



CBD

Secretariat of the **Convention on Biological Diversity**

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Biodiversity and Climate Change

Closing statement by Dr. Ahmed Djoghla
Executive Secretary
Convention on Biological Diversity

to the

**Second Session of the Governing Body of the
International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food
and Agriculture**

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Mr President,
Mr Director General of FAO,
Mr Secretary,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture was approved in 2001, major achievements have been made – advances that each one of you has contributed to in some way. I am honored to be with you this afternoon to salute these achievements . I am honored to be with you this afternoon to salute your hard-work and achievements throughout this Second Session of the Governing Body. As stipulated in the text of the Treaty itself, the conservation and the sustainable use of plant genetic resources will be attained by closely linking the Treaty to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Your work supports that of the Convention on Biological Diversity; your accomplishments help strengthen our mandate and move both Treaty and Convention further along the path to full implementation. For that I thank all of your host organization.

I would like to pay tribute to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and in particular to its Director-General Mr. Jacques Diouf, for his commitment and efforts to bring the Treaty to existence. Your presence today is yet another demonstration of your commitment to the objective of this unique legal instrument. Since its inception, the Food and Agriculture Organization has worked to alleviate poverty and hunger by promoting agricultural development, improved nutrition and the pursuit of food security. The birth of the Treaty and its operationalization is another tremendous contribution to this mission. I would like also to congratulate your Secretary, Dr Shakeel Bhatti for his well deserved appointment and for the spirit of cooperation that he has displayed since taking his assignment.

The Treaty is vital to ensuring the continued availability of the plant genetic resources that countries will need to feed their people. Biological diversity is essential for the development of crop varieties and the breeding of domesticated livestock, as well as supporting agricultural production through pollinators, soil organisms and the natural enemies of crop, pests. The Convention on Biological Diversity recognizes the Treaty's contribution to the implementation of the Programme of Work on Agriculture. The Convention also welcomes the Treaty's contribution to the cross-cutting initiative on biodiversity for food and nutrition which aims to promote the sustainable use of biodiversity in programmes contributing to food security and improved human nutrition. Efforts to link biodiversity, food and nutrition issues are expected, as stated in your Ministerial Declaration adopted in Madrid on 13 June 2006, to contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, in particular Target 2 of Goal 1 - to reduce by half, by 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

Through the conservation of plant genetic resources, the Treaty also supports the Convention's Global Strategy for Plant Conservation, in particular target 9. Plants are universally recognized as a vital part of the world's biological diversity and an essential resource for the planet.

I wish to note the important contribution of the Global Crop Diversity Trust, which is an essential element of the funding strategy with regards to the *ex-situ* conservation and availability of plant genetic resources. The Global Crop Diversity Trust surely contributed to the success of the Treaty.

In a speech at a World Food Day ceremony in Rome, Mr. Diouf, you said that "Preserving biodiversity should be a joint effort involving farmers, commercial plant breeders and the scientific community". Likewise, we are also combining our efforts, to secure the conservation

and sustainable utilization of the world's agricultural genetic diversity while ensuring that these resources remain available to all. The synergies between the Treaty, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the Convention on Biological Diversity are all vital to the programme of work of each group. Access and benefit sharing is a case in point.

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, in Johannesburg, 110 Heads of state and government called for action to negotiate, within the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity, an international regime to promote and safeguard the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. At its eight meeting the Conference of the Parties mandated the Ad Hoc Working Group on Access and Benefit Sharing to finalize the negotiation on the international regime on access and benefit sharing as soon as possible and no later than 2010. It is for this reason that I am extremely grateful to Mr. Fernando Cassas and Mr. Tim Hodges the two co-chairs of the working group for having organized yesterday a side event sharing with the participants the results of the last meeting in Montreal and their plan for the Geneva meeting to be held in January 2008

The Conference of the Parties recognizes the important contribution of the Treaty in this negotiation. The Treaty could constitute an important component of the future international regime. I think the lessons learned from the operationalization of the Treaty are essential and can benefit the process of elaborating the new international regime.

In this regards, I want to congratulate the Governing Body of the Treaty for the progress made on compliance. As a truly modern answer to access and benefit-sharing, I am very pleased to see that the Treaty counts at this time 115 Parties, around 370 Standard Material Transfer Agreements, which together amount to approximately 40,000 plant samples. This is a testament not only of the operational success of the Treaty but also of global commitment to sustainable development. It is a commonly accepted fact that resilience and ability of ecosystems, including agricultural ones, to adapt is enhanced by high levels of biodiversity. Thus, bearing in mind the anticipated, yet not wholly predictable, impacts of climate change, the Standard Material Transfer Agreements are a vital step toward the conservation of plant genetic resources and, ultimately, future food security.

Additional congruencies are seen in each other's efforts to achieve the 2010 Biodiversity Target. I am very pleased to announce that next year's celebration of the International Day on Biodiversity under the theme of "Agriculture and Biodiversity" will be jointly celebrated with FAO, in Bonn, on 22 May. It will be the first time that such an event will be jointly celebrated with a sister agency and it will also be the first time that such an event will be celebrated during the proceeding of a conference of the Parties which will be held with the participation of Heads of State and Governments. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Treaty will also have a major contribution to make during the celebration in 2010 of the International Year on Biodiversity which will coincide with the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, which the city of Nagoya, Japan, has offered to host.

Without biodiversity, food and agriculture cannot meet the needs of populations worldwide, and conversely, without adequate food and agricultural resources, populations will over-harvest wild resources and compromise not only biodiversity, but their own well-being as well. While our organizations cannot solve these problems independently, and each individual must do their part, together we can provide the leadership essential to reducing biodiversity loss.

Thus, continued cooperation between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Treaty and the Convention on Biological Diversity is important not only for the success of each organization's programme of work, but for the synergism these create together. Let us keep in mind, as Dante Alighieri said, that "from a little spark may burst a flame". May

our organizations be these sparks, and our combined efforts the flames which will provide for human well-being.

The expected increased negative impact of climate change on agriculture and the recent increase in price of major cereals, as highlighted by the World Food Day celebrated early this month by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations highlight the need to enhance the cooperation between our two sister agencies. In this regard, I would like to pay tribute to Mr Jacques Diouf for his decision, confirmed at my meeting with him this morning, to second a staff member to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, to act as a liaison officer with FAO. I am also extremely grateful to the Director General for hosting, for the first time in the history of the Convention, in February 2008 here at the headquarters of FAO, the second meeting of the convention on protected areas as well as the next meeting of the scientific subsidiary body of the Convention which will review the programme of work on forests and agriculture as well as the second .

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the Brundland report. In implementing our respective mandate we shall continue to be inspired and guided by the wisdom of Gro Bundtland who stated "I have repeatedly stressed that we have the knowledge to reduce hunger and poverty". I can assure you Mr. Director General and Mr. Secretary, that the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity will spare no effort to work with you to translate into living reality this knowledge.

Thank you for your kind attention.