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Secretariat of the
Convention on Biological Diversity

22 May 2007
International Day for Biological Diversity



Biodiversity and Climate Change

STATEMENT

by

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OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY**

at the

**MINISTERIAL PANEL DISCUSSION ON UNITED
NATIONS REFORM AT THE TWENTY-FOURTH
SESSION OF THE GOVERNING
COUNCIL/GLOBAL MINISTERIAL
ENVIRONMENT FORUM (GC-24/GMEF)**

Nairobi, 7 February 2007

Please check against delivery



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**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

In 1945, in San Francisco, the United Nations Organization was established in response to people's cry for international peace and security in the aftermath of the most devastating war waged by humanity against itself. It was also established based on the strong conviction of its founders that multilateral cooperation is the most powerful instrument to promote and maintain peace and security in the world. For the last 61 years, the United Nations has played an irreplaceable role in maintaining peace and security in the world. In 2001, it received the Nobel Peace Prize as a worldwide recognition of its unique contribution to the promotion and maintenance of international peace and world security.

In Stockholm in 1972, the United Nations Environment Programme was established in response to people's cry to address the collateral damage of the industrial revolution. It was also established based on the strong conviction that multilateral cooperation is the most powerful instrument to address global environmental issues. For the last thirty-five years, UNEP has played an irreplaceable role in promoting international cooperation for the environment. Your meeting, the Global Ministerial Environment Forum is a worldwide recognition of UNEP's unique contribution in promoting global consensus for the environment as reflected in the Malmö Declaration adopted at your first meeting, held in May 2000, as well as today large ministerial participation.

In Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Commission on Sustainable Development was established in response to people's cry for the need to reconcile environmental protection with development processes based on the principle of intra- and inter-generational equity and international solidarity. Based on this conviction, a new generation of multilateral environment agreements was also born in Rio, agreements that include a dedicated financial mechanism. Over the last fifteen years, and with the financial support of the Global Environment Facility and its three implementing agencies, the Rio conventions have played an irreplaceable role in promoting global framework for addressing the interrelated issues of climate change, biodiversity and desertification.

Five years ago at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the 2010 biodiversity target was adopted by 110 Heads of State and Government in response to people's cry for the need to stop the loss of life on Earth as a result of unprecedented loss of biodiversity over the last fifty years. This commitment to reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010 was reiterated two years ago in New York by the 154 Heads of State and Government attending the World Review Summit.

The message of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment—prepared by 1,395 experts from 95 countries—is that 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. Never since human beings first appeared on Earth has anthropogenic change to our planet's natural functioning been so destructive as it has been over the last half-century, resulting in an unparalleled extinction of biodiversity on Earth. Two thirds of the ecosystems of our planet are in decline. Over the last century, species extinction rates rose by a factor of 1,000. Every hour, three species are disappearing. Every year, between 15,000 and 50,000 species are disappearing. Fifty per cent of the biodiversity of our planet may be lost before the end of the twenty-first century. The message of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment is also clear in another respect: the Johannesburg

target is achievable but requires unprecedented efforts at national, regional and international level. It requires also unprecedented efforts at institutional level.

The 4,000 participants and 95 Ministers attending the eight meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Curitiba, Brazil—one of the most megadiverse countries in the world—responded to this call for urgent action and launched a new phase of enhanced implementation of the three interrelated objectives of the Convention. They also agreed to review the implementation of the Convention with a view to adjusting it to the new phase at a meeting to be held in July this year. The report will be considered at the ninth meeting of Conference of the Parties, to be held in Bonn in May 2008.

Last week, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change comprising 2,500 experts from some 130 countries issued the most authoritative statement on climate change to date. Their report was unequivocal in its finding that humans are at fault, and the unprecedented level of concentration of greenhouse gases will continue for hundred of years. The message is crystal clear: there is an urgent need for collective, concerted and long-term effort to address the challenges of a warmer planet. People of the world have supported this call for urgent action through symbolic acts such as switching off their lights at the same time.

Last week, the participants to the six panels of the Paris Conference convened by Mr. Jacques Chirac, the President of France echoed the need for urgent action to address the lack of coherence of the global environmental governance. This lack of coherence was recognized by the Secretary-General's task force on environment and human settlements established in 1998 as well as by the Working Group of Ministers and High Officials on Global Environmental Governance established by your forum in Malmö at its very first meeting. It was also recognized by the Johannesburg Summit. It was further elaborated by the recent report of the High level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment.

This call for urgent action cannot be ignored by the United Nations organization established yesterday to promote peace and security of the world. Today the environment component of the concept of peace and security can no longer be ignored. The award in 2004 of the Nobel Peace Prize to Dr. Wangari Maathai has elevated the environment to a question of peace and security. The recent Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change expresses for the first time the staggering cost of inaction. It could reach over the coming years, 5,500 billion euros or nearly 20% of the world's GDP. As Albert Einstein put it: "Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted." The lack of action at the institutional level to address the unprecedented environmental challenges may be difficult to count, but the lost of the relevance and credibility of this institutions counts. As in 1945, the peoples of the world are calling for urgent action for a new United Nations responsive to the unfolding new threats on peace and security as well as on the very existence of life on Earth. Such a call cannot be ignored and postponing necessary UN reform can no longer be an acceptable option.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Following the publication of the IPCC report, Mr. Achim Steiner, the Executive Director of UNEP, stated that:

"Feb 2, 2007 will perhaps be remembered as the day the global thinking about climate change moved from debate to action. The focus will shift from whether climate change is due to human activities to what on earth are we going to do about it".

Let me therefore express the hope today that this session of the Global Ministerial Environment Forum will be remembered as the birth place of a renewed collective commitment of member States to equip their institution, the United Nations, to address the unprecedented environmental challenges facing mankind through functional and efficient global environmental governance.

I thank you for your kind attention.