



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity



MESSAGE

From Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaoui, Executive Secretary
Convention on Biological Diversity

On the occasion of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, 17 October 2008

Human Rights and Dignity of People Living in Poverty

For information only

Twenty one years ago, on 17 October 1987, over a hundred thousand people gathered at the Trocadéro in Paris, to honour the victims of extreme poverty, violence and hunger. The venue for this gathering was indeed symbolic as it was also the very place where the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed in 1948. This year's theme "*Human Rights and Dignity of People Living in Poverty*" is therefore very apt as 21 years ago, more than a hundred thousand people proclaimed that poverty is a violation of human rights and recognized the need to come together to ensure that these rights are respected. This symbolic gesture which is repeated over the years, set a new world record last year, with 43.7 million people worldwide standing up against poverty.

In September 2007, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a historic declaration: the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. For these communities, one of the many social groups affected by poverty, this declaration marked the end of a painful past and reconciliation with their countries towards a path of human rights. The Convention on Biological Diversity welcomed this Declaration as Indigenous and local communities are the custodians of unique knowledge and skills and the genetic and biological diversity in plant and animal production that may be vital in adapting to climate change.

Since biodiversity has an essential role to play in combating poverty and achieving sustainable development, the Convention on Biological Diversity, this past January, signed an agreement in the amount of € 1,000,000 with the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany to support the project "Linking implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and Poverty Alleviation." This unique initiative aims to foster the integration of biodiversity into the poverty-alleviation agenda, for example by promoting coordinated implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans and national strategies for poverty reduction and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, as well as enhancing the capacity of developing countries on issues related to access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing.

The Convention on Biological Diversity is also helping in the fight to eradicate poverty through its Biodiversity for Development Unit. To achieve poverty eradication and sustainable development, we must develop strategies to protect biodiversity. Over three billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity, while more than 1.6 billion people rely on forests and non-timber forest products for their livelihoods. The degradation of habitat and the loss of biodiversity are threatening the livelihoods of more than one billion people living in dry and sub-humid lands. Biodiversity is the basis for achieving sustainable development.

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