

## WELCOMING ADDRESS

by Mr. Ernst Brugger, Federal Councillor,  
Minister of the National Economy\*

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the great honour of welcoming you, in the name of the Federal Council, to this first meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. I am particularly delighted at the choice of Switzerland as host country of your meeting and I hope you will find here the necessary conditions for fruitful work.

Within the next few days, you will devote yourselves to a problem of major importance for the future of the mankind as far as the quality of our vital environment is concerned. It is tragic to see that numerous animal and plant species are now depleted or even becoming extinct. In the general framework of the safeguard of the environment, the protection of threatened species is a fundamental task. The Endangered Species Convention - to the origine of which many of you, certainly, participated - may undeniably be considered as one of the main achievements in the efforts made, on an international level, for the protection of nature and natural resources. I would like to take this opportunity to heartily thank the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) - which both have their headquarters in Morges, as well as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for their continuous work.

For a long time we have known that wild animals and plants play an essential rôle in the natural systems of our planet and that it is of importance to protect their beauty and diversity for us, and for the future generations as well. We have now become convinced that the threat of progressive destruction of these species cannot be removed without efficient international cooperation. The misuse of the world of animals and plants by international trade has often been denounced. However, are we aware that international trade is only representing one of the factors responsible for the disappearance of some species? The unwise destruction, by man, of the vital habitat of numerous animals and plants through overexploiting forests, and draining marsh areas for the development of arable land and other interferences in the natural cycle also contributes to the impoverishment of nature. Fortunately, international collaboration has already been effective. In particular, we have in mind the Ramsar Convention, already ratified by 10 States, including Switzerland.

The efforts made to protect the remaining virgin natural regions of the world unfortunately often clash with economic and politico-social objectives - certainly important - but from which approach methods seem to have been chosen without consideration for the environment. In this connection, international trade control in endangered animal and plant species sometimes places the people concerned with a dilemma. On one hand, in order to protect

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\* Address pronounced in French

nature, it is necessary that such trade be reduced or even prohibited for some species. On the other hand, economic considerations require its maintenance and even its activating. As Chief of a Minister in charge of foreign market and of the implementation of the Convention as well, I know this problem only too well. I am, however, convinced that the conservation of nature, in its broader sense, is an imperious law and that the long-term measures taken for this aim may also be proved practical on the economic field. It is essential that the importance of the protection of nature and of its wildlife species be recognized by politicians throughout the world, because they have finally to decide whether the natural heritage must be safeguarded for future generations or whether only ruins will be left.

In Switzerland, which assumes the function of Depositary Government, the Convention on the conservation of species entered into force on 1 July 1975, after ratification or accession of nine other States. Today, there are thirty-three contracting States and thirty-two other nations gave, by their signature, expression of their interest in the Convention. We must hope that, in the future, the majority of countries will be in a position to adhere to the Convention in order to control international trade in endangered animal and plant species more efficiently.

The protection of species in connection with international trade in wildlife will however not be sufficient, in the long-term, to avoid the extinction of some of them. We shall not, therefore, restrict ourselves to the improvement of instruments of national law but continue to act through other international conventions, as Switzerland requested at the Conference of Ministries of the environment in Brussels in March 1976. We are totally aware that legal weapons alone are not sufficient to protect nature. It is important that everyone takes even more into account the needs of the environment and that authorities and any groups responsible have courage to take the decisions which will contribute to the long-term maintenance of beauty of nature and of diversity of its resources.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank each of you and I am grateful to the international organizations represented here of the enormous amount of work and of your continuous devotion for the protection of nature. With the wish that the Convention, which was born in Washington three years ago, efficiently contributes to the maintenance of the wealth of animal and plant kingdom, I express my best wishes for the complete success of your meeting. I also hope that you will spend pleasant days in Berne where everybody, and even the bears - which have, of course, good reasons to do so - are pleased with your presence and your actions.

## WELCOMING ADDRESS

of the Executive Director of the  
United Nations Environment Programme,  
Dr. Mostafa Tolba,  
delivered on his behalf by Mr. Peter S. Thacher,  
Director of UNEP Office in Geneva.\*

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Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, distinguished delegates:

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to greet you on behalf of the Executive Director of UNEP at this most important Conference. Dr. Mostafa Tolba had wanted, and planned, to be with you but he has been detained in New York where the UN General Assembly has been considering the Environment Item.

In 1973 the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora was adopted and UNEP, then less than a year old, was given responsibility for provision of the Convention's Secretariat. It is a matter of some interest that in 1973 the concern of States with the adverse effects of uncontrolled international trade in wild animals and plants, and their broader concern with a wide range of environmental problems should both have come to a point of fruition.

Concern for the survival of species endangered by their unwise and uncontrolled exploitation has been evident and justified for many decades, and was, in fact, reflected by effective national action in a number of States during the first quarter of this century. But commerce is a compelling force, and as one after another of the sources of supply were controlled, new sources, seemingly inexhaustible at the time, were sought out and utilized. Increasingly efficient means of transport and communication, coupled with a demand that seemed impossible to quench, led in recent decades to an increase in the international trade in wild animals that constituted a real threat to the survival of many species and regional populations in practically all parts of the world. The pet trade had come to place a substantive drain on certain wild animal populations. The demand for apes and monkeys by centres of medical and pharmaceutical research became so strong as to constitute a menace to the living supply of a number of species. The marketing of fashion furs from spotted wild cats like leopard, snow leopard, cheetah and ocelot and from aquatic mammals such as seals and otters, and of skins from various species of crocodiles, lizards and snakes, and of such other animal products as ivory and rhino horns has caused serious depletion of the animal populations involved and has led to extermination in some regions.

If the aim of human society is to satisfy basic human needs while ensuring that the productive capacity of the environment is maintained and that resources are used wisely, - and it is upon these premises that the activities of UNEP are based - much of the use of wild animals and their products for the purposes that I have just mentioned is totally irrational. If the pursuit of fad and fashion is allowed to result in the extermination of a

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\*Address pronounced in English

species, even locally, let alone globally, we have squandered a resource - we have behaved irrationally. Yet the continuing expansion of the pet trade is alarming; the traffic in skins and ivory is not yet fully under control; and whaling still threatens the survival of a number of species.

It was against this general background that the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora was prepared and adopted by 35 governments at a Plenipotentiary Conference held in Washington in 1973. The Convention has been in force since July 1975 and instruments of ratification or accession have been deposited by 33 governments.

While we have taken a great step forward, ratification by a considerably larger number of States, including many that signed the Convention, is now overdue. And I believe at least one State has ratified, but not yet deposited the instrument and is therefore not yet a Party to this Convention. It is fair to say, as well, that implementation of the Convention has barely begun. This Conference will provide the first opportunity for States Parties to the Convention to exchange information and views on the effectiveness of the mechanisms and procedures for which the Convention provides. If there are problems in the full and effective implementation of the Convention by States, they should be defined and resolved. It is vital that the exchange of views at this Conference be candid and constructive: the Convention must work.

The Convention provides for the exclusion from international trade of animals and plants defined as endangered. However, the trade in many animal species which are not endangered is growing to the extent that many of those species will soon become endangered. Appendix II of the Convention is supposed to take care of that special problem, but to be successful in avoiding an increase in the number of species endangered as a result of uncontrolled trade, the Convention parties must give serious consideration to the listing of species in Appendix II. Perhaps I ought to remind you that at present only seven species of cetaceans are listed, despite the fact that a larger number were deemed endangered by the Scientific Consultation held in Norway last September.

Article XII of the Convention stipulates that a Secretariat shall be provided by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, and that, to the extent and in the manner he considers appropriate, he may be assisted by suitable intergovernmental or non-governmental, international or national agencies and bodies technically qualified in protection, conservation and management of wild fauna and flora.

Fully conscious of the responsibility laid upon it by the Convention, the Executive Director of UNEP concluded that the best way to discharge his responsibility would be by means of a project agreement (in effect, a contract) with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources whereby IUCN would provide the staff and facilities to undertake the Secretariat function. You may be interested to know that an agreed sum of \$202,000 has been provided by UNEP for the period 1 April 1974 to 30 June 1977. That decision was taken in light of the facts that IUCN had a long history of constructive concern with the conservation of wild animals and plants, and in fact had been instrumental in the preparation for the Plenipotentiary Conference; that IUCN was an established organization with relevant expertise, notably in the Survival Service Commission, which in its Red Data Book, keeps a record of all endangered vertebrates and is

presently also working on endangered invertebrates and plants; that in 1973 UNEP was only beginning to establish itself for the assumption of tremendous and complex global task; and that the role of UNEP is primarily that of a co-ordinator, programmer and catalyzer. The fact that UNEP contracted with IUCN to carry out the Secretariat functions by no means reflected an abdication of interest or responsibility. On the contrary, UNEP's Governing Council has designated the preservation of endangered species as a priority subject area of UNEP. UNEP and IUCN are working together on many front lines in the global crusade to save endangered species of animals and plants.

This Conference will no doubt wish to review the functions and performance of the Secretariat, inter alia in the light of any modifications to Convention mechanisms and procedures that it may agree. The Executive Director will be pleased to give serious and immediate consideration to recommendations regarding the Secretariat function that may result from that review and ensure that they are submitted to the Governing Council of UNEP at its next session.

While UNEP cannot now anticipate the financial implications of recommendations of this Conference, and I therefore cannot make any commitments in that connection, I can assure you that financial implications will also receive serious consideration. Additional support of the Secretariat function by the Fund of UNEP is a possibility, but such additional support would necessarily be limited by the need to maintain a balance among a broad range of environmental activities supported by the Fund and approved by the Governing Council. Should a significant increase in the resources available to the Secretariat be recommended by the Conference, delegates might wish to consider the possibility of a UNEP administered Fund-in-Trust, established to receive contributions exclusively for the purposes of the Secretariat.

In his opening remarks, Minister Ernst Brugger (Minister of National Economy of Switzerland) emphasized the responsibility of the Parties to this Convention for actions which will benefit future generations. This is entirely in keeping with the overall objective of the UN Environment Programme which was established as early as the Stockholm Conference in 1972.

Mr. Brugger also touched on the importance of diversity. I suggest there is one law in which we all believe - though it is not established as a matter of international law - namely, that in diversity there is stability; and conversely, in the absence of diversity, there is a risk of instability.

Your deliberations and decisions this week will be of the utmost importance in saving species from extinction during the coming years.

I wish you all success in your task.