



CBD

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

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International Day for Biological Diversity



Biodiversity and Climate Change

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Convention on Biological Diversity**

**Fifth Trondheim Conference on
“Ecosystems and people - biodiversity for development – the
road to 2010 and beyond”**

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Addressing the ceremony held earlier this year to mark the 20th anniversary of the Brundtland report, the Prime Minister of Norway, HEM Jens Stoltenberg stated, “The Brundtland Commission report changed everything. It opened a whole new era of thinking. It launched a movement. As leader of this commission all of Gro’s remarkable skills came into play, as a consensus builder, as a visionary. At the end of the day, Gro presented a consensus document and a milestone in the history of the United Nations.”

At the United Nations General Assembly, following her appointment as Special Envoy of the Secretary General on Climate Change, this visionary and consensus builder, Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, stated, “It is irresponsible, reckless and deeply immoral to question the seriousness of the situation. The time for diagnosis is over and the time for action is now”. She stressed the importance of 2007 as a year when the wheels have to be set in motion. The call for action to find a solution to “the tragedy of the commons”, as Mrs. Brundtland called it twenty years ago in her seminal report, *Our Common Future*, is being heard for climate change.

Indeed several steps have been taken. Early this year and for the first time in its history, the United Nations Security Council devoted a special meeting to address the issue of climate change and security. Three special envoys of the Secretary General have been appointed. A summit of the United Nations General Assembly with the participation of 70 Heads of State and Government exclusively devoted to climate change was convened last month in New York. Later this year and not far from the place where we are meeting today, the Nobel Peace Prize will be presented to Mr. Al Gore, the former Vice-President of the United States of America, and to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). In so doing, the prestigious Norwegian Nobel Committee has recognized, for the second time in its history, the environmental dimension of the concept of peace and security.

The security implications of environmental degradation were recognized by the Committee in 2004, when it awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to an environmentalist for the first time in history, namely Professor Wangari Maathai. On that historical occasion, Mr. Ole Danbolt Mjøs, the chairman of this prestigious institution noted that, “This year, the Norwegian Nobel Committee has evidently broadened its definition of peace still further. Environmental protection has become yet another path to peace.” In accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, Prof. Wangari Maathai stated that, “There can be no peace without equitable development and there can be no development without sustainable management of the environment in a democratic and peaceful space. I hope that this prize will help many people see the link between peace, development and environment.” Indeed sustainable development is the new name for peace and security. Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai has tirelessly worked to highlight the link between peace and the environment, “In a

few decades, the relationship between the environment, resources and conflict may seem almost as obvious as the connection we see today between human rights, democracy and peace.” It is encouraging to note that world leaders are seeing this link. Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier of Germany stated last week, “There is a ‘cold war’ at North Pole that we have to prevent. Climate change is a threat to worldwide peace and security.”

Just as climate change is indeed a security issue, so too, is the biodiversity crisis. Prime Minister of Norway, HEM Jens Stoltenberg, in his article for the third publication of *Gincana*, stressed the connection between the two when he noted that, “Climate change and biodiversity are strongly interlinked. Climate change affects biodiversity and biodiversity can affect the world’s climate, most importantly when forests are lost. Active management and preservation measures aimed at protecting biodiversity cover a wide range of measures which also have the effect of mitigating climate change.” Thus both issues require our attention.

According to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the pressures on the planet’s natural functions, caused by human activity, have reached such a high level that the ability of ecosystems to satisfy the needs of future generations has been seriously, and perhaps irreversibly, compromised. Impacts on the natural functions of our planet have never been so destructive as in the last 50 years. During the last century, the extinction rate of species increased a thousand times. All countries are being affected. Even here in this country, a country that has demonstrated environmental leadership; the Norwegian Red List contains 3886 species, and 1988 of these are classified as threatened. The IUCN red list search listed 624 endangered species in Norway. It is examples, such as these that have led some experts to believe that we are at the eve of the sixth global mass extinction of species and may be the first generated by us -- human-beings.

This unprecedented loss of biodiversity was confirmed by the the Fourth Global Environment Outlook launched last week by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) . The authoritative assessment of the state of the environment of our planet by the world environmental authority of the United Nations system, since the launch in 1987, of the Brundland prepared by more than 500 experts and peer-reviewed by more than 1000 experts, reiterates that we, human beings, are witnessing and are responsible for a reduction in distribution and functioning land, freshwater and marine biodiversity more rapid than at any time in human history. This unprecedented loss of biodiversity is being compounded by climate change.

The fourth assessment report issued early this year by IPCC, demonstrates that up to 30 per cent of all known species are likely to be at increased risk of extinction before the end of this century. It is for this reason that on 22 May of this year, the International Community, thanks to the generous contribution of the Government of Norway, celebrated the International Day for Biological Diversity under the theme “Biodiversity and Climate Change”. To further raise awareness of the impacts of climate change, an exhibit to mark the celebration of the International

Polar Year was mounted in collaboration with UNESCO. The goal was to put a human face on climate change by highlighting the negative impact of climate change on indigenous people, their biodiversity and their lifestyle.

The unprecedented loss of biodiversity is also compounded by another human cause, namely invasive alien species. A warmer world will aggravate the negative impact of alien invasive species, one of the major causes of species extinction in many ecosystems and a scourge that causes tremendous economic loss for the regions affected.

Earlier this year, while paying an official visit to New Zealand, I saw the staggering impact of alien species on the unique terrestrial and marine ecosystems of the 700 islands that make up New Zealand. Every night, possums, whose numbers are now estimated to be 70 million, eat 22,000 tonnes of vegetation. Possums infest 95 per cent of the land area of New Zealand and are causing major changes to the composition of the country's forests. They were originally introduced from Australia for their fur. However, now, they are contributing to a widespread decline and even extinction of indigenous and endemic vegetation, most of which is part of the cultural heritage of the Maori people. Such examples of biodiversity loss and the consequent degradation of cultural heritage are tragic losses that need to be mitigated and reversed.

While living in Kenya as a UNEP staff, I also witnessed the dramatic impact of alien species, this time on the unique biodiversity of Lake Victoria and on the livelihood of surrounding communities. Lake Victoria's ecological and natural resource base has been dramatically altered through water hyacinth infestations as well as the introduction of the Nile Perch. In the mid-1990s, the water hyacinth invaded more than 12,000 hectares of the lake and affected the livelihood of around 40 million people. As they did then, these infestations tend to impede electricity production, irrigation, navigation and fishery activities. Moreover they enhance water loss through evaporation and facilitate the proliferation of diseases by slowing the flow of water. Water Hyacinths are estimated to cause US\$ 150 million in lost productivity and revenues in seven African countries. A South American native, the water hyacinth is now found in more than 50 countries on five continents.

It is estimated that 480,000 alien species have been introduced into the varied ecosystems of our planet. Since the 17th century, invasive alien species have contributed to nearly 40 per cent of all known animal extinctions. One study from the United States of America estimates costs of US\$ 137 billion per year from an array of invasive species.

In addition to exacerbating impacts from invasive species, climate change may also result in reduced agricultural yields, due to drier conditions, particularly in warmer regions. Global warming is likely to alter the production of rice, wheat, maize, beans and potatoes, which are major crops in Africa and staples for millions of people. Moreover, approximately 35 per cent of world crops depend on pollinators

such as bees. However, their populations have already decreased by 30 per cent in the last twenty years, hindering crop maturation. Climate change is likely to give a new dimension to the question of food security, an issue for which we already have trouble finding solutions. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in 2007-2008 Africa will pay 22 per cent more for its importation of cereals. The World Bank projects that the price of major cereals may raise up to 40 per cent as their stocks fall to their lowest levels. The United States Department of Agriculture recently stated that wheat stocks may reach their lowest levels in 30 years by the spring of next year. It is for these reasons that the international community will celebrate next year's International Day on Biodiversity under the theme "Biodiversity and Agriculture". The celebration of this important event will coincide for the first time with the convening of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Bonn.

As species are lost, so too are valuable traits such as drought and pest resistance, and high yields, among others. To mitigate this loss, Norway has taken the lead to build an International Seed Vault. This "Noah's Ark" project, which aims to safeguard crop diversity by storing about 1.5 billion seeds, and three million varieties, in an underground vault on Spitsbergen in the country's arctic Svalbard archipelago. These efforts to provide "back-up" for the world's food supply should be applauded as a major initiative at the service of humanity.

Indeed, twenty years ago, the Brundtland report provided ample evidence that poverty needed to be addressed if the environmental challenges were going to be met. Unfortunately, the impact of climate change on agriculture will aggravate poverty. In 2080, 200-600 million people are likely to join the endless list of people affected by hunger and malnutrition.

The loss of biodiversity will affect all segments of society but the poor will suffer the most. As we know, more than 1.6 billion people depends on forests and forest products for their livelihood, while more than 3 billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity. More than 132 million hectares of forests are lost annually and some predict that fish may disappear from the oceans by 2048. Yet, biodiversity can be a formidable tool to halt and reverse poverty.

As Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland stated "you cannot tackle hunger, disease, and poverty unless you can also provide people with a healthy ecosystem in which their economies can grow." I am therefore extremely grateful to the Government of Germany for considering the support of a programme on biodiversity and poverty alleviation for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which will not be achieved without mainstreaming the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) into development plans and strategies.

The Brundtland report approaches environment and development issues as one common challenge to be solved by collective multilateral action rather than through the pursuit of national self-interest. It is for this reason that the Secretary General has responded to the call from the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity

to integrate the 2010 biodiversity target as part of the Millennium Development Goals. Last week in New York, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between four United Nations Economic Commissions with a view to mainstreaming biodiversity into regional economic processes and integrating biodiversity into poverty reduction strategies. It is the first time in the history of the 500 Multilateral Environmental Agreements, that such an agreement has been signed. To facilitate this work, a senior environmental expert from the French Government has been seconded to the Secretariat for an initial period of at least two years. I am pleased to welcome Mr. Eric Belvaux who has joined us this week and started his assignment here in Trondheim. I am extremely grateful to the Government of France for its support in integrating biodiversity into the development sector as a follow up of the Paris message.

Indeed this year's Trondheim Conference theme is about ecosystems and people: the interlinkages between ecosystem goods and services, on the one hand, and human well-being, development and activities, on the other hand. The Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen once said "A thousand words will not leave so deep an impression as one deed". Last week, by establishing for the first time in the history of international cooperation for development a ministerial portfolio linking Environment and Development Cooperation, Norway has shown the world the way ahead in operationalizing the Brundtland approach. Let me congratulate HEM Erik Solheim for his appointment as Norwegian Minister of Environment and Development Cooperation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The name Trondheim derives from the Old Norse Þróndheimr, meaning home of the strong and fertile ones. Trondheim's internationally renowned university and the city's many research centres ensure that it is a city of innovation and development in science, business and industry ventures. Trondheim is truly the nation's technological capital and the city of the youth. Therefore, your meeting today could not have found a better place to make its impact than here in Trondheim. Indeed, the famous poet and historian Snorre Sturlasson wrote "No King in Norway could rule in peace if he failed to have the people of Trøndelag on his side." And so we can be assured of success here this week thanks to the welcome provided by the city of Trondheim and the region of Trøndelag.

As sustainable development is now the new name of peace, let us ensure that your proceedings here, in this great city of Trondheim, will ensure the success of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and be guided by the wisdom of Henrik Ibsen who stated, "A community is like a ship; everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm." Indeed the 190 Parties to the community of biodiversity should be prepared, in May next year in Bonn, to take the helm inspired by the Trondheim report. In doing so you will be responding to the call of Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland and ensuring that 2007 is

remembered by generations to come as an important year when the wheels for protecting life on earth were also set in motion.

Thank you.