

Birdlife International Dinner – Tokyo, 29 October 2010
Speech by HSH the Prince

Your Imperial Majesty,

Mr Director General,

Excellencies,

Ladies & gentlemen,

Dear friends,

It is always a pleasure for me to be with Birdlife International and in the company of Her Imperial Majesty Princess Takamado.

Having participated yesterday in the tenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, just a few hundred kilometres from here, I am happy to be here tonight to salute and encourage an exemplary institution, a precursor in raising awareness to all the stakes involved in biodiversity.

At a time when, at last, the crucial nature of these stakes is widely known and accepted and has become the subject of complex debate, I am convinced that, more than ever, Birdlife International has a determinant role to play.

For nearly ninety years, Birdlife has been acting with great constancy to raise awareness in the public and among decision makers. This essential work must be tirelessly pursued.

Indeed, although we now know the importance of biodiversity for our lives and those of our children, we also better understand the serious threats weighing on it, especially in certain particularly fragile and vulnerable areas.

I am thinking in particular of tropical forests, which are home to over 75% of terrestrial biodiversity

and whose role in absorbing greenhouse gases is crucial to our Planet's climatic balance. These regions are in serious jeopardy and we cannot accept their disappearance, which would be a major catastrophe.

This is why the programme called *Forests of Hope*, initiated by Your Foundation in Sumatra and about to be extended to several other countries, strikes me as so promising.

Thanks to you, several exceptional species from Indonesian forests are already better known and protected for the benefit of all of us and for local populations.

And I am extremely pleased that my own Foundation, whose commitment to biodiversity you all know, is such a loyal ally to Birdlife International. I have a great deal of satisfaction in that this partnership enables us to pool our efforts and share our thoughts around

many projects all over the world, in Cambodia in particular.

Ladies & gentlemen,

Dear friends,

The fight we are undertaking for the conservation of Nature is unlike any other. It also entails fighting ourselves, with a will not to let ourselves be blinded by the illusion of our might.

In the words of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, “the Earth teaches us a lot more about ourselves than all the books in the world, because it resists us. Man can find himself only by measuring himself against an obstacle.”

Thank you.