



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity



**Statement by the Executive Secretary
Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaf**

on
“Biodiversity challenges and responses: Towards the Nagoya Summit on Biodiversity”

at the
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the cover of its Third National Report on biodiversity, Japan has placed a painting by a famous landscape artist, Gyokudo Kawai that depicts a man tending to his thatch roof beside his cherry blossom tree while butterflies flutter about, all species in harmonious company with each other. In this painting, as in so many Japanese pieces of artwork, we see the symbiotic relationship between man and nature – one that is balanced; one where nature provides man with basic necessities and man takes only what he truly needs. Biodiversity is part of the national identity of Japan. It is part of national heritage of all nations and particularly countries and regions rich in terms of biodiversity and blessed by nature. This is the case of all countries in Asia and Pacific region.

Indeed, biological diversity is the foundation of all life on Earth. However, biological diversity is disappearing at an unprecedented rate threatening the very foundation of life on our planet. According to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, a unique study on the health of our planet, the pressures on the planet's natural functions caused by human activity have reached such a high level that the ability of ecosystems to satisfy the needs of future generations is seriously, and perhaps irretrievably, compromised. Indeed since the end of the Second World War, more land has been converted to agricultural use than in the two previous centuries. Since the appearance of man on Earth, impacts on the natural functions of our planet have never been as destructive as in the last 50 years, leading to an unprecedented extinction of biological diversity. During this period, one-fourth of the world's top soil, one-fifth of agricultural land and one-third of its forests have been depleted.

This unprecedented loss of biodiversity was confirmed by the the Fourth Global Environment Outlook launched in October last year by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The authoritative assessment of the state of the environment of our planet by the world environmental authority of the United Nations system reiterates that we, human beings, are witnessing and are responsible for a reduction in distribution and functioning land, freshwater and marine biodiversity more rapid than at any time in human history. The "ecological footprint" of humankind now extends 25 per cent beyond the biological capacity of the planet. For some experts we are at the eve of the sixth global mass extinction of species and the first to be generated by us human beings.

This unprecedended loss of biodiversity is being compounded by climate change. The report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) demonstrates that up to 30 per cent of all known species are likely to be at an increased risk of extinction before the end of this century.

Here in Asia, the IPCC report predicts that up to 50 per cent of biodiversity of the region is at risk due to climate change, while as much as 88 per cent of reefs may be lost over the next 30 years. Furthermore, as many as 1,522 plant species in China and 2,835 plants in Indo-Burma could become extinct. Climate change is threatening the rich biodiversity heritage of the region, which sustains 30 per cent of the world's coral reefs and mangroves, produces 40 per cent of the world's fish catch, and is considered one of the world's centres for tropical marine biodiversity.

Biodiversity is disappearing faster from the Great Mekong Sub-Region than anywhere else on Earth. The ASEAN region, though covering only three per cent of the Earth's surface, serves as the natural habitat of up to 40 per cent of the world's plant and animal species. Deforestation rates in the region are at least two times higher than other tropical areas. If present levels of deforestation continue, ASEAN will lose nearly three-fourths of its original forest cover, and up to 42 per cent of its biodiversity by the next century.

The growing urban world represents one of the most dramatic changes experienced by humanity in recent history. By 2020, all but four of the world's largest cities will be in developing countries, 12 of them in Asia alone. India has already ten of the 30 fastest growing cities in the world. It is expected that 140 million rural dwellers would migrate to Indian cities by 2030 and 700 million, a population equivalent to all Europe by 2050. In less than a decade, Mumbai will grow by 88 per cent and Dhaka will have grown to more than 50 times its size in 1950. In the next 20 years, 1.1 billion more people will live in Asian cities. Every ten days in the coming 30 years, 1.1 million people will become city dwellers. Half of the Chinese population will soon live in cities. Four hundred new cities will be created, including ten cities of the size of Beijing.

The challenges facing cities in the 21st century were highlighted at the World City Summit held in Singapore last June. The Summit was held also in conjunction with the East Asia Summit Conference on liveable cities. At this occasion, the chair of the meeting, Professor Tommy Koh, stated that “the good news is that Asia is the fastest growing region in the world. The good news is that if Asia continues it will soon catch up with the United States of America and the European Union in the size of its economy. The bad news is that 700 million Asians do not have access to safe drinking water. The worse news is that 1.5 billion Asians do not have access to basic sanitation. The really awful news is that most of major cities of Asia outside Japan and Singapore are becoming unliveable.”

As the fastest growing region in the world, Asia faces unprecedented environmental challenges. In terms of biodiversity, what is lost for one country is lost for the entire region and for the world. Environmental impact reaches across international borders emphasizing the importance of regional cooperation. This is what Environment Cooperation-Asia is about. It is also what the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity is about. It is what the enhanced partnership between Japan and the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity is about.

As stated by His Excellency Masahiko Koumura, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “it is impossible to ensure Japan’s national interests, namely the welfare of the Japanese people and the peace and prosperity of Japan, without forging the peace and prosperity of the world”. Today, the environmental dimension of peace and security cannot be ignored. Ensuring the stability and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region is vital for the security and prosperity of Japan and the world. I commend Japan for promoting the “flying geese” model of regional integration as an instrument for peace and security. Biodiversity is an integral component of sustainable development, the new name of peace and security of the world.

Since its establishment in 1991, the Environmental Congress for Asia and Pacific has emerged as a unique mechanism to foster regional cooperation for promoting sustainable development as evidenced by the Asia Pacific Forum for environment and development, its plan of action and its recommendations. I would like therefore to congratulate all the participating countries and pay tribute to our host, Japan, its people and government, for its leadership. My gratitude goes to the Ministry of the Environment of Japan under the able leadership of His Excellency Tetsuo Saito and his colleagues.

Established in the run-up to the Rio Summit, your unique mechanism through its 15 past meetings has always played a major role in promoting the implementation of Agenda 21 and the other Rio’s achievements in the region. Two distinct chapters of Agenda 21 have been devoted to biodiversity and biotechnology. The Rio Summit witnessed also the opening to signature, together with the Climate Change Convention, of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. It was therefore most appropriate that the theme of today’s sixteenth meeting of the ECO-Asia be devoted entirely to “biodiversity”. I commend Japan and all the participating countries for this initiative. Therefore, this meeting could not have found a better host than the city of Nagoya, which has demonstrated its commitment to the biodiversity, as evidenced by the Fujimae tidal flat. Indeed, this meeting could not have found a better host than Nagoya, the host of EXPO 2005 held under the theme “Nature’s Wisdom”. Your meeting could not have found a better host than Nagoya, the host of the tenth meeting of the United Nations Conference of the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in October 2010. It is therefore a unique privilege and a distinct honour to address you today on the results of the ninth United Nations Conference of the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Bonn in May this year, and the agreed road map of the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit.

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity is a unique international legally binding instrument with the following three mutually supportive objectives: the conservation, the sustainable use and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. It is one of the three Rio Conventions translating in legal term the sustainable development agenda and the agreement reached at the Rio de Janeiro Summit.

In May this year, the city of Bonn hosted the ninth United Nations Conference of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The meeting was preceded by more than 200 events organized by the host. The

Bonn Biodiversity Summit was the largest biodiversity gathering with the participation of almost 5,000 participants, including heads of state and government, and more than 664 journalists from 27 countries.

The High-level Segment was exceptional. For the first time, a Heads of State and Government component was organized. For the first time, we in the Secretariat were blessed by the participation of the Prime Minister of Canada, the host of the Secretariat. For the first time, the host of COP-9 announced a contribution of 400 million Euros for biodiversity, and 40 million Euros for the Life Web Initiative. Sixty-four countries have announced their participation to this unique initiative aimed at promoting additional marine and terrestrial protected areas for the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention. The engagement of the Ministers in the negotiation of key issues was unique and greatly contributed to the decisions adopted. The participants adopted 37 decisions, including the road map for the negotiation of an international regime on access and benefit-sharing and the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target aimed at reducing substantially the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010 and achieving goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals. Indeed, the Bonn Biodiversity Summit set the new course towards more sustainable living and protection of biodiversity. It achieved more in the way of raising awareness about biodiversity loss and engaging all stakeholders than any other Conference of the Parties before it.

Two hundred forty-four side-events were organized, including 82 by the business community alone. The active engagement of the business community at the Bonn meeting was unprecedented. This was facilitated by the convening of the Lisbon and Berlin meetings on Business and Biodiversity. The engagement of NGOs and indigenous people was also impressive. A Planet Diversity—a world congress on the future of food and agriculture—was organized with the participation of 6,000 people. A Naturathlon with more than 600 participants from 92 countries was also organized. A live concert on biodiversity was held with more than 5,000 people. Three different children and youth gatherings were convened and the results of the International Youth Conference, “Biodiversity on The Edge”, were presented at the opening ceremony of the Bonn meeting. The global Green Wave initiative was launched with the motto “One school, one tree, one gift for nature”, as a joint initiative between the Secretariat and the Government of Germany. A meeting of mayors on local action for biodiversity was convened for the first time, and the Bonn declaration on parliamentarians and biodiversity was adopted.

With less than two years to go before the 2010 biodiversity target deadline, the road ahead is truly daunting and poses a great challenge for the global community. Indeed, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity finds itself at a crossroad; addressing the unprecedented environmental challenges that the world faces requires a renewed international cooperation at regional and international levels. It also requires leadership.

In his contribution to the CBD magazine *Gincana* specially prepared for the Bonn meeting, Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda stated that, “it is important for each country to address sincerely what they are able to do and what they should do towards the achievement of the biodiversity 2010 target and additional targets, by collaborating with other countries, international organizations, NGOs and so forth. Japan is determined, in Asia and in the international community, to actively contribute to such activities and make further efforts toward the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, as a potential host of COP-10”.

Japan has demonstrated its commitment to play its leadership role in promoting the biodiversity agenda. For the first time, a country decided, at Cabinet level and almost three years in advance, to offer to host a meeting of the Conference of the Parties. As a host, Japan included biodiversity as a priority issue of the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit. For the first time in the history of the G8, since its establishment in Rambouillet in 1975, a host took the initiative to prepare and submit a plan of action on biodiversity. The Kobe Call for Action for Biodiversity endorsed by the Hokkaido Summit is an historical contribution in furthering the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention. The Kobe Call for action contains concrete recommendations in the five following areas of cooperation: a) achieving the 2010 biodiversity target and follow up actions; b) sustainable use of biodiversity; c) biodiversity and protected areas; d) private sector engagement; and e) strengthening scientific capabilities for monitoring of biodiversity.

The whole biodiversity community is indebted to Japan for this achievement and for demonstrating its leadership in adopting Japan’s plan of action for the implementation of the Kobe.

Indeed, Japan's commitments for the implementation of "Kobe Call for Action for Biodiversity" are unique and revolve around the following: a) Satoyama Initiative; b) Coral reef Marine Protected Area Networks in East Asia; c) Kobe Biodiversity Dialogue; and d) Global Biodiversity Monitoring Networking Initiative.

Less than two weeks after the decision adopted in Bonn to convene the tenth meeting of the United Nations Conference of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture, Japan, in October 2010, a kick-off seminar for the preparation of COP-10 was held in Nagoya with the participation of more than 1,200 participants. Indeed, the Nagoya authorities, the officials of Aichi Prefecture, the national authorities, as well as the people of Japan are fully determined to play a leadership role and to welcome the world in Nagoya in October 2010. The Nagoya Summit will be held while the world will be celebrating, at the initiative of the United Nations General Assembly, the International Year of Biodiversity. I am very grateful to the Ishikawa Prefecture for considering hosting the closing ceremony of this unique event in the life of the Convention.

During the Nagoya kick-off seminar of COP-10, held here in June in this impressive Nagoya Conference Centre, a song was performed by 191 children of Nagoya representing the number of Parties. The Bonn meeting opened by welcoming Brunei Darussalam as the 191st Party and was closed by the announcement of Iraq that it had finalized its internal procedure for acceding to the Convention. Last month the Presidency Council of Iraq adopted the law of accession and Iraq will become very soon the 192nd Party. I sincerely hope that on 19th October 2010 when the children of Nagoya will perform the COP-10 song, they will be 195 representing all the members of the international community including the United States of America.

At the Arthur M. Sackler Colloquia of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America held last month, participants have argued that humanity is in the midst of the sixth global mass extinction of species. Two biologists of the University of Stanford in California stated that "the future of biodiversity for the 10 million of years to come will be determined in the next fifty to one hundred years by the activities of one single specie: *Homo sapiens*". Ensuring the future of biodiversity requires the engagement of all States and all citizens of the world. It calls for a new era of coexistence between man and Nature. This is what the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit is about.

I thank you for your kind attention
