



**Secretariat of the
Convention on Biological Diversity**

**MESSAGE FROM
THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
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ON THE OCCASION OF WORLD FOOD DAY
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22 May 2007
International Day for Biological Diversity



Biodiversity and Climate Change

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Today on behalf of the Convention on Biological Diversity I would like to join the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and countries around the world in marking the World Food Day being observed this year on the theme, “The Right to Food”.

It is a theme chosen to carry the voice of the millions of people who today do not enjoy that right. It is a theme for reflection rather than celebration and designed to help bring about action that will make it happen.

The right to food is a universal right that cannot be realized in isolation from other human rights. Hunger and malnutrition are caused not just by a lack of available food, but also by poverty, income disparities, and lack of access to health care, education, clean water, and sanitary living conditions. The right to food means that every woman, man and child must have access at all times to food – sufficient in quality, quantity and variety to meet their needs, free from harmful substances and suitable to their culture.

Neither can the right to food be realized in isolation from concerted efforts to secure environmental sustainability and ensure sustainable management of natural resources including the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

In 2002, the Parties to the Convention committed themselves to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth. This target was subsequently endorsed by leaders at the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the United Nations General Assembly and has been incorporated as a new target under the Millennium Development Goals. Achievement of the Millennium Development Goal on environmental sustainability is arguably the most foundational to achievement of all the others.

Biodiversity and healthy ecosystems are the foundation of agriculture and food production. Indeed, the *Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of*

the Right to Food in the Context of National Food Security adopted by the FAO Council in 2004 recognize that realization of the right to food is dependant on sustainable management of natural resources.

This includes the sustainable use of land and water, and maintenance of functioning ecosystems and biological diversity. It includes also, the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture, protection of traditional knowledge and the equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of these resources.

These issues lie at the heart and purpose of the Convention on Biological Diversity whose three objectives are the conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of its components and the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.

To support attainment of our common goals, FAO and the CBD are working together on measures to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity important to agriculture and the equitable sharing of benefits arising from its use.

This includes review and guidelines for implementation of the Convention's Programme of Work on Agricultural Biodiversity and cross-cutting initiatives on Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition, for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Soil Biodiversity and for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Pollinators. The review of this work will take centre-stage at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention that takes place in Bonn next year.

Building further on this partnership, the International Day on Biodiversity in May 2008 will focus on the theme of *Biodiversity and Agriculture* to draw attention of people globally to the links and dependencies between food production and biodiversity. We look forward to celebrating this important event together with all our partners.