



CBD

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## **The Relevance of the 2010 Biodiversity Target to the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals**

Biological diversity is the result of millions of years of evolution and comprises the totality of life on Earth. Ecosystems provide the essential requirements for life, protection from natural disasters and diseases and the very basis for human culture. Indeed biodiversity is not only an environmental issue but is also a cultural and spiritual consideration as well as an economic and a financial challenge.

The preservation of nature is at the heart of the cultures and values of past and present human civilizations. Biodiversity is also an engine of growth and prosperity and its loss is both a cause and a consequence of poverty and hunger.

However, we are now facing an unparalleled extinction of biodiversity. Never since human beings first appeared have changes to our planet's natural functioning been so destructive as over the last half-century. Pressure from human activities on the natural functioning of the planet has reached such an extent that the ability of ecosystems to meet the needs of future generations is now seriously—perhaps irreversibly—jeopardized.

The second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook, recently published by the Convention on Biological Diversity, echoed the startling findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment which was conducted over four years by more than 1,395 experts from over 95 countries. Of the 24 ecosystem services studied, 15 are in decline.

Over the last century, species extinction rates rose by a factor of 1,000. Twenty per cent of known bird species have already disappeared. Forty-one per cent of mammals are in decline and 28 per cent are under direct threat.

Until recently, forests covered 47 per cent of the Earth's land surface. Now they have totally disappeared in 25 countries and, in a further 29 countries, 90 per cent of forest cover has been lost. In the Caribbean, the average hard-coral cover has fallen from 50 to 10 per cent over the last three decades. Some 35 per cent of mangroves have been destroyed in the last twenty years.

Since the dawn of history, humans have used more than 7,000 plant species to satisfy their needs. Today, only 150 plants are used, and most of us use only 12 species. Between 1950 and 1980, more land was converted for the growing of crops than in the



eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries combined. And yet, over the last fifty years, two thirds of croplands have been degraded in one way or another.

This escalating biodiversity crisis is presenting a real and tangible threat to efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted in 2000 by more than 100 Heads of State at the Millennium Summit.

The MDGs were adopted as a global commitment to the 2.7 billion people living on less than \$2 per day, the 820 million people suffering from hunger in developing countries and the 25% of humankind who do not have access to safe drinking water. The MDGs have been adopted during a time of unprecedented economic growth, technological advance and scientific progress. Since 1950, we have seen a six-fold increase in global wealth. In 2004, international trade grew by 9 per cent and, according to the World Trade Organization, global exports of goods passed the 10,000-billion dollar level.

As a result the “ecological footprint” of mankind now extends 20 per cent beyond the biological capacity of the planet. If everyone was to have the same standard of living as the United Kingdom, we would need three and a half planets. If we all wanted to enjoy the same consumption patterns as American citizens, we would need five.

Mankind is living beyond the means and capacities of our planet and as we continue to irreplaceably damage ecosystems, our ability to respond to the global challenges we are facing fades. Indeed many of the basic human requirements addressed under the MDGs depend on the provision of ecosystem services.

Goal 1 on reducing extreme poverty and hunger, for example, is intricately linked to the use of biodiversity resources. More than 1.6 billion people, including 1 billion poor people, depend on forests for their livelihoods. Forests are also home to 80 per cent of the remaining terrestrial biodiversity. However, 12-15 million hectares of forests are lost globally each year. At the same time, habitat degradation and the loss of biodiversity are threatening the livelihoods of more than 1 billion people living in dry and sub-humid lands. The livelihoods of three billion of people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity however these resources are being overexploited and some predicts that fish will disappear from the ocean as early as 2040, in less than 33 years from now.

Recent reports from the World Health Organization reveal that owing to the deterioration of the health of our ecosystems, 36 new human infectious diseases have emerged since 1960. WHO has indeed documented that human health is highly dependant on a healthy, well-functioning environment, which cannot exist without biodiversity. For example, 60% of childhood malarial fevers in Ghana are treated first with plant-based medicines in the home. In a world where safe drinking water is directly related to health, in 2025, two thirds of mankind—more than 5.5 billion human beings will live in countries with a serious shortage of drinking water.

Without biodiversity and its associated ecosystem services how can we possibly expect to achieve MDGs four, five and six to reduce child mortality, improve maternal health and combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases?

In response to the strain, 110 Heads of State and Government decided, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, to significantly reduce the

rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. This commitment - the so called 2010 biodiversity target - was reaffirmed when the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and its goals was reviewed in New York in September 2005.

The 2010 biodiversity target can be reached, provided that the international community redoubles its efforts to conserve, sustainably use and promote the fair and equitable sharing of nature's goods and services. It requires unprecedented efforts at global, regional and national levels.

The 4000 participants attending the eight meeting of the Conference of the Parties held in Curitiba, Brazil responded to this urgent call for action for the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target by adopting 34 decisions which heralded a new enhanced phase of implementation of the Convention.

For the first time in Curitiba a president and two vice-presidents attended the high level segment which took the form of an inter-active dialogue among ministers. The participants considered the contribution of biodiversity to the achievement of the MDGs. Ministers and other heads of delegation stressed that the 2010 target and the MDGs should be mutually supportive and invited the Secretary General to consider including the 2010 biodiversity target as part of the MDGs.

In response to this call, the Secretary General of the United Nations, in his report to the 61<sup>st</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly recommended the integration of the 2010 biodiversity target as part of goal 7 of the MDGs on ensuring environmental sustainability.

Further, in response to the Curitiba appeal, and at the initiative of France and IUCN, 400 participants adopted in September 2006 the Paris Message on integrating biodiversity into European development cooperation.

The Participants, in adopting this message, noted that the 2010 biodiversity target was to be achieved as a "contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on earth". Particular priorities for action include:

- Promote sustainable rural development using biodiversity as an asset for rural poverty reduction, thus minimizing risk, improving food security, nutrition and health;
- Develop and support the use of innovative financial mechanisms for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and poverty reduction;
- Strengthen civil society, in particular local communities and indigenous peoples, in order to build the domestic constituency for the integration of environment and development;
- Integrate environmental issues in national planning strategies for poverty reduction and macroeconomic policy instruments (PRSPs), and monitor progress of turning policy into action.

The European Union General Affairs and External Relations Council at its December meeting welcomed the Paris Message and early this year Germany, Portugal and Slovenia adopted the Biodiversity Agenda of the Triple European Union Presidencies for the period of January 2007 to June 2008 . They decided to cooperate to ensure the success of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to be held in Germany in May 2008

making COP 9 a European Union event. They noted that at the time of COP 9 only two years will remain to demonstrate the world's achievement towards 2010 biodiversity target.

To mobilize the support of the international community, on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2006, the 61<sup>st</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly decided to proclaim 2010 as the international year on biodiversity. 2010 will also coincide with the timeframe agreed in Curitiba for the finalization of the negotiation of the international regime on access and benefit sharing another commitment adopted in 2010 in Johannesburg at the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

Therefore COP 10 needs a leader. I am extremely pleased to learn that Japan, has decided to be this leader by offering to host what can be already considered an historical meeting. Japan, with its unique experience in protecting its 90,000 species has much to offer as a leader and as a country which has succeeded in demonstrating that economic growth can be achieved while protecting the environment.

The United Nations University located in Japan is a critical partner in the achievement of both the MDGs and the 2010 biodiversity target. In addition to conducting critical research within the thematic area of environment and sustainable development, the UNU's role in disseminating research and enhancing synergies within the United Nations system is helping us move forward. The Convening of COP 10 in Japan will offer another opportunity to enhance our partnership with this unique institution. Today's event, organized by UNU, is a vibrant testimony of such a partnership. I would like to once again thank UNU for hosting these lectures, and I pledge, once more, to work collaboratively with the UNU for the benefit of all life on Earth.