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Speech

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Rio Conventions Pavilion Science Day
“Our Planet Urgently Needs Action: From Science to
Policy Response”
Session 4 The diagnosis: Scientific Assessment to Inform
Policy

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Bringing science and policy together is a lot like trying to mix oil and water. It seems to be impossible. Science is reductionist. It reduces complex phenomenon into their fundamental parts. Scientists are always testing hypotheses, calculating probabilities and reporting uncertainties. Policy making on the other hand is all about synthesis. Combining elements to try and form a coherent whole.

In the real world, neither science nor policy making can provide a cut and dried truth. Miguel de Cervantes, the Spanish novelist once wrote: “*Truth will rise above falsehood as oil above water*”.

The truth is we need a good mix. So how do we mix oil and water? By adding emulsifier. A bit like when mustard or mayonnaise is added to a vinaigrette. The emulsifier in our case is the assessment and translation of scientific knowledge into policy-relevant language that can really inform policy development.

Effectively designed and managed assessments encourage the co-production of knowledge. It is an iterative and collaborative process. Scientists, a wide range of stakeholders and policymakers are all involved.

This segment of the Rio Conventions Pavilion “Science Day” brings together four major scientific assessments on land conducted over the past two years.

I am delighted to welcome the IPCC, IPBES, IRP and JRC to these discussions.

It also involves GEO, the global partnership of governments and organizations promoting the transformation of Earth observations into knowledge. It is an incredible line up of speakers. But this segment also involves you: independent scientists, policy makers and other stakeholders. And I am very sure you all have your own recipe for a good vinaigrette.

To my mind, the best scientific assessments are characterized by quality, consistency, independence and impartiality, as well as transparency and openness. And the best interface between science and policy involves a space like this. For open deliberation, where a diverse and representative mix of

stakeholders can engage and help put good science to work. But let's hear from you in a dynamic and interactive way.

I do not need to tell any of you how important putting these major scientific assessments to work is for the environment and for people. The next two hours will fill in any gaps you may have. And more importantly, I hope the discussions lead to productive outcomes that support all our work.

I look forward to those outcomes and I thank all of you for helping to build a solid scientific foundation for the policies of the UNCCD.
