



CBD

# Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

22 May 2007  
International Day for Biological Diversity



Biodiversity and Climate Change

## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, DR. AHMED DJOGHLAF, TO THE SIXTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE “ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE” Belgrade, 10-12 October 2007

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### From Belgrade to Bonn

The sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” is taking place at an exciting time. We are seeing greater political awareness of the importance of taking action to protect our environment. This is especially so on climate change. In the last few weeks and months we have seen climate change at the top of the agenda of the G8 and the United Nations. Our political leaders – including Heads of State and Government – are no longer debating whether we must take action on climate change. Instead, political leaders worldwide are discussing how to take action. We look forward to a breakthrough at the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties in Bali next month.

We have also begun to see greater recognition of the importance of biodiversity and of the ecosystem services that biodiversity underpins. At their Summit on 7 June this year, for the first time in the history of the G8, Heads of State and Government recognized the importance of biodiversity as an indispensable basis for the provision of vital ecosystem services and the long term provision of natural resources for the global economy. They also committed to increase their efforts for the protection and sustainable use of biological diversity to achieve their agreed goal of significantly reducing the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010.

I believe that as environmental leaders we have the challenge and the obligation to build upon this momentum so that practical steps needed to reduce, and ultimately to halt, biodiversity loss are put in place.

In doing that we should emphasize that biodiversity is an asset in addressing both climate change and its impacts. By protecting biodiversity, especially in forests wetlands and oceans, we can contribute to reducing greenhouse-gas emissions. And by protecting biodiversity we can buy insurance against some of worst impacts of climate change.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Assessment on Europe’s Environment, prepared for this meeting, shows just how much is to be done.

The Assessment charts progress made by Europe in addressing biodiversity loss. There has indeed been much progress especially in developing ecological networks of protected areas. But as the Assessment states there is an urgent need to address agriculture – a sector that still exerts a high pressure on biodiversity – to end over-fishing and destructive fishing practices, and to combat invasive alien species – the 121 “worst invasives” documented in the Assessment are having a terrible impact on marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems.



Echoing the message of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the 4<sup>th</sup> Assessment on Europe's Environment concludes that "biodiversity in the Pan-European region is likely to decline further and the 2010 target will not be achieved without considerable additional efforts".

The decline of biodiversity will only be halted when the value of biodiversity and the ecosystem services generated is fully integrated into decision making at all scales and in all economic and social sectors.

This means integrating consideration of biodiversity and ecosystem services in land use policy and planning, into agricultural, forestry and fishery policies, and into trade and development cooperation policies. It means addressing the ecological footprint of European producers and consumers so that we are living within the means of one planet. While Ministers of the Environment have a key role to play in facilitating support from other ministries, and in leading direct conservation action, all Ministers across government will need to be engaged in these efforts.

Europe's regional bodies, including the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the Council of Europe and the institutions of the European Union all playing an important role in this challenge. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity pledges to play its part in cooperation with these bodies and in support of national focal points.

In just over six months time, Europe will host the ninth meeting of the Convention's Conference of the Parties in Bonn. This will be a landmark conference – the last chance to make concrete commitments to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target. This meeting in Belgrade provides an opportunity to set the tone for open and constructive negotiations in May next year, negotiations that will enable Europe and the rest of the world to recognize the full value of biodiversity and to reflect these values in our economic activities and our daily lives.