



**STATEMENT BY AHMED DJOGHLAF
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DIVERSITY**

on the occasion of
World Migratory Bird Day

14 and 15 May 2011

All life on the planet is inter-connected. On World Migratory Bird Day today, we are reminded that changes on the land mean changes in the skies.

Human activities on land, through for example forestry, agriculture, mining and urban expansion, lead to land degradation such as deforestation and wetland loss. This change in the use of land leads to fragmentation of habitat. Migratory birds rely on consistent and secure networks of habitats along their annual migration paths. Changes to these, can have devastating consequences.

We know the results. As reported in Global Biodiversity Outlook 3, the situation of birds is not good. Farmland bird populations in Europe have declined by on average 50% since 1980. Of the 1,200 waterbird populations with known trends, 44% are in decline. A study in the central Amazon region of Brazil found that forest fragments of less than one square kilometer lost half of their bird species in less than fifteen years. Salt marshes, important as natural storm barriers and as habitats for shorebirds, have lost some 25% of the area they originally covered globally, and current rates of loss are estimated to be between one and two per cent per year.

Governments are making stronger commitments to stem this loss. At the Nagoya Biodiversity summit, governments agreed to the Global Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Over the next ten years, this framework will provide the basis for a new relationship between humanity and nature, including actions that can help migratory species.

Under the Plan, Important biodiversity areas will be protected through an increase in effectively managed protected areas. Complete legal protection is currently given to only 26% of Important Bird Areas (IBAs). Of nearly 11,000 IBAs in 218 countries, on average only some 39% of their area is included in protected areas. Similarly, only 35% of sites holding the entire population of one or more highly threatened species are fully covered by protected areas. While the proportion

of both of these categories of sites under legal protection has increased significantly in recent years, more needs to be done.

Another Aichi Target includes reducing habitat loss and degradation, by as much as half, through such measures as broad-scale land-use policies that incorporate biodiversity concerns.

A commitment to more sustainable agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture will include policies that lead to biodiversity-friendly practices that reduce the impact of these activities on migratory species and the habitats they rely upon.

In some cases, restoration will be the best way to ensure that Migratory Birds have the habitat they need. Governments have committed to restoring some 15% of degraded ecosystems, as a contribution to ecosystem resilience and other benefits.

In order to ensure that these commitments are honoured, the United Nations General Assembly has declared 2011-2020 to be the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity. This decade will be an opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of biodiversity and the impacts of human activities on the species and ecosystems of our planet.

Through raising awareness of the plight of groups of species, such as migratory birds, greater support for policies that will conserve and protect their habitat can be realized.

On this World Migratory Bird Day, I invite you to not only look around you, but also to the skies, and to reflect and take action that preserves the vital habitat of migratory species.
