



CBD

# Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

## MESSAGE

From the Executive Secretary,  
**Ahmed Djoghlaif**

**On the Occasion of the International Day of the  
World's Indigenous People, 9 August 2007**

For information only

22 May 2007  
International Day for Biological Diversity



Biodiversity and Climate Change

The celebration of the International Day of the World's Indigenous People on 9 August 2007 presents an opportunity to draw attention to the contribution of indigenous and local communities to the conservation and sustainable use of the world's biological diversity. It also provides opportunity to highlight how these communities, environmental managers with immense ecological knowledge, are crucial partners in our efforts to address the two most serious environmental threats facing mankind today: the loss of biodiversity and climate change.

Indigenous communities have been the stewards of biological diversity for millennia, responsible for preserving and even increasing biodiversity through their traditional management practices.

In its Article 8(j), the CBD acknowledges the unique role of indigenous and local communities in conserving life on Earth. Parties to the Convention have committed to respect, preserve, maintain and promote the wider use of traditional knowledge relevant for conservation and sustainable use, with the approval and involvement of indigenous and local communities. The Convention's Working Group on traditional knowledge, represents a unique forum that promotes active partnerships between governments and indigenous and local communities, in pursuit of the goals of the Convention.

It is, however, a matter of great concern that indigenous and local communities in particular regions, including the Arctic, small islands and high altitudes, are experiencing accelerated climate change and are considered highly vulnerable.

At the same time, the traditional knowledge of the indigenous and local communities can play an important role in designing and implementing measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change, although its potential has yet to be fully explored. With this in mind, the Secretariat of the CBD has been working with indigenous and local communities to ensure their full and effective participation and promote the role of traditional knowledge in the global effort to address the loss of biological diversity and climate change.

To highlight these issues, the Secretariat has created an exhibition entitled "Indigenous and Local Communities – the Human Face of Climate Change". Now on display at the headquarters of the United Nations in New York, the exhibition will be displayed at the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris, this October. Concurrently, the CBD Secretariat and UNESCO will facilitate a panel of indigenous climate change experts to discuss the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss experienced by indigenous and local

communities around the world. This will be a valuable opportunity to further understand the links between traditional knowledge, biodiversity and climate change.

If the world is to achieve the target to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010, and in light of the climate change crisis, we must fully recognize and value indigenous peoples as custodians of the Earth's biodiversity. I look forward, therefore, to continuing our work together, and on behalf of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity I would like to wish all Indigenous Peoples the greatest success in the celebration of this very important day.

Montreal 7 August, 2007