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# Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

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Biodiversity and Climate Change

## Statement

by

**Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention  
on Biological Diversity**

to the

**Second meeting of the Advisory Group on Article 8(j)  
and Related Provisions of the Convention on Biological  
Diversity**

**Montreal, 30 April 2007**

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to welcome the distinguished experts to the second meeting of the Advisory Group for Article 8(j) and Related Provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity. I am particularly pleased to welcome the representative from the Government of Brazil, a Party to the Convention with a particular interest in Article 8(j) and a rich diversity of indigenous and local communities, and the representative of the Government of Germany, which will host the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Bonn in May 2008.

In commencing today, I also want to thank the Government of Spain, whose representative was not able to attend this meeting, for their generous funding, which made this meeting possible and for Spain's ongoing support to the programme of work for Article 8(j).

Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity have recognized the symbiosis that exists between the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities and the conservation and sustainable use of life on Earth. They recognized that the survival of species goes hand in hand with the maintenance of traditional knowledge, and that much can be learned from indigenous and local communities in our efforts to ensure the sustainable use of biological diversity.

As we are rapidly approaching the target date of 2010 to achieve a significant reduction in the rate of loss of biodiversity, we must fully recognize and value the contribution that traditional knowledge can make to the achievement of the three pillars of the Convention: the conservation of biological diversity, its sustainable use and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources. The active involvement of indigenous and local communities around the world is therefore essential in the achievement of the ambitious target

Never since the appearance of man on Earth, have the impacts on the natural functions of our planet been as destructive as they have been in the last 50 years. The result has been an unprecedented extinction of biological diversity. The pressures on the planet's natural functions caused by human activity have reached such a high level that the ability of ecosystems to satisfy the needs of future generations is seriously, and perhaps irretrievably, compromised.

During the last century, the extinction rate of species increased a thousand times. Every hour, three species that are the result of thousands of years of evolution disappear forever. Each day, 150 species perish. Each year, between 18 and 55 thousand species become forever extinct. This loss of biodiversity is real and climate change, caused by human activity, is one of its main drivers.

The latest report published earlier this year by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, is categorical. The current concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is greater than it has ever been in the last 650,000 years. The report specifies that even if greenhouse-gas concentrations were now to stabilize, human-caused global warming and the rising of sea and ocean levels would continue for centuries due to the complexity of the world's climate and the interconnectivity of ecosystems.

At its eighth meeting, the Conference of the Parties noted with concern that indigenous and local communities, particularly those in the Arctic, small islands and high altitudes, are highly vulnerable to climate change, but more importantly that indigenous and local communities, in maintaining healthy ecosystems, can mitigate against climate change. During the course of this meeting, you will consider a paper that I have commissioned on this very issue containing proposed recommendations to the Working Group on Article 8(j) and, in turn, the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in an effort to highlight possible contribution of indigenous and local communities can make to this global issue.

The overall findings of research into climate change and biodiversity are horrific. According to a report from *Environment New Service* dated 2 August 1999:

“The current extinction rate is now approaching 1,000 times the background rate and may climb to 10,000 times the background rate during the next century, if present trends continue. At this rate, one-third to two-thirds of all species of plants, animals, and other organisms would be lost by the second half of the next century, a loss that would easily equal those of past mass extinctions.”

The facts are that many plant and animal species are unlikely to survive climate change. For some of these species, there will no longer be anywhere suitable to live. Others will be unable to reach places where the climate is suitable.

Such conclusions require urgent and unprecedented efforts and interventions from all stakeholders and the global community itself. It is for this reason that I wanted to address you here today.

We face a grave situation of increased biodiversity lost accelerated by climate change. Indigenous and local communities, often amongst the world’s most marginalized and impoverished people, will bear the brunt of this catastrophe because of their close association with lands and waters traditionally occupied and used by them and with the plants and animals contained therein. Indeed, indigenous and local communities are the human face of climate change.

I do not want to portray indigenous and local communities simply as victims of these events—for there is much that indigenous and local communities and their environmental knowledge can contribute to solutions on biodiversity loss and climate change. Indigenous and local communities have accumulated vast amounts of ecological knowledge in their long history of managing the environment. Indeed their very survival has relied on learning to use their local resources (including biological resources) in sustainable ways.

I want to appeal to the world’s indigenous and local communities and you, directly, in your roles of advisors on the programme of work on Article 8(j) and related provisions of the Convention, to accept the challenge of being partners with the Convention on Biological Diversity in this struggle to save life on Earth.

The Secretariat is determined to play its role and I, as the Executive Secretary, have initiated a new era of implementation to ensure that we face this important challenge. With no increases in core resources, the Secretariat has taken on many

additional efforts to ensure that we can address the 2010 challenge to slow the rate of biodiversity loss. The year 2010 will also be the International Year of Biodiversity and will provide us with an added focus to galvanize our efforts.

One such effort I want to recommend to you is the recently published newsletter for Article 8(j), which has been produced within existing resources, and is a major tool for the enhanced implementation of the Convention and the engagement of indigenous and local communities. I have also overseen the revitalization of the Convention's webpage, including the homepage for Article 8(j) and the traditional knowledge information portal, which will provide both resources and electronic communication tools to assist indigenous and local communities in networking and capacity building on the implementation of the Convention. This will also greatly assist information-sharing and the sharing of experiences and building of partnerships, which will complement the enhanced efforts of the international community to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target.

As advisors on the programme of work on Article 8(j) and related provisions of the Convention, I invite you to contribute to the second edition of the Article 8(j) newsletter, *Pachamama*, or "Mother Earth" in Quechua language, which will be published later this year.

As the Convention is entering a new enhanced implementation stage, the engagement of indigenous and local communities is, more than ever, crucial to its success. A strong relationship between the Secretariat and indigenous and local communities is vital and this Advisory Group has a special role as a bridge between the Secretariat and World's indigenous and local communities.

I look forward to working with you and your representative organizations in the years to come to ensure the full implementation of the objectives of the Convention for the benefit of your communities, the environment and the people of the world.

I thank you for your attention and wish you a successful and productive meeting.

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