



CBD

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

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International Day for Biological Diversity



Biodiversity and Climate Change

**Statement by Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaf,
Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, to the
First International Technical Conference for Animal Genetic Resources
Interlaken, Switzerland, 1-7 September 2007**

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honour to address this historic First International Technical Conference for Animal Genetic Resources. As Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) I, above all, wish to extend my most sincere gratitude to the Swiss authorities, namely Ms. Doris Leuthard, the Swiss Federal Councillor, Head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, for the continued support of Switzerland to promoting the environmental agenda, in general, and during the preparation, negotiation, and now implementation of the three objectives of the CBD. I would like to tell you that it is an honour to be hosted by Switzerland as a participant of this historical meeting, and an honour to be in the city of Interlaken. I would like to also extend my deep gratitude to FAO, represented today by the Assistant Director-General, Mr. Alexander Müller, for its continued support to the Convention and its objectives. Furthermore, my sincere appreciation goes to the members and delegates of the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) for their continuous cooperation with the CBD in the area of biodiversity for food and agriculture. On the occasion of the eleventh regular session of CGRFA, held recently in Rome, the Commission highlighted the need for coordinated action to establish an effective international framework for the conservation of agricultural biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, including Animal Genetic Resources, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from their use.

The Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity recognize that Animal Genetic Resources are vital to the well-being and food security of both rural and urban populations around the world. Through its programmes of work on agricultural biodiversity, on traditional knowledge, innovations and practices, and on access and benefit-sharing, the Convention has developed a number of initiatives to support local and indigenous communities, farmers, pastoralists and animal breeders whose livelihoods depend on the conservation, development and sustainable use of Animal Genetic Resources. We, at the CBD Secretariat, will therefore look forward to the adoption and implementation of the Interlaken Global Plan of Action, as well as the Interlaken Declaration in advancing the furthering of the implementation of the Convention in the key areas of Animal Genetic Resources.



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As you know, a negotiating process is under way within the framework of the Convention with a view to developing an international regime on access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from their utilization by 2010. The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture is being considered as one of the possible components of this international regime. Developments on Animal Genetic Resources within the framework of FAO will also be of great interest to the negotiating process. I would therefore like to extend to Dr. Shakeel Bhatti, the Secretary of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, my warmest congratulations upon his well deserved appointment, as well as my deep gratitude for the spirit of cooperation he has demonstrated as evidence of the result of our today's meeting on issues of collaboration between our two institutions on access and benefit-sharing.

Similarly, these developments will be of great interest to indigenous and local communities and to the work within the Convention on traditional knowledge. Indigenous and local communities have accumulated an enormous amount of biological diversity-related knowledge in their long history of managing the environment. These refined systems of knowledge that indigenous peoples have nurtured and transmitted orally from generation to generation, are of direct value to these societies but also of considerable value to humankind as a whole. For example, in the Andes, indigenous peoples are using animal genetic diversity to adapt to climate change, through the breeding of highland alpacas with lowland alpacas to produce stronger hybrid animals that better resist climate variability.

We know that agricultural biodiversity at the genetic, species and ecosystems levels plays important roles, among others, in food security, human nutrition, and pest and disease management. It also contributes to the maintenance of productive habitats and culturally important landscapes. Domestic animal breeds provide such critical ecosystem services as support for primary production and soil formation through seed dispersal and nutrient cycling. It is therefore disturbing to note that genetic material is being lost at an alarming rate, with some 30 per cent of domesticated breeds found internationally being currently at risk of extinction. Susceptibility to diseases is increasing and fertility rates and product quality are falling. In Africa alone, where over 80 distinct breeds of cattle can still be found, their replacement or cross-breeding with exotic varieties is weakening breeding programmes that could otherwise improve the hardiness of the stock. This unprecedented loss of biodiversity is taking place while the international community at the highest level has committed itself as early as 2002 to spare no efforts to substantially reduce the loss of biodiversity, including Animal Genetic Resources, by 2010. Biodiversity commitment has been recently endorsed for the first time by the G-8 Summit, as evidenced by Heligendamm statement.

It is for these reasons that I warmly welcome the release of the Commission's report on *The State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*, the first comprehensive global assessment of the status and trends of, and threats to Animal Genetic Resources. The report's baseline information about animal genetic diversity and its detailed assessments of the various drivers of biodiversity loss provide the necessary basis from which to design and implement a comprehensive and effective Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources. The organizers and the delegates to this international conference here in Interlaken, Switzerland, recognize that in order to be successful, this plan for the sustainable use, development and conservation of Animal Genetic Resources will have to mobilize additional human and financial

resources, promote capacity-building and develop new cooperative institutional frameworks. Perhaps it was in part this very same recognition that helped to convince the conference organizers to hold this remarkable event in such an inspiring location.

Here in Interlaken – well known for the extraordinary beauty of the imposing Jungfrau-Aletsch-Bietschhorn UNESCO World Natural Heritage site – local myths and legends have considered the surrounding mountains, lakes, springs, and caves to be centres of powerful energy for thousands of years. Ringgenberg, Grindelwald, Lauterbrunnen... what makes these places so special? It is precisely the harmonious development of the economy, community and ecology that have combined to produce this extraordinarily cultural agro-ecosystem. The unique wealth of Switzerland Animal Genetic Resources can be admired at the exit of our conference centre. I would therefore like to convey to the Mayor of Interlaken, who is present here with us, our congratulations for demonstrating and protecting nature and its biodiversity, which is not only good for the environment, but also for business and local communities. Just as preserving the unique landscapes and cultural heritage of the Jungfrau-Aletsch-Bietschhorn region requires a sound management strategy established with the active participation of local communities and stakeholders, a similar approach will be required to safeguard the Dorper sheep in South Africa, the Hungarian Grey Cattle, the Neuquén-Criollo goats in Argentina, and the Ban pigs in north-west Viet Nam. These are only a few of the remarkable species and rare breeds that constitute a source of hope to farmers and pastoral peoples in their struggle to adapt to changing market and ecological conditions.

FAO is a key partner in implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity and achieving the 2010 Biodiversity Target set by the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and we continue to attach great importance to the close cooperation with FAO in pursuing our common goal for the benefit of the life on Earth. I look forward to the forthcoming thirteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-13), which will be hosted for the first time by FAO, as well as the suggested high-level dialogue between the Director-General of FAO and CBD Parties. I also look forward to working with FAO for the celebration of next year's International Day for Biological Diversity under the theme "Biological Diversity and Agriculture", and I wish you every success in your deliberations in the coming days.

Thank you for your kind attention.