

**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY****PRESS RELEASE**

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**THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY HAILS THE DAY OF THE WORLD'S
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

Montreal – 9 August 2006

The yearly celebration of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, on 9 August, 2006, is a unique occasion to assess the progressive steps taken by the international community towards effective recognition and enjoyment of the rights of indigenous peoples and towards greater understanding of the intimate relationship between cultural and biological diversity and the role of indigenous languages.

Indigenous peoples are stewards of the Earth's biological diversity and their diverse cultures and languages are the pillars of humanity's cultural diversity. The Earth shelters approximately 6,000 languages, but the great majority of them, like the cultures they represent, are threatened with disappearance. Approximately 97 % of the population speak about 4 % of the languages of the world. Conversely, almost 96 % of the languages are spoken only by 3 % of the population and most of those languages are indigenous languages. And 10 % have less than 100 speakers. "These figures testify to an incredible linguistic and cultural diversity of humanity. Losing linguistic and cultural diversity has been directly linked to losing biological diversity", said Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), is one of the major intergovernmental processes, which recognizes the dependency of indigenous and local communities on biological diversity and the unique role of indigenous and local communities in conserving life on Earth. This recognition is enshrined in both the preamble of the Convention text as well as in its key provisions.

It is for this reason that Article 8(j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity, calls on Parties to respect, preserve and maintain the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities relevant for the conservation of biological diversity, to promote their wider applications with the approval of knowledge holders and to encourage equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of biological diversity.

"For millennia, indigenous peoples have managed their traditional lands and waters and the diversity of life contained therein and they must be empowered to continue to do so if we are to achieve our mutual goals of conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of its components and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of its use", said Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif.

He added that “Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity have taken encouraging steps to respond to the needs and aspirations of the world’s indigenous peoples and to enhance their participation in policy processes and dialogue on matters that are of concern to them, including through the establishment of a voluntary fund to support indigenous participation in meetings under the Convention and through enhanced participation procedures in the Working Group on Access and Benefit-Sharing and in other bodies”.

It is for this reason that, immediately after taking up his assignment in January this year, the Executive Secretary issued a message to all indigenous and local communities to join forces to meet the challenges of protecting life on Earth.

He stated that “As the Convention is now embarked in an exciting phase of enhanced implementation, you, as one of its major stakeholders, have an essential role to play. Today, as you celebrate the International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity that I am honored to head in the years to come wishes to renew its commitment to its role as faithful partner of the indigenous peoples of the world”, he concluded.

Information for Journalists:

The Convention on Biological Diversity is one of the most broadly-subscribed international environmental treaties in the world. Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro Brazil in 1992, it currently has 188 Parties—187 States and the European Community— who have committed themselves to its three main goals: the conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of its components and the equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. The Secretariat of the Convention is located in Montreal.

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