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**Secretariat of the  
Convention on Biological  
Diversity**

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International Day for Biological Diversity



Biodiversity and Climate Change

**STATEMENT**

**by**

**AHMED DJOGHLAF**

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

**of the**

**CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL  
DIVERSITY**

**at the**

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**of the**

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UNITED NATIONS**

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Madam Chairperson,

Distinguished delegates,

Last month, thanks to the leadership of the Secretary General, a summit of heads of State and Government was convened for the first time to address the challenges of climate change. Seventy heads of State and Government attended this historic meeting. I am therefore honoured to address this historic session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Last year, I presented the results of the Curitiba meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which witnessed the birth of a new phase of enhanced implementation of the Convention in order to achieve its three objectives. This calls for the active engagement of all stakeholders at all levels, as well as an enhanced partnership with all actors. Since the beginning of this year more than 21 memoranda of understanding have been signed with sister agencies and partners. Last week, here in New York, I had the privilege of signing a memorandum of understanding with the executive heads of the United Nations regional commissions for Africa (ECA), Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Western Asia (ESCWA), and Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), with a view to mainstreaming the three objectives of the Convention into their regular programmes and integrating biodiversity into regional development cooperation for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. This is the first time in the history of multilateral environment agreements that such an agreement has been reached. It is in the same spirit that this year also coincided with enhanced partnership with the biodiversity-related conventions, and the adoption of a joint work plan with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

Biodiversity, climate change and desertification are strongly interconnected. This is why “Climate Change and Biodiversity” was the theme of this year’s International Biodiversity Day. This is why two meetings of the Joint Liaison Group of the three Rio conventions were held this year, and a third one will be held in Bali in December this year. For the first time, a joint contribution of the secretariats of the three Rio conventions on forest and biodiversity will be submitted to next meetings of the respective conference of the parties.

At its twelfth meeting held in Paris in July 2007, the Convention’s Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) decided to integrate advice on potential impacts of climate change on biodiversity into each programme of work of the Convention. The Convention Secretariat was also requested to develop proposals for mutually supportive activities for the secretariats of the Rio conventions, Parties and other organizations. The options will be considered by the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Bonn in May 2008. SBSTTA also considered, for the first time, the emerging issue of biofuel production and its potential impact on biodiversity. This was the first time the scientific body considered an emerging scientific issue.

The SBSTTA meeting was followed by the second meeting of the Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention, which ushered in a new era of collaboration between the Convention and its financial mechanism. For the first time, a meeting was held with the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties and the Chief

Executive Officer of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and was followed by a high-level dialogue with the 400 participants. The review meeting also adopted several recommendations on the development and implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans, including on the need to link these to other national and sectoral development planning processes. The Working Group also set out priority areas for capacity-building, access to and transfer of technology, and technology cooperation.

This month, the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing held its fifth meeting and continued the elaboration and negotiation of the international regime on access and benefit-sharing in line with the renewed mandate given to it by the Conference of the Parties. The Working Group has been requested by the Conference of the Parties to complete the negotiation of the international regime “at the earliest possible time before the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 2010”. This is a complex negotiation, but the process is on track. Agreed measures within the framework of the international regime are important not only to achieve the objectives of the Convention, but also for the many stakeholders involved.

The meeting of the Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing was followed by a meeting of the Working Group on traditional knowledge. In many respects, the work of this group is closely related to the discussions on access and benefit-sharing. The work on such issues as elements of *sui generis* systems for the protection of traditional knowledge and the ongoing development of a code of ethical conduct is progressing and will ultimately contribute to the international regime and ensure that indigenous and local communities derive a fair share of benefits deriving from utilization of their traditional knowledge.

With regard to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, I am pleased to report that 143 countries are now a Party to this instrument, which aims at ensuring the safe transfer of living modified organisms. Following the breakthrough meeting in Curitiba last year, where an agreement was reached on the issue of labelling, work is progressing on the development of a liability regime under the Protocol.

Distinguished delegates,

The successful implementation of the Convention also requires involvement of those whose lives seem furthest removed from nature, yet who nonetheless rely on ecosystem services to achieve even basic standards of living. People living in urban centres make up half of the world’s population but account for three-quarters of the consumption of natural resources and are major drivers of biodiversity loss.

It is for this reason that in March 2007, representatives from 21 cities across the world adopted the Curitiba Declaration on Cities and Biodiversity, which recognizes the importance of urban governments to the maintenance of healthy ecosystems upon which their communities so much depend, and reaffirms their commitment to contribute to the implementation of the Convention and its 2010 biodiversity target. As a follow-up to this, mayors from around the world have outlined plans to form a Global Partnership on Cities and Biodiversity to be presented to the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, taking place in Bonn in May 2008.

Finally, I would also like to pay particular tribute to the Government of Germany for its continued support for the Convention, not only as host of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, but also for bringing biodiversity to the fore at the G-8 summit in Heiligendamm in June 2007. I am also grateful to the Chancellor of Germany, Madam Angela Merkel for convening for the first time in the history of the Convention a Head of State and Government segment of the ministerial meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held on 28 May 2008.

We need to seize this unique moment of greater attention to the environment at all levels to build a collective and responsible response to the environmental challenges facing humanity, the supreme organ of the United Nations has a unique role to play in this respect. I look forward to thanking the Second Committee of the General Assembly for its continued support for the Convention and its objectives.

I thank you for your attention.