



CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

PRESS RELEASE

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The Convention of Life on Earth recognizes Joke Waller-Hunter, champion for the environment.

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In recognition of the contribution of a tireless crusader for sustainable development and the environment, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity dedicated its conference room today to the memory of Joke Waller-Hunter, the former head of the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Just after her death, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan called Mrs Waller-Hunter a “firm believer in the principles of sustainable development”, adding that she “knew that global cooperation was essential to advancing that cause”. He said that she “would be mourned with deep affection and respect by her family, many colleagues, friends and allies around the world”.

“Joke Waller-Hunter was a firm believer in the principles of sustainable development,” said Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. “What distinguished her however was that she demonstrated her conviction of the need to save life on our planet through firm and decisive actions. This is why I decided to dedicate our conference room to her memory. I know that her example will inspire those who meet in this space to take action to save life on Earth.”

“As we mark this year’s International Day for Biological Diversity, and remember the importance of protecting the biodiversity of drylands from the threats that human activities cause, we are particularly reminded of Joke’s work to combat climate change and to mitigate its effects on the fragile and threatened ecosystems of this planet,” said Dr. Djoghlaif.

At the dedication ceremony, Betske Goinga, a close friend of Joke, thanked the Secretariat for the initiative. “I am sure Joke would have appreciated your initiative; not for herself, because that was not in her character, but for all she has done to improve the environment,” Betske said. “She always remained a very modest person who did not put herself in the foreground.”

Responding to the dedication of the SCBD conference room, Richard Kinley, the acting-Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, said, "We are deeply moved by your efforts to pay tribute to an extraordinary woman whom we all miss very much."

Joke Waller-Hunter is most recently remembered for her role as the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Appointed in 2002, she oversaw the entry into force of the treaty's legally binding Kyoto Protocol and played a leading role in preparations for its implementation, particularly with regard to adaptation to the impact of climate change.

Before joining the UNFCCC, the Mrs. Waller-Hunter served for four years as the Director of the Environment Directorate of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Paris. Prior to that, she was the first United Nations Director for Sustainable Development, coordinating the world body's work in that area.

"Joke was central to the work in 1992 that brought the world together as one voice in Rio de Janeiro," said Ahmed Djoghla. "Her efforts contributed to the signing and ratification of the key international agreements of our age—the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention to Combat Desertification. I am personally inspired by her example and know that others seek to emulate her passion."

The dedication ceremony in the offices of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity drew extensive attendance from representatives of the Montreal diplomatic community and representatives of the city of Montreal, the Province of Quebec, and officials from international organizations based in Montreal.

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