

## COMMUNIQUÉ

### President of Tunisia gives a voice to the youth for protecting life on Earth and their future

*Montreal, 11 June 2010* – In a letter to the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali announced the establishment, in support of the International Year of Biodiversity and the International Year of Youth, a range of youth institutions as part of its fourth National Youth Consultation.

Held every five years, the National Youth Consultation offers the opportunity for Tunisia to take cognizance of conditions, attitudes and expectations among the country's youth, which are then taken into consideration when formulating development plans and policies.

“Children's Municipal Councils” and a “Children's Parliament” have been therefore established to serve as a consultative institution that includes youth from both genders, with a composition matching that of the Chamber of Deputies according to each district, so that they become imbued with the values of dialogue, consensus and participation, draw benefits and benefit others, and imitate parliamentary work in its procedures and operating rules.

On Tunisia's proposal, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2010 as the International Year of Youth. To mark the Year, Tunisia has planned several activities, which include establishing “Friends of the Environment” associations in children's clubs, and “Environment Clubs” in educational institutions. It has integrated environmental education within school curricula, and involved the written and audiovisual media in serving these national objectives. In addition, “Our Programme for the Future (2009-2014)” provides for the establishment of a “Youth and the Environment” forum in each youth centre, and the adoption of a “Youth Agenda 21” so as to enhance youth's volunteer action in this field.

In handing over the letter of the President of Tunisia to Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Tunisia's Consul in Montreal, Mr. Imed Sassi, said, “It is an honour to give you this letter of commitment of the Government of Tunisia for the creation of these youth institutions, on behalf of the honourable leader of Tunisia, His Excellency President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. These youth committees will engage with all issues of sustainability and biodiversity. It is significant to do this in the year 2010, an extraordinary year, as it is both the International Year of Biodiversity and, as a coincidence, also the United Nations International Year of Youth.”

Mr. Imed Sassi added, “Youth is the future human capital that can help the world realize the Millennium Development Goals, the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and all the associated policies for sustainability and youth. Tunisia congratulates Ahmed Djoghlaif and his team for helping to spread the messages and objectives of the International Year of Biodiversity around the world.”

In receiving the letter from the President of Tunisia, Mr Ahmed Djoghlaif stated, “I applaud the leadership of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to give voice to the youth of today, the citizens of tomorrow, in building their future, which cannot be dissociated with protection of biodiversity. This is indeed a major contribution to the success of the International Year of Biodiversity as biodiversity is life, biodiversity is our life and biodiversity is the future of our children.”

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