

UNITED NATIONS



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## THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**  
**22 May 2004**

Biological diversity provides the basic goods and ecological services on which all life depends and is now recognized as crucial to sustainable development, the eradication of poverty and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The theme of this year's International Day for Biological Diversity -- *Biodiversity: Food, Water and Health for All* -- underlines biodiversity's importance in ensuring food security and adequate supplies of water, and in protecting the wide array of traditional medicines and modern pharmaceuticals that are based on the world's biological riches.

Ever since the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, where Governments committed themselves to achieving a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010, biodiversity has assumed an increasingly prominent place in the forums where human development and the survival of our planet are debated. Governments are recognizing that the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Biosafety Protocol, as well as the processes the two agreements have set in motion, are crucial for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and for the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.

The past 12 months have brought a number of advances. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety entered into force last September. The parties to the Convention adopted indicators to measure progress towards the 2010 target. The Parties also decided to support the elaboration and negotiation of an international regime on access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing.

These and other actions must, however, be supported by national policies and by new additional financial and technical resources. Moreover, it must be remembered that responsibility for the preservation of biodiversity extends far beyond Governments. Every individual, local community, sector and organization, whether private, public, national, international or non-governmental, has an obligation and an interest in changing outlooks through education and by example, thereby helping to end thoughtless or deliberate waste and destruction.

The consequences of failing to stop the loss of biodiversity are too awful to contemplate. Our highest priority should be to guarantee the health and effective functioning of the earth's life support systems -- on land, in the seas and in the air. On the International Day for Biological Diversity, let us renew our pledge to promote global awareness of the value of biodiversity, and most of all to do our utmost to preserve our priceless source of life.