



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIODIVERSITY
PROTECT BIODIVERSITY IN DRYLANDS

**22 May
2006**



ACHIEVING THE 2010 TARGET!

Statement by

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**Executive Secretary
Convention on Biological Diversity**

to the

**United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at its
fifth session**

**New York
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Madame Chair,
Distinguished delegates,

From its inception, the Convention on Biological Diversity has attached the highest importance to the need to protect and conserve the rich biodiversity heritage of indigenous and local communities. Article 8(j) of the Convention focuses specifically on respecting, preserving and maintaining traditional knowledge and the equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge. As a cross-cutting issue, the perspectives and traditional knowledge of indigenous and local communities are also being incorporated in all the programmes of work under the Convention.

The high priority attached to the promotion of Article 8(j) of the Convention can be seen in the establishment by the Parties to the Convention of the Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions of the Convention, which provides advice to the Parties regarding its effective implementation. The Working Group has met four times. Its most recent meeting was held in Granada, Spain, in January this year, at the kind invitation of the Government of Spain. It was attended by more than 100 representatives of indigenous and local communities.

As an indication of the importance placed on the implementation of Article 8(j), and the participation of indigenous and local communities, the Convention is the only multilateral environmental agreement with two full-time positions in its Secretariat exclusively focused on traditional knowledge and its role in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

At its eighth meeting, held in Curitiba, Brazil, in March this year, the Conference of the Parties 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. In recognition of the diversity of indigenous and local communities, the Conference of the Parties also established separate categories of accreditation for indigenous communities and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles.

The eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties attracted large numbers of participants from indigenous and local communities, and more than 1,000 non-governmental organizations participated, including 348 indigenous organizations. Outside this Forum, the Convention hosts one of the largest gatherings of indigenous and local communities within the international system, which is further testimony to the high priority given by indigenous and local communities to the work of the Convention.

The eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties adopted a number of decisions of relevance to the Permanent Forum and has requested that the Executive Secretary transmit these to you.

In particular, the Conference of the Parties took note of the draft elements of an ethical code of conduct to ensure respect for the cultural and intellectual heritage of indigenous and local communities relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity to seek the collaboration of this Forum in the development of the code. You may recall that the development of this code is a direct response to a request made at your second session.

The Conference of the Parties also invited the Permanent Forum to support and collaborate with the Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions and the Indicators Initiative of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity to organize an international expert seminar on indicators relevant for indigenous and local communities and the Convention on Biological Diversity, with the aim of supporting the work of the Working Group on Article 8(j), the Strategic Plan of the Convention, the 2010 target of reducing the rate of biodiversity loss, and the Millennium Development Goals. My representative will meet with members of the Forum, its secretariat and representatives of the IIFB during this meeting to advance this task.

In response to a recommendation arising from the third session of the Permanent Forum, the Conference of the Parties, in its decision VII/16, called for the organization of a workshop on cultural, environmental and social impact assessments based on the Akwé: Kon Voluntary Guidelines, aimed at the further strengthening of the understanding of the link between environment and cultural diversity. The Workshop was held in Tokyo from 30 May to 2 June 2005, and was attended by 189 experts from Member States and indigenous organizations. The Workshop was conducted in partnership with UNESCO, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the United Nations University and FAO as part of the broader symposium entitled “Conserving Cultural and Biological Diversity: the Role of Sacred Natural Sites and Cultural Landscapes” – an activity of the World Expo 2005 in Aichi, Japan. The participants adopted by consensus a Declaration on the Role of Sacred Natural Sites and Cultural Landscapes in the Conservation of Biological Diversity, which the Conference of the Parties requested be transmitted to this Forum.

The Conference of the Parties also took note of the request by this Forum (again arising from your third session) to the Working Group on Article 8(j) to advance its mandate to develop mechanisms for effective *sui generis* systems of protection for traditional knowledge based on customary laws of indigenous peoples. In response, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to further develop as a priority issue, the possible elements of *sui generis* systems and to inform other relevant organizations, including the Permanent Forum, of the potential elements to be considered in the development of *sui generis* systems for the protection of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices.

Regarding the ongoing negotiations of an international regime on access and benefit sharing of genetic resources, the Conference of the Parties has taken positive steps to enhance the involvement of indigenous and local communities, including by encouraging the participation of representatives of indigenous and local communities in government delegations and it is expected that the next meeting on Article 8(j) will make a significant contribution to the finalization of the negotiations.

Finally, I want to emphasize that the Convention is entering an exciting phase of enhanced implementation in which not only the Parties but also the indigenous and local communities and organizations such as the Permanent Forum, have a major role to play.

In my capacity as the new Executive Secretary, I attach the highest importance to enhancing our relationship with the Permanent Forum and to promoting the implementation of the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity relevant to

indigenous and local communities. I look forward to establishing a solid and vibrant relationship with you as we pursue are mutual goals for the benefit of the world's indigenous and local communities.

I also look forward to working with you and the Forum in the months and years ahead to ensure the full implementation of the objectives of the Convention for the benefit of your communities and the environment.

Thank you for your attention.