



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

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International Day for Biological Diversity



Biodiversity and Climate Change

STATEMENT

by

MR. AHMED DJOGHLAF
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

at the opening of the

**MEETING ON “CITIES AND BIODIVERSITY:
ACHIEVING THE 2010 BIODIVERSITY TARGET”**

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Mayor Carlos Alberto Richa of Curitiba
 Mayor Gérald Tremblay of Montreal
 Mrs Bärbel Dieckmann, Mayor of Bonn
 Mayor Takehisa Matsubara of Nagoya
 Mayors,
 Ladies and Gentlemen,

When a family faces crises, it gets together and celebration of anniversaries is a good opportunity to provide a collective response to meet these challenges. As evidenced by the messages that we heard this morning humanity is facing unprecedented environmental challenges. The city of Curitiba at the occasion of its 314th anniversary has decided to assemble the mayors of the world to provide a collective response to the unprecedented loss of biodiversity of our planet. Humanity stands at a defining moment of its history.

The last edition of the “World Population Prospects” was issued last week. The world’s population is expected to reach 9.2 billion by 2050. Most of the growth will occur in developing countries and in cities. Every year, more than 50 million people, the equivalent of the populations of Spain and Portugal combined, are added to the population of the world’s cities.

This year marks a paradigm shift. 2007 will be remembered as a major milestone. For the first time in history, the world’s urban population will exceed its rural population. The majority of the world’s population is now living in urban areas, mainly in poor countries; poor in terms of money, but very rich in terms of biodiversity. A new era is born, the era of “*Homo Urbanus*”, the city dweller. The impact is expected to have far-reaching implications on humanity.

The growing urban world represents one of the most dramatic changes experienced by humanity in recent history. In 1820, London became the first modern city with a population of more than one million. Sixteenth other cities joined the list in 1900. Today the list includes 411 cities. The world city population has now reached 3.2 billion people. It has increased nearly fourfold since 1950.

In 1950, only two cities, New York and Tokyo, had a population of more than 10 million. Today, there are more than 20 megacities on the planet, and except for New York and Tokyo, they are all located in developing countries. Furthermore, in as early as 2030, four out of five urban residents in the world will live in developing countries and most of them in slums. Already about 1 billion urban dwellers live in slums.

India has already 10 of the 30 fastest growing cities in the world. It is expected that 140 million rural dwellers would migrate to Indian cities by 2030 and 700 million, a population equivalent to all Europe by 2050. It is therefore expected that 45,000 rural migrants will arrive in Indian cities every day between now and 2050 or 31 persons per minutes. India is one of the megadiverse countries and has 45,000 reported plants and 89,492 reported animal and only 70% of its territory has been surveyed.

Brazil, one of the world’s megadiverse countries, has 56,200 reported plants. The country hosts more plant species than all of the G-8 countries combined. In Shanghai, the population has grown by 11 per cent since 2000, to reach 18 million. China, another

megadiverse country, hosts more than 30,000 higher plants, 56% of them endemic, and ranks third in the world in terms of biodiversity after Brazil and Indonesia. South Africa covers 2 per cent of the world's territory but harbours 10 per cent of the biodiversity of the world. It hosts more species than the United States of America.

If not managed adequately, the growth of the urban population may accelerate the unprecedented loss of biodiversity of our planet. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, a study carried out by 1,395 experts from 95 countries, has shown that, since their appearance on Earth, human beings have never destroyed the web of life as much as during the last fifty years. The pressures exerted on the planet's natural functions by human activity have reached such a level that the ability of ecosystems to meet the needs of future generations is now seriously, and perhaps irretrievably, compromised.

In a recent past, 47 per cent of the Earth's surface was covered in forest. Since then, forest cover has completely vanished in 25 countries and only 10 per cent remains in 29 others. Ten million hectares of forests continue to disappear each year, the equivalent of an area three times larger than Belgium. It is a well-established fact that tropical forests are the richest ecosystems in terms of biodiversity. Although they only represent 7 per cent of the world's surface, tropical forests currently house up to 80 per cent identified living species. Some 35 per cent of mangroves have been destroyed in the last twenty years.

The extinction of animal and plant species is now between one hundred and one thousand times higher than the natural rate. Already, twenty per cent of known bird species have disappeared. Forty-one per cent of mammals are in decline and 28 per cent are under direct threat. Unless urgent action is taken, by mid-century up to fifth of the Earth's remaining plant species may be doomed to extinction.

Owing to unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, the "ecological footprint" of humankind now extends 20 per cent beyond the biological capacity of the planet. We are consuming more natural resources than can be regenerated. Humankind is living beyond the means and capacities of our planet. Cities occupy 2 per cent of the planet's surface but their residents use 75 per cent of the Earth's natural resources. Large populations living in megacities consume massive amounts of energy, thus contributing to climate change, which has been identified as one of the main drivers of the unprecedented loss of biodiversity. It is for this reason that the international community will celebrate on 22 May this year, the International Day for Biological Diversity under the theme biodiversity and climate change.

However, unsound urban management is not the unavoidable destiny of cities. Sound urbanization and ecologically managed cities can exist. One of the architect of the Curitiba miracle, Dr Jaime Lerner, stated that "cities are not the problem, they are the solution". Curitiba, known as "the most innovative city in the world" is a living testimony of this. Curitiba, the laboratory of the environment of Brazil, has decided to be the environmental laboratory of the world. By hosting last year the largest gathering of biodiversity experts in the life of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Curitiba has made a significant contribution to bringing the new phase of enhanced implementation of the three mutually supportive objectives of the Convention to life. Today, at the occasion of the first anniversary of this new era in the life of the Convention, the leaders as well as

the people of this great city have decided to make yet another major contribution in translating the enhanced phase of implementation into reality. Indeed, the battle of life on Earth urgently requires the active involvement of local authorities and the engagement of the Mayors of the world.

The city that has demonstrated that urban planning can and should also be an environmentally friendly plan is showing the way ahead. The launch, tomorrow afternoon, of the Curitiba BioCity initiative constitutes another demonstration of how the leaders and the people of this great city are leading by example. This complex and wide ranging plan on urban biodiversity, funded entirely by the municipal budget, will promote the knowledge and reintroduction of the regional native flora, establish permanent preservation areas as well as incentives for private conservation areas, ensure the maintenance of water resources and plant and manage more than 300,000 additional trees along the Curitiba streets. In addition, investments in the BioCity initiative have already started and will reach 175 million dollars over 6 years with significant partners like the Brazilian Federal Government, Brazilian development banks and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Curitiba's population consumes 23 per cent less fuel per capita than the Brazilian average, and every Curitibaño today has a share of 52 square metres of green areas. The City hosts 16 municipal parks, 14 urban forests and 1,113 smaller public green areas totaling more than 20 square kilometres of green areas within the Municipality. The City of Curitiba, "A Cidade da Gente", the city of all people, that in May 1992 hosted a meeting of 300 mayors as a contribution to the Rio Summit, is today hosting a meeting of mayors from all over the world as its contribution to advancing the biodiversity agenda. The city, that through its Cambio Verde, has transformed waste into an economical and financial instrument and reinvented the urban transport, is hosting today the first ever global meeting on cities and biodiversity. I would like therefore to convey to Mayor of the City of Curitiba, Mr. Carlos Alberto Richa, my deep gratitude and ask him to convey to the people of Curitiba our sincere thanks for the fantastic birthday gift offered at the occasion of the 314th anniversary of this great city by hosting this first-ever meeting on sharing best practices for protecting biodiversity in urban areas.

I would like also to congratulate Mr. Gérald Tremblay, the Mayor of Montreal, host of the Secretariat, for his well-deserved recent election as the Vice President of the World Mayors Council on Climate Change in Charge of Biodiversity. I would like also to extend my gratitude to the Lady Mayor of Bonn, Ms. Bärbel Dieckmann, for her active engagement for the preparation of the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to be held in May 2008 in Bonn. I would also like to thank Mr. Takehisa Matsubara, Mayor of Nagoya, for the offer to host the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, which will be a landmark event in the life of the Convention. I would like also to thank all the mayors and their representatives for attending today's meeting. Your massive participation demonstrates your commitment to the biodiversity agenda and your engagement to play your role in the battle for life on Earth.

We have heard this morning the message of Mr Achim Steiner, the Executive Director of UNEP who referred to the power of network and connectivity. It is this spirit which guided the work of the inter-agency task force established with the participation of all partners for preparing today meeting. I would like also to pay tribute to the members

of the inter-agency task force and convey to all of them my deep gratitude for a job well done..

As the cities will determine the fate of the remaining biodiversity of our planet, there is a strong view that the battle for life on Earth will be won or lost in the cities. Let's therefore ensure that the Curitiba meeting will be remembered by historians as the birth place of the Mayors Global Alliance for the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention on Life on Earth in the urban areas. It has been said that "local authorities move the world", let's ensure that future generations will remember today's meeting as the birthplace of the "*Green Homo Urbanus*".

I thank you for your kind attention.
