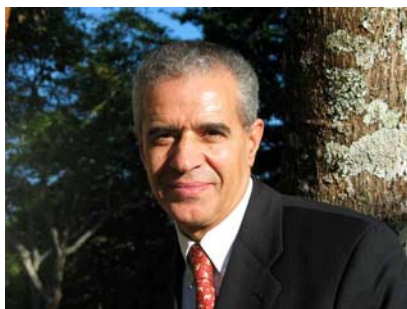


**MESSAGE OF DR. AHMED DJOGLAF,
THE NEW EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
TO CITIZENS OF CANADA**



The roots of modern-day Canada are inextricably linked to its wealth of natural resources. More than 1,000 years ago Norse colonists from Greenland came here, excited by reports of abundant timber. Later, they were followed by Western European fishing fleets and fur traders attracted by the continent's immensely rich waters and forests.

The whole culture and the livelihoods of the Canadian Inuit of the far north are founded on their close relationship with the mammals and marine life of the land and sea.

So it is fitting that Canada, and in particular the city of Montreal, is host to the Convention on Biological Diversity—the international treaty aimed at conserving life on Earth, which was signed at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

It is also fitting that Canada is grappling with some of the huge challenges facing the planet in respect of biological diversity.

The Great Lakes, shared between Canada and the United States, were perilously polluted in the 1970s. However, major improvements have been made over the past few decades. For example Lake Erie, which was once considered all but biologically dead, is now the world's largest walleye fishery. The Great Lakes are also testament to the devastating environmental and economic losses that can be triggered by alien invasive species like the zebra mussel. This continues to be an area of major concern for our Convention.

Climate change, probably the biggest emerging threat to all life on Earth, is also taken seriously by Canada. I applaud the new climate-change initiatives of the Canadian Government, and its successful hosting of the talks in December which reignited the political will to tackle this over-arching threat.

Montreal itself is part of the solution. It has joined the Cities Alliance, which announced at the climate talks that they will reduce greenhouse-gas emissions by 20 per cent by 2010.



In keeping with the spirit of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Canada and Montreal recognize that little can be achieved without building bridges and forging partnerships between the developed and the developing world and between all segments of society.

The landmark strategy adopted in 2003 for the conservation of critical species and habitats in North America brings together not only Canada and the United States but also, significantly, Mexico. Among its many goals is the promotion of collaborative responses to the threats faced by ecosystems, habitats and species while also evaluating and pinpointing links between trade and biodiversity.

2006 marks the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the permanent Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal. It is a time to reflect. And it provides an opportunity to renew action aimed at achieving the internationally agreed target of reducing the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010.

Canada and the city of Montreal have already given a lot to the cause of biological diversity. But I would, humbly and politely, urge even more from our hosts and from a wider variety of actors.

In my capacity as the new Executive Secretary of your Convention, and to mark this tenth anniversary, I am calling on the citizens of Canada to join forces with their Convention by establishing “Canadian Friends of the Convention on Life on Earth”.

I am extending an invitation that I hope will attract the support of “friends” from not only government and civil society, but also from Canadian scientists, the media, cultural communities, indigenous groups, the art world and women. In short, I call on every Canadian citizen to register as a Friend of the Convention.

I look forward to welcoming our new Friends of the Convention for a first gathering in June this year.

Montreal
2 March 2006