DRAFT STATEMENT FOR SBSSTA 15
(Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice)

Dear Chairman and delegates

Thank you for the opportunity for the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna — the biodiversity working group of the Arctic Council — to make a statement at this meeting. The Arctic Council is a high-level intergovernmental forum which addresses issues of importance to Arctic States (Kingdom of Denmark, US, Russia, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Canada, Norway) and Arctic indigenous communities. The Arctic Council is unique in that Arctic countries and organizations representing the interests of indigenous people – the permanent participants – have a seat at the same table. CAFF´s mandate is to address the conservation of Arctic biodiversity and help to promote practices which ensure the sustainability of the Arctic's living resources.

CAFF has a Resolution of Cooperation with the CBD, which has proven very productive, and we would like to thank you for that on-going collaboration. In addition, at the CBD COP10, the COP invited the Arctic Council (in Decision X/13) to provide information and assessments on Arctic biodiversity to the SBSTTA. You will find included in the materials for this meeting of the SBSTTA a formal report on these topics SBSTTA/15 doc. 14.

The Arctic has some of the most captivating and inspiring species and landscapes on Earth. This area, often thought of as pristine and untouched, is in fact undergoing serious changes that threaten the resilience of natural ecosystems, the cultural traditions of Indigenous Peoples of the North, and the livelihoods of Arctic residents.

Climate change is emerging as the most far-reaching stressor on Arctic biodiversity, although contaminants, habitat change, industrial development, and unsustainable harvest levels continue to have impacts as well. As noted by the IPCC in recent decades, climate change has affected the Arctic twice as fast as other areas of the globe[1]. A warming climate is not only *projected* to melt sea ice and increase runoff, these environmental changes already *are starting* to occur, with immense implications for Arctic biodiversity. Depending on the magnitude of these and other changes, certain ecosystems may no longer be considered truly 'Arctic'. The result may be that many species thriving in the Arctic today are not able to survive there in the future. The importance of the Arctic to support global biodiversity and the climate system is immense and more thorough examination is needed to better understand how these processes may be changing.

[1] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). 2007. Summary for Policymakers. In: Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Solomon, S., D. Qin, M. Manning, Z. Chen, M. Marquis, K.B. Averyt, M. Tignor and H.L. Miller (eds.)

In response, leading Arctic scientists are currently engaged in a full and comprehensive Arctic Biodiversity Assessment (ABA). The ABA is the Arctic Council's response to global conservation needs and is scheduled for completion in 2013. It will:

- provide the baseline of the current state of the Arctic's ecosystems and biodiversity
- create a baseline for use in global and regional assessments of biodiversity
- provide up-to-date scientific and traditional ecological knowledge
- identify gaps in the data record
- identify key mechanisms driving change
- and produce policy recommendations regarding Arctic biodiversity.

A primary challenge is to shorten the gap between data collection and policy response. To assist, CAFF is creating a framework to allow for the collection, processing and analysis of data on a continuous basis. The Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Programme (CBMP) of CAFF is an international network of scientists, government agencies, Indigenous organizations and conservation groups working to harmonize and integrate efforts to monitor the Arctic's living resources.

Many questions remain unanswered. We do not know enough about the effects of climate change on biodiversity, what these changes mean to flora and fauna, and what effects they may have on natural resources and local peoples. It is vital that we are able to detect changes and understand the complex interactions between climate and Arctic species in order to determine possible actions.

The ABA and the CBMP in combination provide the framework and tools necessary to create a baseline of current knowledge and provide dynamic assessments over time. This evolving, sustainable and responsive system can produce more regular, timely and flexible analyses than previous static approaches.

The Arctic States and other participants of the CAFF Working Group, as the regional fora for dealing with biodiversity issues in the Arctic, welcomes cooperation with the CBD. CAFF can contribute to the CBD process by providing the integrated circumpolar expertise, data and analysis needed for sound decision making and helping to place the status of Arctic biodiversity in a global context CAFF also can benefit from the CBD process by applying international targets and tools in a regional context. We look forward to further fruitful cooperation.

Thank you Mr Chair.