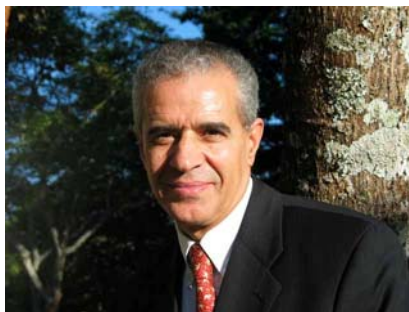




MESSAGE OF DR. AHMED DJOHLAF,
THE NEW EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
TO THE AFRICAN PEOPLE



Africa has demonstrated its commitment to the protection of its environment for the benefit of present and future generations by playing its role in the major international environmental processes. African countries are now parties to all relevant multilateral environment conventions, including the three Rio conventions. As early as 1985, Africa established, a mechanism at ministerial level to address its environmental agenda. Indeed, in its twenty years of existence, the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN) has played a leading role in assisting African countries to address their environmental challenges in a coordinated manner.

In addition, Africa showed the world the way forward by adopting—for the first time in the history of any region and under the leadership of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), AMCEN and the African Union—a continent-wide Action Plan for the protection of its environment. The Action Plan was adopted by the Heads of State and Government at the second ordinary meeting of the Assembly of the African Union, held in Maputo in July 2003.

At the same meeting, the African Heads of State and Government also adopted a revised African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. In doing so, African leaders have adjusted this Convention, known as the Algiers Convention, which was adopted in 1968, to the Convention on Biological Diversity and incorporated its threefold objective, including the sustainable use of components of biodiversity, as well as the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. To this end, building the human and institutional environmental capacity of Africa is essential. The recent announcement of the Royal Society of Chemistry to give Africa free access to 1,5 million pages and 250,000 articles to African scientists is a welcome decision that needs to be emulated.

I am pleased also to announce that the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle de France and the Smithsonian Institute have decided to join forces with the Secretariat of the Convention to build the capacity of the developing countries, and in particular the African countries, for meeting their biodiversity challenges. The agreement will be signed this month in Curitiba, Brazil, with the participation of more than 100 ministers. In my capacity as the new Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, I pledge my

full commitment to the African people and their institutions to spare no effort to assist in the implementation phase of the biodiversity component of the Action Plan of the Environment Initiative of NEPAD, as well as the Algiers Convention. I look forward to the establishment of an enhanced partnership with the Commission of the African Union, the Secretariat of NEPAD and the Secretariat of AMCEN for the benefit of the biodiversity agenda of Africa and its people.

Montreal, 3 March 2006