



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

MESSAGE

From the Executive Secretary,
Ahmed Djoghlaif

On the Occasion of World Refugee Day, 20 June 2007

For information only

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International Day for Biological Diversity



Biodiversity and Climate Change

As the world focuses on the plight of millions of refugees and displaced people on World Refugee Day, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity would like to pay tribute to the courage, strength, and compassion of not only the refugees, but also of those who give them: “a New Home, a New Life.”

Today, some 40 million people are displaced or refugees, three-quarters of them women and children. The reasons for people fleeing their homes have become increasingly complicated and interlinked. Today people do not just flee persecution and war but also injustice, exclusion, environmental pressures, and competition for scarce resources.

It is clear that the relationship between environment and refugees can no longer be overlooked. Environmental problems have contributed to large permanent migrations and have displaced millions of people. Red Cross research shows that more people are now displaced by environmental disaster than by war. It is estimated that some 50 million people worldwide will be displaced by 2010 because of desertification, dried aquifers, rising sea levels, weather-induced flooding and other serious environmental changes. These conditions are expected to worsen with climate change and will worsen further as the Earth's ability to sustain life is diminished by the unprecedented loss of biological diversity now ongoing. In turn, the loss of biodiversity will be compounded by the impact climate change if this is not tackled, and human displacement will increase.

It is for this reason that this year the international community celebrated the International Day on Biological Diversity last month on the theme of biodiversity and climate change. The UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, called for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity to become a part of any strategy aimed at adapting to climate change. This is equally necessary for any strategy related to the security dimensions of the Earth's climate.

On this World Refugee Day let us therefore not forget the millions of people forced to seek a new home, a new life. And redouble our efforts to address the root causes of displacement, including a renewed commitment to achieve the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and to achieve the 2010 Target to significantly reduce the rate of loss of biodiversity.