



**Convention on
Biological Diversity**

**INTERNATIONAL YEAR
OF FORESTS • 2011**



STATEMENT

BY MR AHMED DJOGHLAF

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

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

**MEETING OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON
FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES, TOWARDS THE REPORT ON THE
STATE OF THE WORLD'S FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES**

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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



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COP 10 / MOP 5

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to convey my warm greetings to everyone gathered in Rome, Italy, to support the preparation of the report on the *State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources*.

This meeting comes at a critical time when the world's forests are facing immense pressures and challenges. Key findings from the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010 show that while deforestation has slowed somewhat in recent years as compared to the 1990s, it is still alarmingly high. Continued deforestation has resulted in carbon emissions, shortages in water and food supply, and in an unprecedented loss of forest biodiversity and genetic resources.

Yet, the world is not standing idly by. Governments, international organisations, and forest stakeholder groups are taking action to find ways of conserving and sustainably managing forests and their genetic resources for the benefit of present and future generations. One such effort is the preparation of the report on the *State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources* which will be the most comprehensive effort undertaken to date to map the genetic diversity of trees and other forest resources.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you are aware, the diversity of forest genetic resources is of vital interest to us all. Conserving this diversity is an essential challenge as forest genetic resources are the basis for the capacity in forests to adapt to environmental change.

Yet, despite our vital interest in the conservation and sustainable use of these resources, we have been slow to inventory and understand them. The Convention on Biological Diversity recognizes the need to do more in this regard and is fully supportive of increased scientific investigation.

This is why the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, at its tenth meeting, held in Nagoya, Japan, in 2010, explicitly *recognized* the importance of forest genetic diversity for the conservation and sustainable use of forest biodiversity, including in the context of addressing climate change and maintaining the resilience of forest ecosystems. In decision X/36, the Conference of the Parties *welcomed* the preparation by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization of the report on *The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources*. In the same decision, the Conference of the Parties *invited* Parties, other Governments, and relevant organizations to support the preparation of the report, and *requested* the Executive Secretary to collaborate with FAO in the preparation, including by participating in relevant sessions of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and its Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources.

Last, but not least, forest genetic resources also play a fundamental role in scientific research and in the development of commercial products in a variety of sectors, including pharmaceutical, biotechnology, and seed and crop industries. Identifying useful properties of forest genetic resources – often following leads from the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities – has helped scientists to better understand biodiversity and can enable industries to develop new products for the benefit of humankind.

In this context, the Conference of the Parties adopted the new *Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from Their Utilization*. The Protocol regulates the relationship between providers and users of genetic resources, including forest genetic resources, within and across scientific and economic sectors. As we move into the future, this historic agreement may greatly affect the future use of forest genetic resources, ensure the sharing of benefits arising from their utilization with biodiversity-rich developing countries through technology transfer, research results, training and profits.

I regret that I am unable to be with you but I look forward to learning about the dialogue and ideas that emerge from this meeting. The 2010 International Year of Biodiversity was a resounding success – and we are translating our achievements into an equally successful 2011 International Year of Forests. I thank you for your kind attention and wish you a fruitful meeting.
