**INFORMATIVE SPEECH**

**FOR**

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“Either we leave our descendants an endowment of zero poverty, zero fossil fuel use, and zero biodiversity loss, or we leave them facing a tax bill from Earth that could wipe them out.” The environmentalist Johan Rockstrom presents that food for thought. There is so much in life and in the environment that we tend to take for granted.... forget about the things we know and ignore.... what about what we **DON’T** know? When it comes to biodiversity and ultimately the survival of this planet, there are many questions that need to be posed... and answered.... like, “What is biodiversity?” According to National Geographic, simply put, biodiversity is “the variety of living organisms in a given area.” I suppose we might venture to say that this gathering illustrates a type of biodiversity.... yes, I know it’s a stretch but it’s a way to support an illustration of the concept. While there’s about one hundred of you present today, consider this: according to the National Wildlife Federation, “Researchers have estimated that there are between three and thirty **MILLION** species on earth...” Guess how many have been identified so far??? Scientists have barely made a dent in classifying just 1.7 million varieties.... that sounds **daunting**, doesn’t it?? And why is it so important to discover, classify, and identify as many species as possible? Because every unique region throughout the world has its own biodiverse, symbiotic, ecosystem forming a delicate balance that will either thrive or die depending on the threats to the balance of nature.

While we may think that the concept of biodiversity is “on trend,” just do some research and think of “buzz words” like “extinction” and you know that no matter what it’s called, each region, every environment, all communities have an ecosystem and a balance to be maintained. We, as a civilization, face the threat of extinction if that balance is compromised by threats manufactured by human activity...pollution, overfishing, over- hunting, deforestation, global warming.... all upset the harmony of life and ecodiversity. We are co-dependent. We are interdependent... we are integrally involved with even the smallest most seemingly innocuous life forms. As a result, more intense concentrations and study of the causes and effects of our actions beg for clarity. Our myriad of “networks of life” demand understanding through research, identification, and proactivity to sustain life.

Johan Rockstrom also teaches, “The value of biodiversity is that it makes our ecosystems more resilient.... its wanton destruction is akin to **setting fire to our lifeboat.**” The time for us to act and to be involved in preserving the vital status quo of our natural habitats is long overdue. It’s important to value the relationships between and among living things as our main priority. We’ve discovered the condition in the world of academia. As we move on to the professional world, I invite each one of us to consider charting our career course in fields that make a positive, lasting impact on the fate of our natural and miraculously diverse environments. Years ago there was an expression, “Up the creek without a paddle.” If we “**set fire to our lifeboat**, we won’t even have **THAT**!! (**Wait for the laugh**). It’s up to us to make a difference in this world.Thank you!