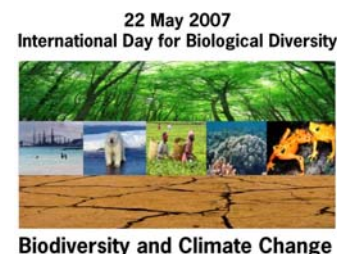


Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity



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

**On the occasion of the
30th Anniversary Celebration of the International Center for Agricultural Research in
the Dry Areas**

Aleppo, Syria, 4-5 May, 2007

It is with great pleasure that I extend my congratulations to Dr Mahmoud Solh and his whole team, on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the creation of the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA).

In 1977, year of the creation of the first station of the ICARDA in Aleppo, there was under 4.5 billion people on Earth. We are today about 6.7 billions and the world population will likely increase to over 8 billions by 2030, which will increase food demand by 55% compared to 1998. We all know that in the present context of climate change and biodiversity loss, this will not be an easy task.

Thirty years ago, the threat of food shortages and loss of natural resources in the dry areas, and its global implications, were already raised as challenges. As a result, moved forward by creative thinkers, the ICARDA was born.

Dry and sub-humid lands are home to around 2 billion people, 35% of the global population, and encompass approximately 44% of the world's cultivated systems. Ninety per cent of the 2 billion inhabitants of drylands live in developing countries. Dry and sub-humid lands also have great biological value and are the original source of many of the world's food crops and livestock including wheat, barley and cows. The conservation and sustainable use of dry and sub-humid lands biodiversity is, therefore, central to livelihood development and poverty alleviation. These few facts show how the work of the ICARDA is critical to the achievement of sustainable agriculture.

Therefore, at the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the ICARDA, I would like to applaud these creative thinkers, their successors and the people who work everyday at the ICARDA to improve the welfare of poor people through research and training in dry areas of the developing world. The advancement of agricultural research in these areas is crucial to poverty alleviation and the sustainable use of natural resources. I wish the ICARDA success in this endeavor.

On this day of celebration, I would like to reaffirm the full commitment of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to spare no effort to enhance the complementarity of our mutually supportive goals.