



CBD

# Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

MESSAGE

FROM

**MR. AHMED DJOHLAF, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY,**

**ON THE OCCASION OF**

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

***8 March 2007***



22 May 2007  
International Day for Biological Diversity



Biodiversity and Climate Change

As major stakeholders in the Convention on Biological Diversity, women have a special relation with nature in general and biodiversity in particular. In most countries, the survival of women, their well-being and empowerment depend on biodiversity. For women in developing countries, particularly in the least developed countries, biodiversity is vital for their survival and the survival of their families. Biodiversity is also part and parcel of their belief system and their cultural and spiritual values. It is for these reasons that the preamble of the Convention on Biological Diversity recognizes “the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity” and affirms “the need for the full participation of women at all levels of policy-making and implementation for biological diversity conservation”.

Women around the world are now organizing to have their voices heard and to promote sustainable management and conservation of biodiversity at the local, regional and international levels. An example of this was when, in recognizing the unique voice that women bring to environmental concerns, 22 women ministers of the environment and 28 women leaders of organizations from around the world, gathered in Finland and agreed unanimously to create the Network of Women Ministers of the Environment. Today, the Network plays a valuable role in bringing a greater focus to gender issues in biodiversity conservation. In Curitiba, Brazil, on 27 March 2006, at the margins of the High-Level Segment of the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, 22 women environmental ministers decided to take the lead in promoting within the existing networks the enhanced phase of implementation of the three objectives of the Convention.

Strategic Objective K.1 of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action calls on Governments to “encourage, subject to national legislation and consistent with the Convention on Biological Diversity, the effective protection and use of knowledge, innovations and practices of women of indigenous and local communities, including practices relating to traditional medicines, biodiversity and indigenous technologies, and endeavour to ensure that these are respected, maintained, promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge”. The Johannesburg Plan of

Implementation adopted by the World Summit on Sustainable Development notes the need to “encourage and enable all stakeholders to contribute to the implementation of the objectives of the Convention and, in particular, recognize the specific role of youth, women and indigenous and local communities in conserving and using biodiversity in a sustainable way”. Women are the most important links in the maintenance and development of indigenous knowledge systems.

Women are key to achieving the 2010 biodiversity target and beyond! The traditional knowledge, practices and innovations that women have acquired over centuries puts them at the forefront when it comes to protecting life on Earth.

As Executive Secretary of your Convention, I reiterate my pledge on the occasion of this year’s International Women’s Day to continuing this important and vibrant partnership with the women of the world.

Montreal, 8 March, 2007