



Secretariat of the
Convention on Biological
Diversity

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIODIVERSITY
PROTECT BIODIVERSITY IN DRYLANDS

22 May
2006



ACHIEVING THE 2010 TARGET!

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STATEMENT BY

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EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

TO

WORLD HERITAGE AND CLIMATE CHANGE EXPERT MEETING
UNESCO

Paris, 16-17 March 2006

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Climate change, through temperature increases ("global warming"), sea-level rise, changes in precipitation patterns, and increased frequencies of extreme weather events, is exerting considerable impacts on the Earth's biodiversity. Recent findings by the scientific community suggest that global warming is causing considerable shifts in species spatial distributions, consistent with earlier predictions by climate change models, and that spring is arriving earlier in temperate latitudes. Entire regions are also suffering from the effects of global warming; in particular, boreal and polar ecosystems. The incidence of pest outbreaks, particularly in forest ecosystems, is correlated with changes in ambient temperatures. The recent extinction of at least one vertebrate species, the golden toad, is directly attributable to the effects of contemporary climate change.

Although past changes in the global climate resulted in major shifts in species ranges and marked reorganization of biological communities, landscapes, and biomes during the last thousands of years, these changes occurred in landscapes that were not as fragmented as today, and with little or no pressures from human activities. This means that on the one hand, current climate change coupled with other human pressures is stressing biodiversity far beyond the levels imposed by the global climatic change that occurred in the recent evolutionary past. On the other hand, this also suggests that while designing activities aimed at mitigating the impacts of climate change, biodiversity considerations are essential.

The impacts of climate change on biodiversity are of major concern to the Convention on Biological Diversity. At its fifth meeting in 2000, the Conference of the Parties drew attention to the serious impacts of loss of biodiversity on terrestrial and marine ecosystems, and on people's livelihoods and requested the Convention's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) to establish an ad hoc technical expert group which, between 2001 and 2003 carried out an in-depth assessment of the inter-linkages between biodiversity and climate change and its implications for the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol. One of the report's main findings is that there are significant opportunities for mitigating climate change, and for adapting to climate change while enhancing the conservation of biodiversity. The report also identifies a suite of tools, including the ecosystem approach of the Convention, that can help decision makers to assess the likely impacts and make informed choices when designing and implementing mitigation and adaptation projects.

At its seventh meeting in 2004, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention further requested SBSTTA to develop advice for promoting synergy among activities to address climate change at the national, regional and international level, including activities to combat desertification and land degradation, and activities for the conservation of and sustainable use of biodiversity. Another expert group on biodiversity and adaptation to climate change was then established which undertook a detailed assessment on the integration of biodiversity considerations in the implementation of adaptation activities to climate change. SBSTTA welcomed the report at its eleventh meeting late last year, and requested the expert group to further refine its contents. The report is undergoing revisions and it will be published in the CBD Technical Series later

this year. One of the main findings of the report is that the ability of natural and managed ecosystems to adapt autonomously to climate change is insufficient to arrest the rate of biodiversity loss and that directed adaptation towards increasing ecosystem resilience be promoted.

Collectively, the findings of these two reports provide comprehensive advice and guidance on how to mainstream biodiversity into climate change activities, at the biophysical level and at the level of tools and practical approaches. This information can be applied to the management of protected areas in general, and to World Heritage sites in particular, in order to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity is fully committed to exploring ways and means to enhance its collaboration with the World Heritage Committee on this topic, bearing in mind the challenge we all face to reduce significantly by 2010 the rate of biodiversity loss in the world as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on earth. I wish you all success in your workshop.