodiversity Targets. This plan aims to address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss, reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use, improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity, enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services and enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building. The consideration of all of these elements is necessary to ensure that fungi are valued and protected.

Under the Convention on Biological Diversity a range of tools and guidance has been developed which is relevant to research and conservation efforts related to fungi. This includes the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation, which focuses on the plant kingdom but also invites countries and other stakeholders to develop conservation strategies for other groups such as fungi. The Global Strategy for Plant Conservation, and the toolkit to support its implementation, provide a framework which could be applied to the conservation of fungi as integral part of healthy ecosystems.



**Convention on
Biological Diversity**

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
United Nations Environment Programme
413 Saint-Jacques Street, Suite 800, Montreal, QC, H2Y 1N9, Canada
Tel : +1 514 288 2220 Fax : +1 514 288 6588
secretariat@cbd.int www.cbd.int



A further initiative under to the Convention on Biological Diversity relevant to fungi is the Global Taxonomy Initiative, which was established to address the lack of taxonomic information and infrastructure and declining taxonomic expertise. There is currently a lack of taxonomists globally. This lack is particularly true for fungal taxonomists. This taxonomic impediment hinders our ability to make informed decisions about conservation and management of biodiversity. Conferences like this one are crucial in reinvigorating this field of study by increasing awareness, interest and support for research and conservation of fungi at the national and regional level.

Your discussions over the coming days represent a valuable opportunity for sharing, learning and advancing the field of fungal conservation and I hope that this conference can be the meaningful start of an ongoing initiative. With this I wish all of you a successful and productive conference.

Thank you for your kind attention.