



**Convention on
Biological Diversity**



**MESSAGE FROM AHMED DJOGHLAF, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, ON THE OCCASION OF THE
NELSON MANDELA INTERNATIONAL DAY, 18 JULY, 2010**

In November 2009, the United Nations General Assembly declared 18 July the “Nelson Mandela International Day” in recognition of the former South African President’s contribution to the culture of peace and freedom. The name Mandela evokes an image of an extraordinary human being: the epitome of courage, hope and sacrifice. His passion and commitment to improving human conditions has been unyielding, before, during and after the years he spent in prison. On this, the first observance of the Nelson Mandela International Day, we all need to rise to the challenge and act to improve the human condition.

During the International Year of Biodiversity it seems fitting that those of us who work for sustainable development join forces with the rest of the world on this year’s Mandela Day. The Nelson Mandela Foundation encourages us to commit 67 minutes of our lives—representing the 67 years that Nelson Mandela has dedicated to fighting social injustice—to fighting for humanitarian issues. I would encourage us all to reflect on our power to change the world around us through individual actions.

Nowhere is action needed more urgently than when it comes to the loss of biodiversity, one of the great humanitarian issues of our time. Today species are disappearing at up to 1,000 times the natural background rate of extinction, undermining nature’s ability to provide us with the goods and services we so greatly depend on, including food, medicines, building materials, air and water purification, climate stabilization and crop pollination. It is the poor of the world who will suffer the most if we do not stop the loss of our biological resources, since the poor depend disproportionately on biodiversity for their day-to-day livelihoods.

On 22 September 2010, prior to the opening of the general debate of the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly, Heads of State and Government will gather in New York to consider our relationship with life on this planet and what we will need to do to move forward. In October, officials of the 193 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity will meet in Nagoya, Japan, to agree a long-term strategy for stopping the loss of life on Earth.

Taking advantage of the unique opportunity presented by the Nelson Mandela International Day, let us commit ourselves to observe 67 minutes for protecting Life on Earth.



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