



**Convention on
Biological Diversity**



2010 International Year of Biodiversity

STATEMENT BY

MR AHMED DJOGLAF

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

ON THE OCCASION OF

**THE 39TH INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS (IFAP) WORLD FARMERS'
CONGRESS**

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Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
United Nations Environment Programme
413 Saint-Jacques Street, Suite 800, Montreal, QC, H2Y 1N9, Canada
Tel : +1 514 288 2220, Fax : +1 514 288 6588
secretariat@cbd.int www.cbd.int



Life in harmony, into the future
いのちの共生を、未来へ
COP 10 / MOP 5

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be addressing the IFAP World Farmers' Congress during this 2010 International Year of Biodiversity. Since we signed our cooperation agreement in 2007, the Secretariat and the IFAP have increasingly been working together to highlight the importance of agricultural biodiversity to the international community. We have also been working together to highlight the key role that farmers can and must play in ensuring a sustainable future.

As the President of IFAP, Mr. Ajay Vashee, has said, "In agriculture the principle stakeholder, the farmer, must be involved in policy formulation."

This is particularly true given current threats to global food security. According to the FAO's 2009 hunger report, *The State of Food Insecurity*, undernourishment remains a serious problem around the world, especially in developing countries. In Asia and the Pacific, an estimated 642 million people are suffering from chronic hunger; in Sub-Saharan Africa 265 million; in Latin America and the Caribbean 53 million; in the Near East and North Africa 42 million; and in developed countries 15 million. This means that currently 1.17 billion people are undernourished – in other words, one sixth of humanity.

During the second half of the twentieth century, the global food system was able to more than double food production in response to the doubling of world population. Today, however, the rate of growth in agricultural productivity is declining in parallel to the alarming loss of agricultural biodiversity, as well as the reliance of agriculture on an increasingly narrow base of crops and livestock.

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 history of agriculture, a mere 30 account for 90 per cent of all the food that we eat every day.

The ongoing global decline in pollinators such as bats and bees is also undermining agricultural productivity. In one study of 30 crops, estimated harvest loss through lack of pollination was US\$ 54.6 billion, representing a 46 per cent loss of crop yields.

Feeding a growing population, and meeting the Millennium Development Goals, is challenging enough in a stable world. But climate change must now be factored in. As areas of the Earth become warmer or colder, wetter or dryer, we shall need nature's bounty to help us cope.

The 2010 International Year of Biodiversity offers a unique opportunity to ensure that the voice of farmers, speaking in unison for life on Earth and the future of humanity, is heard far and wide. I therefore commend the IFAP for placing biodiversity as a policy priority during 2010. I commend them for striving to highlight the crucial role played by farmers in conserving ecosystems. And I commend them for challenging national governments and the international community to establish programs to help secure biodiversity, while ensuring that farmers have the necessary tools to increase food production.

As always, the Secretariat stands ready to support your efforts. Two upcoming events are particularly important in this regard. In September in New York, heads of state attending the 65th session of the UN General Assembly will for the first time ever discuss biodiversity, its role in development, and its role in the fight against climate change. And in October, at the Convention's 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Nagoya, Japan, an unprecedented range of stakeholders—from youth to indigenous authorities to the private sector—will gather to shape our post-2010 strategic plan and post-2010 biodiversity targets.

Mahatma Gandhi, that great defender of farmers, famously said: "The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problem." These words need to motivate our actions from now until end of 2010 and beyond. By redoubling our efforts over the coming months and years, I am sure that we will be able to preserve agricultural biodiversity, and thus help to protect our future wellbeing and prosperity. As the slogan of the International Year reminds us, "Biodiversity is life...biodiversity is OUR life."

Thank you for your kind attention.