

President Van Rompuy

Ladies and Gentlemen

Five years ago Hoge Kempen was opened by Stavros Dimas, the European Commissioner for the Environment before me.

It was an important moment. It was also a personal triumph for Ignace Schops, a proud moment for Belgium and a great step forward for Natural Conservation practices across the EU.

It also happened at a time when biodiversity was a 'hot topic' in European policy. Europe was about to present a biodiversity action plan to stop biodiversity loss altogether by 2010, and the CBD conference in Brazil that year called for radical action to halt biodiversity loss around the world.

A lot can happen in five years. And biodiversity is an even hotter global topic than it was then. It hasn't all gone to plan. In Europe we have not reached our goal to halt biodiversity loss by 2010.

We also are more aware of the need for global action. At the next CBD conference in Nagoya, Japan later this month, we will be doing all we can to reach agreement on a new global framework to protect biodiversity.

There are, I think, which will make Nagoya successful:

* First - an agreed ambitious global target and a credible Strategic Plan on how to achieve it.

* Second - agreement on a balanced and effective international regime that ensures clarity, transparency and legal certainty for everyone involved – those that provide and those that use genetic resources and related information. This means a fair solution for both the developed and the developing world, and one that gives researchers the security they need to carry out much needed genetic research.

* Third - we need a realistic and constructive approach to make sure that all parties mobilise sufficient scientific, human and financial resources to back up their commitments.

Looking at this monument, I think we should take a moment to reflect on what it's made of. I believe it contains stones from more than 30 parks around the world – each one a real example of land preserved for future generations. Stones mean permanence and solidity: they will not change, despite what we do to our environment in the years to come. In a way, these stones put our relationship with our planet into perspective.

We should take from this monument a real sense of hope and vision. We need to be as solid as this monument in our aims, but with the capacity to change, to be flexible. With hope and vision, we can look to the future and we can imagine a more sustainable way of life. This is something to build on.

It's a mighty challenge, on a global scale. But I am confident that the world will see reason and rise to that challenge. Perhaps all of us here today will be able to return to this monument in 2020 in the knowledge that we are safely on a path to sustainability.

Thank you.