For further detail on the Convention the reader is referred to Appendix A, where the *Convention on Biological Diversity* appears in its entirety.

Discussions for a convention on biological diversity were initiated in 1988 by the United Nations Environment Programme's Governing Council and concluded on 22 May 1992 in Nairobi. Negotiating teams from 100 countries were involved in formulating the international accord on biodiversity that was further debated and finally signed in Rio on 11 June 1992. Canada was the first country to express its intention to sign the Convention, which ultimately ensured the decision of a further 162 countries to sign by the end of the day on 14 June 1992. As of 5 April 1993, 167 countries had signed the Convention and 12 countries had ratified it (Mauritius, Seychelles, Marshall Islands, Maldives, Canada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Ecuador, Fiji, Antigua and Barbuda, Mexico, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu).

Conservation of biodiversity is more than an aesthetic or moral issue; it is integral to our health and economy. Species loss threatens the natural resources upon which sustainable development depends. Genetic material from plant and animal species (many still undiscovered) is the foundation for the agricultural, pharmaceutical and other biotechnology-based industries. It is estimated that one-quarter of all the pharmacological products used in North America contain ingredients derived from wild plants. Biodiversity is integral to the maintenance of the environment and supports water purification, soil production, carbon cycling and oxygen production.

The UNCED *Convention on Biologicial Diversity* represents a global attempt to address what should be done and at whose expense. Participants developed a global strategy with guidelines for action by international, national and local governments and institutions to save, understand, and use biodiversity sustainably and equitably.

Under the Convention, countries make a commitment to protect endangered species and their habitats. Measures include the compilation of inventories of vulnerable and threatened species at two levels, global and national. The Convention sets rules for technology transfer to the South and for granting access to tropical plants and animals, many of which are essential to the genetic tailoring of ingredients for new drugs, pest-resistant crops, fast-growing trees and other products. The convention also calls for tropical countries to receive a share of profits from the development of such products and for financial assistance in meeting their obligations under the Convention.

B. The Convention and Canada

Several witnesses before this Committee emphasized the important role Canada had played in the negotiation of the Convention, and urged the Committee to reiterate the importance of a continuation of Canada's leadership role in the conservation of biodiversity. As Don McAllister, Senior Biodiversity Advisor, Canadian Museum of Nature, told the Committee: