



CBD

# Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

22 May 2007  
International Day for Biological Diversity



Biodiversity and Climate Change

**Statement on behalf of Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif,  
Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity,  
to the  
Fifth Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe,  
Warsaw, Poland, 5–7 November 2007**

Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to convey my greetings to the distinguished participants of the fifth Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE), and I regret that I cannot be with you in person. I applaud the governments of Poland and Norway for choosing the excellent theme 'Forests for quality of life'. This theme strikes a chord with the large and growing global community of experts and enthusiasts who strive to conserve biodiversity. Intact forest ecosystems have an immense recreational, cultural, spiritual, and aesthetic value, in addition to the important economic value of wood and non-wood forest products. The conservation and sustainable use of forest biodiversity, and the equitable sharing of its benefits, are indeed vital for our quality of life.

Scientists estimate that forests harbour 50-90% of all terrestrial biodiversity. The large margin of uncertainty indicates how many species of plants, animals, micro-organisms and fungi on our planet are still not scientifically described. Yet, forests are disappearing or are being degraded at a fast pace world-wide, and up to 150 species are being lost every day. "The library of life is burning, and we do not even know the titles of the books", as former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland expressed it very aptly.

However, recently we are seeing encouraging progress towards sustainable forest management in many regions of the world. The decisions taken by the past four Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe have shaped European forest policy, but your work also serves as a role model for progress towards sustainable forest management in other regions, and globally.

I am very pleased to note that the 2010 Biodiversity Target is referred to in the draft declaration of the fifth Ministerial Conference. This target, adopted in 2002 by the 190 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, aims to significantly reduce the loss of biodiversity by 2010. European governments have gone an ambitious step further and pledged to stop the loss of biodiversity by 2010. Unprecedented efforts of States, the private sector, and civil society are needed to reach this target, and the forest sector is a key player in these efforts. Indeed, I hope that the much needed collaboration at all levels

between actors in the fields of sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation can be further strengthened on the basis of the Warsaw Declaration.

The quality of life that our forests provide is threatened by many factors, and climate change is uppermost in our minds and on our agendas these days. Droughts and forest fires are projected to increase in semi-arid and arid lands; the effects of air pollution on forests will become more severe as our forests are weakened by weather extremes; and a surge in frequencies and intensities of storms and floods will aggravate problems of erosion and disease. At the same time, the forest sector plays a key role for mitigating the effects of climate change, and for adapting forest ecosystems to its impacts. Ecosystems can better withstand the expected impacts of climate change when they are rich in biodiversity, and the conservation and restoration of carbon-rich ecosystems such as wetlands and forests can be very cost-effective measures to mitigate climate change. The CBD Secretariat has recently drafted, in cooperation with the Secretariats of our two sister Conventions - the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification - an information note to all Parties on the important role of forests for achieving the objectives of the three Conventions.

The Parties to the CBD will review the programme of work on forest biological diversity at their ninth meeting in May 2008 in Bonn, Germany. Preliminary results of the review indicate that the various international and regional agreements with relevance to forests yield best results when they are implemented in synergy. The draft review takes due note of the exemplary success of the MCPFE in contributing to the conservation of forest biodiversity, and of the useful cooperation with the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Much has been achieved in the progress towards sustainable forest management, but more efforts are needed to reach the 2010 Target. Healthy and intact forest ecosystems are a key infrastructure for the XXI<sup>st</sup> century, and they are our best insurance for a sustained quality of life.

In this spirit, I wish the fifth Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe every success.

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