



Secretariat of the **Convention on Biological Diversity**

22 May 2007
International Day for Biological Diversity



Biodiversity and Climate Change

Statement by

Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif

Executive Secretary
Convention on Biological Diversity

to the

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at its sixth session

New York
17 May 2007

Check against delivery

Madame Chair,
Distinguished delegates,

From its inception, the Convention on Biological Diversity has attached the highest importance to the need to protect and conserve the rich biodiversity heritage of indigenous and local communities. Article 8(j) of the Convention focuses specifically on respecting, preserving and maintaining traditional knowledge and the equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge. As a cross-cutting issue, the perspectives and traditional knowledge of indigenous and local communities are also being incorporated in all the programmes of work under the Convention.

The high priority attached to the promotion of Article 8(j) of the Convention can be seen in the establishment by the Parties to the Convention of the Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions of the Convention, which provides advice to the Parties regarding its effective implementation. The Working Group has met four times to date. The fifth meeting of the Working Group on Article 8(j) and related provisions will occur back to back with the Working Group on Access and Benefit Sharing (of genetic resources) on 15-19 October and 8-12 October respectively. These working groups will make draft recommendations to the supreme body of the Convention – the Conference of the Parties – which will meet in Bonn, Germany, in May 2008.

At the last Conference of the Parties, held in March last year in Curitiba, Brazil a new enhanced phase of implementation of the three objectives of the Convention was born. The meeting was held with the participation of more than 348 representatives of indigenous and local communities. For the first time a new category of “local communities” was established. The new enhanced phase of the implementation of the Convention calls for the active engagements of all stakeholders. It requires therefore the active engagement of indigenous and local communities. Such an engagement is more than ever, crucial to the success of this new phase. In this regard, the recent establishment of a voluntary fund – now fully operational - is a major step forward in ensuring the effective participation of indigenous and local authorities in the CBD processes.

As Executive Secretary, I place great importance on a solid partnership with the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and I would like to use this opportunity to report to you on action taken regarding recommendations made by this body to the Convention on Biological Diversity. I will also take this opportunity to bring your attention to a number of ground-breaking initiatives which have been carried out within existing resources, regarding the Convention and the World’s indigenous and local communities.

As major tools for the enhanced implementation of the Convention and the engagement of indigenous and local communities, the revitalization of the Convention’s webpage has been undertaken, 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. In particular, thanks to the generous support of the programme of work for Article 8(j) by the government of Spain, the 8(j) webpages and the Convention’s webpages are being translated into Spanish and soon into French. This work 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. It is in this spirit that the SCBD newsletter on article 8j has been launched. Copies of the first issues are available at the back of the room and Indigenous and local communities are invited to use it as a tool of enhanced communication.

The eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties¹ noted with concern that certain indigenous and local communities in the Arctic, small islands and high altitudes are highly vulnerable to climate change and in fact are experiencing accelerated climate change. In response, I have initiated what I believe to be a ground breaking report on indigenous and local communities highly vulnerable to climate change, with a focus on causes and solutions. This report will be launched on 22 May on the International Day of Biological Diversity under the theme of “Biodiversity and Climate Change”. It provides a new perspective to the issue as well as an emphasis on the “human face to climate change” – the face of the world’s indigenous and local communities. Furthermore, a pictorial exhibition on indigenous and local communities and climate change, which forms part of Indigenous Cultural Exhibition for the UNPFII has been developed and currently occupies the public entrance to UN Headquarters. After June, this exhibition will travel to Paris for the UNESCO General Conference to be held in October and after that to Bonn, Germany for the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to be held in May 2008. I recommend both the report and the exhibition to you.

Regarding recommendations emerging from the Permanent Forum, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to seek the collaboration of the Forum regarding the draft elements of an ethical code of conduct to ensure respect for the cultural and intellectual heritage of indigenous and local communities relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. To this end, early this year, the Secretariat of the Convention forwarded this request, along with copies of the draft elements, in all six United Nations languages to the 16 members of the UNPFII through your secretariat, to seek your input. The Secretariat of the Convention, welcomes this opportunity to collaborate, however, to date, we has not yet received any views from the members of the Permanent Forum, and should you wish for views to be taken into account, we will requires them before the end of May, so that your comments can be incorporated into the revised elements which will be considered by the WG 8(j) in October of this year. The WG 8(j) is requested to further develop the draft elements of the code of conduct and to submit these to the Conference of the Parties at its ninth meeting for consideration and possible adoption. To that end, I urge members of the Forum, to consider the draft elements and to provide your views promptly, and I extend an invitation to the Chair of the Forum to participate in the 5th meeting of the WG 8(j) to assist us in that revision.

The Conference of the Parties also invited the Permanent Forum to support and collaborate with the Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions and the Indicators Initiative of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity to organize an international expert seminar on indicators relevant for indigenous and local communities and the Convention on Biological Diversity, with the aim of supporting the work of the Working Group on Article 8(j), the Strategic Plan of the Convention, the 2010 target of reducing the rate of biodiversity loss, and the Millennium Development Goals. To that end, and thanks again to a generous contribution from the government of Spain, the Secretariat entered into memorandums of understanding with IUCN LAC region and the Tebtebba Foundation (Philippines) to facilitate the LAC consultation on Indicators (Dec. 2006) and the International Expert Meeting on Indicators, which was held 5-9 March 2007. These reports will be considered by WG 8(j) in October with the view to adopt a handful of practical, meaningful indicators, which capture indigenous realities and assist monitoring traditional knowledge status, sustainable use and the 2010 Biodiversity Target. Furthermore, I want to applaud this collaborative work on indicators which is built on a strong mutually beneficial partnership between the World’s indigenous and local communities, the Convention on Biodiversity and the Permanent Forum. This innovated work also provides an

¹ Decision VIII/5/B, paragraph 6.

opportunity for the World's indigenous peoples to help shape international commitments to saving life on Earth that will emerge after the 2010 target.

The Conference of the Parties also took note of the request by this Forum at its third session addressed to the Working Group on Article 8(j), to advance its mandate to develop mechanisms for effective sui generis systems of protection for traditional knowledge based on customary laws of indigenous peoples. In response, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to further develop as a priority issue, the possible elements of sui generis systems and to inform other relevant organizations, including the Permanent Forum, of the potential elements to be considered in the development of sui generis systems for the protection of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices. As requested by the Parties, the Secretariat has been gathering and analyzing information, including the Report on Indigenous Traditional Knowledge prepared by Permanent Forum expert Michael Dodson (refer document E/C.19/2007/10), and will present the document for the consideration of the 5th meeting of the WG 8(j) to identify priority elements of sui generis systems and to make appropriate recommendations for the consideration of the Conference of the Parties, for possible adoption.

Regarding the ongoing negotiations of an international regime on access and benefit sharing of genetic resources, the Conference of the Parties has taken positive steps to enhance the involvement of indigenous and local communities, including by encouraging the participation of representatives of indigenous and local communities in government delegations and it is expected that the next meeting on Article 8(j) will make a significant contribution to the finalization of the negotiations. The Secretariat is also working with donors to ensure that indigenous and local communities are provided with ample opportunities to develop positions and contribute to the ongoing process of the elaboration of an international regime.

Finally, I want to reiterate that the Convention is entering an exciting phase of enhanced implementation in which not only the Parties but also the indigenous and local communities and international organizations such as the Permanent Forum, have a major role to play.

In my capacity as the new Executive Secretary, I attach the highest importance to enhancing our relationship with the Permanent Forum and to promoting the implementation of the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity relevant to indigenous and local communities. I look forward to establishing a solid and vibrant relationship with you as we pursue our mutual goals for the benefit of the world's indigenous and local communities.

I also look forward to working with you and the Forum in the months and years ahead to ensure the full implementation of the objectives of the Convention for the benefit of your communities and the environment.

Thank you for your attention.
