

Thank you Chair

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, the Stockholm Conference recommended to convene a plenipotentiary conference to adopt a convention on international trade of species of wild animals and plants. This provided the impetus for finalising the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Animals and Plants or CITES in 1973.

The Convention came into force in 1975 with the ratification by 10 Parties and now it counts on 184 contracting Parties, including the European Union. The Parties are legally bound to achieve their primary objective that trade in CITES-listed species is legal, sustainable and traceable so that their survival in the wild is not threatened. This is no small feat: in 1975 there were 148 listed

wildlife transactions; today, these have reached 23.7 million.

CITES will celebrate its 50th birthday next year and much has changed since 1973. The Convention has had to adapt to new challenges to conserve wildlife species traded internationally. With 99 active Resolutions and numerous decisions taken in the past 50 years, Parties have, for example, adapted their CITES legislation regularly; continuously built the capacity of their Scientific and Management authorities; produced guidance to assist Parties in carrying out scientific and legal assessments to regulate the wildlife trade; put in place measures to combat wildlife crime, despite new challenges such as Internet wildlife crime; moved from paper permits to electronic permitting systems; and listed plant and animal species on the CITES

appendices to improve their conservation status.

There remain many serious challenges. But as we meet here to take stock of environmental progress 50 years later, I would like to recognise the CITES Parties for their achievements of the last 50 years as well as the human and financial investments made to regulate the wildlife trade of 38,000 species, sometimes under very difficult circumstances. We should also not forget those countries, indigenous peoples and local communities on the front line - those who are expected to invest locally for our global benefit.

International cooperation remains crucial for effective implementation of the Convention and availability of financial resources for wildlife conservation. We ask you to support the CITES strategic vision: that by 2030, all

international trade in wild fauna and flora is legal and sustainable, consistent with the long-term conservation of species, and thereby contributing to halting biodiversity loss, to ensuring its sustainable use, and to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Thank you.