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35th Anniversary of CITES – Geneva, 1st July 2010

**Address by Ambassador Dante MARTINELLI
Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the UN in Geneva**

Mister Secretary General,
Dear colleagues,
Madame la Maire,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is no secret that Switzerland attaches great importance to the protection of the environment and in particular to the preservation of biodiversity. We are in deed convinced that a sound management of natural resources domestically, as well as an efficient cooperation at the international level are crucial for the future of our planet.

2010 being the "International Year of Biodiversity", States are currently addressing issues of conservation with a particular emphasis. For example, important discussions were recently held in Korea on a governmental platform to bridge the gap between science and policy in the field of biodiversity and ecosystems services. Not less important exchanges of views will take place later this year in Nagoya, under the Convention on Biodiversity. These are meetings that Switzerland very much welcomes. They allow us to underline the urgency that we all face to fulfil our commitments and to engage the necessary means in favour of the conservation of nature. Losses, otherwise, will be irreversible.

In this context, and in this particular year, it is a great pleasure for me to be able to participate in the anniversary of one of the first international instruments addressing conservation issues. And even more so as the representative of a country which has a true special relationship with CITES.

In deed, apart from being a Party to the Convention since its very first day, Switzerland also has the privilege to act as the Depository of the Convention. And we also have the chance to host its Secretariat.

As a host country, I can assure you, Mister Secretary General, that we will maintain our efforts in order to provide you and your staff with the best possible conditions and infrastructure in Geneva. We are fully convinced that an efficient preservation of biodiversity in the world needs efficient International Organisations ; and that efficient organisations necessitate modern working places. In that sense, I am glad to be able to tell you that the Swiss Federal Department for Foreign Affairs has decided to offer you a special birthday present this year and will finance new IT equipments for your staff.

As mentioned, Switzerland also has the privilege – and the responsibility – to act as the Depository for CITES. If I am well informed, at the time of the diplomatic conference which established CITES in 1973, very few countries – if any – volunteered for this task. Today, 35 years later, I can tell you that Switzerland never regretted its decision to lend support to CITES at this very early stage. By accepting to be the Depository of the Convention, Switzerland made one of its best investments ever. In deed, CITES developed into a champion of international conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, turning from 10 Parties in 1973 to 176 today.

Finally, as a Party to CITES, Switzerland will of course continue to carefully fulfil its obligations. This goes without saying ! But we also will continue to pay a particular attention to its functioning and will play an active role in the further development of the CITES acquis.

To conclude, I want to warmly thank you, Mister Secretary General, as well as all your staff, for your untiring efforts and work in favour of a world which fully recognises the central value of nature for all.

I wish to CITES and to the CITES community a very happy birthday !