

**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY****PRESS RELEASE**

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**THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY WELCOMES THE ADOPTION OF THE DECLARATION ON
THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

Montreal –30 June 2006

Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of Convention on Biological Diversity, has welcomed the recent adoption by the United Nations Human Rights Council, of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. “This is of great significance and will give added impetus to the implementation of the programme of work of Article 8(j) of the Convention, which is of major interest to indigenous and local communities”.

Preservation of nature is at the heart of the cultures and values of traditional societies. The conservation, sustainable use and equitable sharing of the benefits that nature provides - the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity - are the cornerstones of indigenous societies. For more than 300 million indigenous peoples, the Earth offers not only life, but also is the basis of their cultural and spiritual identity. Because it is inherited from the ancestors, and includes trans-generational obligations, it is a sacred heritage.

It is for these reasons that the Convention on Biological Diversity is one of the major intergovernmental process which recognizes the unique role of indigenous and local communities in achieving sustainable development. This recognition is enshrined in both the preambular of the Convention text as well as in its key provisions.

The Declaration recognizes that “respect for indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment”. In doing so, it echoes Article 8(j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which calls on Parties to the Convention to respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities relevant for the conservation of biological diversity, to promote their wider applications with the approval of knowledge holders and to encourage equitable sharing of benefits arising out of its use.

The Convention is also exploring elements of *sui generis* systems, as well as other mechanisms and measures, for the protection of traditional knowledge in line with article 26 of the Declaration, which requests States to give due recognition to indigenous peoples’ laws, traditions, customs and land-tenure systems, as well as article 29, which recognizes indigenous peoples right to maintain, control, protect and develop their traditional knowledge, technologies, including human and genetic resources and seeds and medicines, including knowledge of fauna and flora.

Moreover, through the development under the Convention of the Akwé: Kon Guidelines for the Conduct of Impact Assessments regarding Developments proposed for Sacred Sites and Lands and Waters Traditionally Occupied or Used by Indigenous and Local Communities, the Convention has significantly contributed to article 30 of the Declaration, which calls for the development of effective measures to address environmental, economic, spiritual and social impacts of developments proposed to take place of indigenous lands or territories.

Consistent with articles 40 and 41 of the Declaration, the Parties to the Convention are committed to the participation of indigenous peoples in issues affecting them. Furthermore, to enhance their participation, in March 2006, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention became the first governing body of a multilateral environmental agreement to establish a voluntary funding mechanism specifically for the participation of indigenous and local communities in meetings held under the Convention.

“The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the results of more than 12 years of intensive negotiations, comes at the time when the Convention on Biological Diversity is entering a new and exciting phase of the implementation of its threefold objectives and will provide the political impetus to the implementation of the programme of work of Article 8(j) of the Convention, which is of major interest to indigenous and local communities,” concluded Mr. Ahmed Djoghla.

Information for Journalists:

The Convention on Biological Diversity is one of the most broadly-subscribed international environmental treaties in the world. Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro Brazil in 1992, it currently has 188 Parties—187 States and the European Community— who have committed themselves to its three main goals: the conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of its components and the equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. The Secretariat of the Convention is located in Montreal.

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