

**Geneva, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2016**

**Press Conference by IUCN and Toyota**

**Remarks by Jane Smart, Director, Global Director of IUCN's Biodiversity Conservation Group**

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Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. I am Dr Jane Smart, Director, Global Director of IUCN's Biodiversity Conservation Group.

I am delighted to be here today to celebrate the start of what will be a long lasting relationship between IUCN and Toyota to provide critical knowledge that will lead to action to conserve biodiversity.

### **Details of the IUCN Red List 2020 goal**

As Inger Andersen mentioned, our planet is facing an extinction crisis – the fastest ever seen in its history. To protect the rich diversity of species on which we depend, it is essential to understand their current status.

We have already assessed more than 79,837 species on The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. This is the most comprehensive information source on the global conservation status of wild species. It tells us that more than 23,000 have been found to be threatened with extinction. An extremely disturbing picture. Yet, this is just the tip of the iceberg. More than 1.8 million species have been described.

We cannot assess them all – but we urgently need more knowledge on more of them - particularly on those species that are critical to food security. We therefore aim to increase the number of species assessed by 2020 to 160,000 – to just over double the current number.

Our goal is to make The IUCN Red List a more complete “barometer of life” – to catalyse action driven by information and analysis. The IUCN Red List is ‘the starting point of conservation policy and action.

### **Positioning of Toyota partnership**

Let's think about food for a minute.

Some facts:

80% of our calorie intake comes from just 12 dominant agricultural crops and 50% of these calories come from just the three big grasses: wheat, maize and rice.

And we now live in a world where climate change is affecting the way our food grows. The key to finding new crops that can adapt to warmer and different climates is to conserve the relatives of these crops in the wild. This is because these wild relatives are the source of genetic material used to develop new varieties of crops.

To do this we need more information on the conservation status of these crop wild relatives. We need to know their status – on The IUCN Red List – the starting point of conservation action.

If these crops became extinct there would be huge impact on food security and livelihoods. Yet little is known about the state of these crop wild relatives what actions we need to take to not only protect them but to enable them to thrive.

The name 'Toyota' means plentiful rice! We have chosen to focus much of the research being funded by Toyota on plants such as wild rice, wild wheat, other crop wild relatives. We are also focussing on marine fish such as sardines, pilchards and sole because they are a source of food for billions the world over, and catching and processing them also provides work for an estimated 200 million people worldwide.

Additionally, over the 5 year period we will be assessing other economically important plants, fungi, freshwater fish, reptiles, and invertebrates such as dragonflies..... as well as upgrading the web platform used by more than 3.5 million people a year to improve access to the vital data on The IUCN Red List.

### **The Toyota Environmental Challenge 2050**

The vision that has been presented by Toyota Motor Corporation in its Environmental Challenge 2050, Challenge to Zero and Beyond, is extremely ambitious. IUCN applauds Toyota for not only this Vision but the real plans to achieve it.

As an environmentalist who has been working for over 30 years in the field I am not easily impressed, but this is impressive!

The vision that has been presented is mostly focusing on CO2 reduction - which is a climate change-related challenge – critical for the future of our planet. However conserving biodiversity is equally critical.

Climate change and biodiversity are two sides of the same coin. Not many companies appreciate this linkage – but we see that Toyota does. This is why: if we destroy habitats such as forests and peatlands we release CO2 into the atmosphere. If we keep them where

they are, and manage them well they will keep on soaking up that Co2. Thus, protecting biodiversity goes hand in hand with the target of reducing CO2 and ameliorating climate change.

All parts of the Toyota Environmental Challenge 2050 Action Plan are impressive. They are seeking to not only reduce CO2 in their cars but also in the making and eventual disposal of those cars. They are also seeking to significantly reduce their footprint across their whole supply chain. This includes;

- Zero CO2 emissions for new vehicles, product life cycle, and even production plants;
- Putting in place measures to minimize and optimize water usage;
- Establishing a recycling-based society.

In addition, through Challenge 6 of its Environmental Challenge, Toyota is taking a leadership role for both avoiding habitat destruction and putting the conservation, management and restoration of biodiversity at the centre of its plans.

The generous grant to support the assessment of around 28,000 species for The IUCN Red List is the first project to be launched under Challenge 6 and we at IUCN are extremely happy and proud of this partnership to protect biodiversity.

IUCN hopes that vision and leadership shown by Toyota will inspire other companies in the motor industry and beyond. If other businesses were working towards similar visions, we really could eventually live in harmony with nature. What a different world we would see in 2050!