



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIODIVERSITY
PROTECT BIODIVERSITY IN DRYLANDS

22 May
2006



ACHIEVING THE 2010 TARGET!

Platform for Agro-biodiversity Research Stakeholder Meeting, 29-31 May, 2006 Rome, Italy

Message from Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif (Executive Secretary)

Mr. President,
Distinguished scientists,
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very honoured to have this opportunity to address close collaboration between IPGRI and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. It is regrettable that I am prevented from attending this important meeting at the launch of the platform, which addresses one of the most important topics for the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Despite the efforts made since 1992, loss of habitats, species and genetic diversity has continued. Agricultural biological diversity is no exception. The challenges that we face in the field are considerable. Three outstanding characteristics of agriculture and its impacts on biodiversity are scale, complexity, and linkages with culture.

The scale of the agriculture is vast. Nearly one third of the world's land area is used for food production, making agriculture the largest single cause of habitat conversion on a global basis. Agriculture is also the primary user of water and often unsustainably. The impacts of agricultural activities are not confined within the boundaries of farms or fields. As agricultural production seeks to meet the rising demand for food, conversion of forests and marginal lands to agriculture are substantially reducing levels of biological diversity. Excessive use of nutrients and pesticides have led to problems of pollution and eutrophication. Clearly the ecosystem approach to management is needed.

Culture is also affected. We are witnessing a tremendous reduction in the genetic diversity of the sources of our food. Since the beginning of agriculture, about 7,000 plant species have been cultivated and collected for food by humans. But today, 90% of our food energy and protein comes from only 15 plant, and 8 animal species with disturbing consequences for nutrition and food security. The whole way of life is affected by the loss of diversity.

In French, the word for mother, *mere*, relates to word *mer* - meaning ocean. The ocean is the mother of life. The linkage has inspired laypeople and attracted poets. In a similar manner, the term *agriculture* includes the word *culture*. The attempt to sustain agricultural biodiversity is not only about the sustaining seeds and crops. It is about sustaining the diversity of our diets, ways of life, and our cultures. The importance of local and indigenous communities, their



traditional knowledge and culture is enshrined in the CBD. I am sure that we will see such interactions during the development of the platform.

We do not forget the great contributions that agriculture has also made to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The maintenance of genetic diversity by farmers, for example, is based upon centuries of experience. Farmers understand better than most the concept of sustainability. Similarly, the organisations that support agriculture, including IPGRI as a notable example, have made their own significant contributions. But as the challenges facing agriculture increase, our efforts must be re-doubled if we are to reverse global trends.

The in-depth review of the programme of work on agricultural biodiversity is planned to take place at the 13th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) followed by its consideration at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in June, 2008. As experienced experts in the field, you are welcomed to provide your inputs into this process. I am personally convinced that this platform will be of great help.

I would like to congratulate IPGRI for your successful launch of the platform. I wish you a fruitful meeting and thank you for your attention.