



Convention on
Biological Diversity



STATEMENT

BY MR. AHMED DJOGLAF

**THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

ON THE OCCASION OF

**AT THE MINISTERIAL ROUND TABLE
OF THE NINTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE
UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT
DESERTIFICATION**

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ONE NATURE • ONE WORLD • OUR FUTURE
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Excellencies
Ladies and gentlemen,

In 1996, in opening the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Minister of the environment of Argentina stated that “the meeting provided an opportunity for an analysis of our achievements, but also for far-reaching self-criticism and for the identification of the even bolder actions that were required’ The same can be said of today’s meeting 12 years later at the occasion of the High level segment of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification.. For having hosted a COP on CBD and UNCCD, Argentina is well placed to be the champion on synergies among these two Rio Conventions.

The topics of our respective conventions, desertification and biodiversity loss, are intimately connected. Desertification leads to biodiversity loss in a number of ways, causing habitat degradation, reducing ecosystem productivity, and enabling the spread of invasive alien species. At the same time, biodiversity loss weakens the integrity of dryland ecosystems and makes them more vulnerable to desertification. Desertification and biodiversity loss reinforce each other, and therefore must be addressed together.

Speaking at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity last year in Bonn, your Executive Secretary, Mr. Luc Gnacadja, stated that such challenges “call for innovative ways for the implementation of the Rio conventions, particularly through synergy”. And, indeed, in Bonn, the Conference of the Parties recognized the necessity of greater cooperation and encouraged further collaboration between the Rio conventions. I would like to pay tribute to Mr. Gnacadja for his constant support and the high quality of the collaboration between our two secretariats. I would also like to point out that the CBD has recently developed a toolkit available online entitled “Pastoralism, Biodiversity and Livelihoods”, a concrete product that demonstrates how biodiversity protection and sustainable land management—and therefore the objectives of our conventions—are interlinked.

On this important occasion, the words of the great Argentinean economist Raúl Prebisch also come to mind: “A new rationality must be sought, but not one based on hegemonic interests; rather, one based not merely on economic and social objectives but on eminently ethical ones.” The unprecedented loss of biodiversity compounded by climate change is indeed an ethical issue and a moral obligation.

The way we are using Earth’s biological resources to satisfy our needs must be changed. Currently, the “ecological footprint” of humankind extends 25 per cent beyond the biological capacity of the planet. By 2030, it is projected that global agricultural production will need to increase by more than 50 per cent in order to feed a population more than 27 per cent larger and roughly 83 per cent wealthier than today’s. And yet the ongoing increase in human population is above the rate of increase in the yields of the three major cereals—wheat, maize and rice—that supply most nutritional needs. Worse still, despite global food production having increased by 168 per cent over the past 42 years, an estimated 852 million people were undernourished in the period 2000–2002, up 37 million from 1997–1999. Of this total, nearly 96 per cent live in developing countries, the majority in sub-Saharan Africa.

While demand for food is increasing, global food supply is increasingly under threat from biodiversity loss, climate change and land degradation. Seventy-five per cent of the food crop varieties we once grew have disappeared from our fields in the last 100 years. Around 20 per cent of domestic animal breeds are at risk of extinction, with an average of one breed lost each month. Of the 7,000 species of plants that have been domesticated over the 10,000-year history of agriculture, a mere 30 account for 90 per cent of all the food that we eat every day. With so much agricultural diversity already having been destroyed, widespread failure in our handful of remaining major crops and animal breeds due to disease or pest outbreaks is an ever more ominous possibility. Moreover, the reliance on so few plants and animal breeds makes human populations vulnerable to climatic changes: as growing conditions change due to climate change, the species required may also change.

Land degradation is further exacerbating these problems. For example, agriculture and agricultural biodiversity account for 20 to 60 per cent of national GDP in Africa, with most of this production taking place in dry and sub-humid lands. However, almost half of African dry and sub-humid lands are vulnerable to desertification, with climate change expected to further increase this vulnerability by expanding exposure to wind and water erosion, prolonged drought and wild fires.

Addressing these challenges presents an opportunity for integrating the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity with sustainable land management. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has identified several key biodiversity-based adaptation activities for agricultural systems. These activities include the conservation of agricultural genetic resources, the reduction of other threats to agricultural biodiversity, the restoration of degraded land with native species, integrated land and water management, disease control programmes for native livestock, and invasive-species-management planning.

With regard to mitigating climate change, sustainable land management in agricultural areas can increase carbon sequestration in the soil through techniques such as integrated pest management, conservation tillage, intercropping, and the planting of cover crops. When cover crops are used in combination with conservation tillage, soil carbon content can increase annually for a period of up to 50 years. The sustainable management of grazing land can provide similar co-benefits, since such lands contain between 10 and 30 per cent of the world's soil carbon stocks. Enhancing agricultural biodiversity through activities such as changing varieties and planting times can result in the avoidance of a 10-15 per cent reduction in yield under 1-2°C local temperature increases. In addition, forests account for as much as 80 per cent of the total above-ground terrestrial carbon while peatlands, which cover only 3-4 per cent of the world's terrestrial surface, store 25-30 per cent of the carbon contained in both terrestrial vegetation and soils. As such, healthy forests and wetland systems have the potential to capture a significant portion of projected emissions.

Indeed meeting the objectives of the UNFCCC requires the full implementation in a synergetic manner of the objectives of the three Rio Convention. Argentina may not be the sole country of having hosted a COP of CBD and a COP of UNCCD but it is the sole country of handing hosted a COP of the three Rio Conventions including two COP of UNFCC in 1998 and 2004. Argentina has chaired the process which led to the adopting of the Kyoto protocol. Argentina is therefore in a unique position to take the lead in promoting the synergy between the three Rio Conventions.

The time for forward thinking is now. Humans are continuing to alter and degrade Earth's natural systems at an astonishing rate. To stop this degradation, we have to realize that we are collectively responsible for the well-being of current and future generations, and so for the health of this planet that sustains us all. We have to realize that, as Jorge Luis Borges wrote, "what one man does is something done, in some measure, by all men." If we are to survive and thrive, it can only be by working together – as individuals, as governments, as parties to the Rio conventions.

The celebration of the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity offers a unique opportunity to achieve this strategic objective. In September of 2010 in New York, the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly will see a high-level meeting with the participation of Heads of State and Government exclusively devoted to biodiversity. Then, in October, at the tenth meeting of our Conference of the Parties in Nagoya, we will finalize an International Regime on Access and Benefit Sharing and a post-2010 Strategic Plan for the Convention.

Raúl Prebisch, whose work contributed so much to North-South cooperation, said that: "It is essential that some day all of us, those of the North and those of the South together, set ourselves to explore the nature of our problems, discarding dogmas and preconceived ideas, until we reach a measure of common ground." In the spirit of increased international collaboration, I am very pleased to present to you in the six United Nations languages the official logo of the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity, which will include a joint celebration on biodiversity and dry lands. Indeed Biodiversity is Life ... Biodiversity is OUR life – and none can protect it better than us. *La Diversidad Biologica es Vida... La Diversidad Biologica es Nuestra Vida.*

Thank you for your kind attention.