



Secretariat of the Convention
on Biological Diversity

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIODIVERSITY
PROTECT BIODIVERSITY IN DRYLANDS

22 May
2006



ACHIEVING THE 2010 TARGET!

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OPENING STATEMENT

BY

**AHMED DJOGLAF
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

TO THE

HIGH-LEVEL MINISTERIAL SEGMENT

OF THE

**EIGHTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO
THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

Curitiba, Brazil, 27 March 2006

Excellency Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva
President of the Republic of Brazil

From the dawn of humanity we have always lived in harmony with nature and enjoyed its bounty. However our umbilical link with Mother Nature is now being seriously eroded. Over the last 50 years, humans have changed ecosystems faster and more extensively than in any comparable period of time in human history. Humans are making unprecedented changes to ecosystems. These changes are weakening nature's ability to deliver its vital services. Human activity is putting such a strain on the natural functions of the Earth that the ability of the planet's ecosystems to sustain future generations can no longer be taken for granted. All the science shows that we are on the eve of one of the greatest extinctions of life on this planet. We are undermining the ecological capital of our children.

Faced with this frightening reality, 110 Heads of State and Government committed themselves, four years ago in Johannesburg at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, to "achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth". This commitment was reiterated six months ago, in New York, at the World Review Summit, by 154 Heads of State and Government.

The time is running out, the clock is ticking, and we have only four years left to fulfill the Heads of State biodiversity promise. I would like to pay tribute to the Presidents of Algeria, France, Gambia and Congo as well as the Prime Minister of Malaysia for their personal engagement to achieve such a promise as evidenced by their contribution to the newly born *Gincana* magazine. The most biodiversity-rich country in the world, a country that has selected Mother Nature as its national anthem, has decided to play its leading role in showing the way ahead for achieving this heads of state promise. Born in Rio, the Convention on Life on Earth has now found a champion. Its birth place, Brazil, the first country to sign it in Rio in 1992 and the host and the land of the largest remaining rainforest in the world. The daughter of Rio in coming back home 14 years after has found its leader and a champion, H.E. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Last month, the leader of this great nation signed a presidential decree placing an additional 6.4 million hectares of the Amazon rainforest, an area twice the size of Belgium, under direct environmental protection. The objective is to put 50 million hectares under protected area, an area similar to that of Spain. After launching the unique Zero Hunger Programme, the leader of the country hosting 30% per cent of all known species in the world has agreed to sponsor Baze, the Brazilian Alliance for Zero Extinction, involving 25 partners. For these major contributions to fulfilling the 2010 biodiversity promise of the Heads of State, I would like to say to you, in my capacity as a mere citizen of the world and on behalf of my wife and my two children, thank you, Mr. President. *Obrigado Mr President.*

At the beginning of this month, the leader of the country with two thirds of its territory still covered by natural vegetation placed the fulfilment of the threefold objective of the Convention high on the agenda of his state visit to the United Kingdom. For the first time, two leaders of the world have put sustainable development, including biodiversity, at the top of their agenda and stressed the relation between biodiversity and poverty alleviation. In my capacity as the newly designated Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity and on behalf of my 67 colleagues in the Secretariat, I would like to say to you, thank you, Mr. President. *Muito Obrigado Mr President.*

In March last year, the leader of the largest food exporter in the world signed the national biosafety law. Two weeks ago, the leader of the fourth larger producer of GMOs in the world finalized its national position on handling, transport, packaging and identification of LMOs, thus paving the way to the historic Curitiba accord under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. On behalf of the 1,032 participants in this landmark event on this unique international treaty, hailed by Dr. Töpfer, as the new legal instrument of the twenty-first century, I would like to say to you, thank you, Mr. President. *Muitissimo Obrigado Mr President.*

Last week, the leader of the country that has succeeded under his leadership to reduce the rate of deforestation by more than 30%, kindly accepted to put at the service of the international community for two years the architect of this Brazilian miracle, H.E. Marina Silva, Minister of the Environment of Brazil as the President of the eight meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention born in Rio. On behalf of the 4,000 participants attending this largest ever gathering of biodiversity experts on the Convention, I would like to say to you, thank you, Mr. President. *Um Milhão de Vezes Obrigado Mr President.*

By accepting to grace with your participation today the largest ever gathering of ministers in charge of biodiversity, I would like also to say to you, on behalf of 103 ministers and heads of delegation here present, thank you, Mr. President. I would like also on behalf of the 300 participants to our meeting today to express my deep gratitude to Michel Krigsner, the CEO of O Boticario company for not only hosting this meeting but also for their active engagement through its Fondation in joining force for the protection of nature. I would like also to thank O Boticario for the greening of the Curitiba airport to welcome the 188 Parties. I would like also to thank you, Mr. President, for personal involvement in the US\$ 250 million "Vale Florestal" programme promoted by the Brazilian companies for the reforestation of 200,000 hectares. Green business is not only good business but also the future of tomorrow's business.

In my opening statement last Monday, I stated that, "Mother Nature is talking to its children. We must listen and respond". Implementation, implementation, implementation was the response of the daughter of the Amazon forests Marina Silva in accepting to lead the Convention on Life on Earth. Since the first meeting of the Convention in Bahamas in November 1994, more than 600 reports have been prepared. 283 meetings have been organized and 192 decisions adopted. Today's largest ever gathering of ministers in charge of biodiversity is the forum to echo the call of the President of this historic meeting.

The 2010 biodiversity target will not be achieved without an enhanced era of implementation of threefold objective of the Convention. Your two-day first-ever interactive forum is a unique opportunity to agree on the road map for achieving the 2010 biodiversity target.

In doing so let us be reminded by the statement made by H.E. President of France, Jacques Chirac, in January 2005 in Paris at the meeting on biodiversity and science, and I quote, "We are probably the last generation that still has the possibility of stopping the destruction of the living environment before an irreversible threshold is crossed".

Twelve years ago, on 28 November 1994 in Nassau, Honorable Hubert A. Ingram, the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas said at the opening of the first ministerial segment of your Convention, which I had the privilege of servicing as Secretary, and I quote, "Biological diversity of the planet is a precious asset. Its destruction, willingly or unknowingly, can no longer be tolerated. Our children shall never forgive us for it. Our generation has thus a historic mission to fulfil and a unique responsibility to discharge. And you as the Conference of the Parties have both the responsibility and the honour to lead the world in realizing that partnership."

During your two days of deliberations for establishing this global partnership for a global alliance for life on Earth, we must all be reminded of what Chico Mendes, a UNEP 500 award laureate, a Brazilian son of the Amazon forest once said "At first I thought I was fighting to save rubber trees, then I thought I was fighting to save the Amazon rainforest. Now I realize I am fighting for humanity". Your decisions or lack of decisions will, in the long term, have a bearing on the future of humanity and our children.

President last Friday here in Curitiba, 1,500 children handed to me and to Marina Silva a message that I want to deliver to you. Last month, at the University of Quebec in Montreal, 300 young people handed me a similar message that I want also to deliver to you. I have also a message for you from my two children, Sabrina and Mounir. They want you to take to the G8 in St Petersburg in July this year their fears and their concerns for their future. They want you to be their champion in putting the achievement of the 2010 promise of the Heads of State on the agenda of the world's most

powerful nations. It is my honour to hand over to you these messages. *Muito Obrigado*
Mr. President. I thank you for your kind attention