



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity



MESSAGE

from

**DR. AHMED DJOGHLAF,
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY,**

**on the occasion of
WORLD WATER DAY**

22 March 2008

Water, essential to all life and to sustaining almost all aspects of human well-being, is being celebrated today under the theme of sanitation, in accordance with the International Year of Sanitation 2008. To mark the day, people around the world are encouraged to draw attention to the world's sanitation challenge, as reflected in the world's development agenda, for example, in the targets of the Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

Our water resources are coming under increasing pressure. Inland waters are amongst the world's most threatened ecosystems and the rate of loss of freshwater dependent biodiversity is the fastest of all the major biomes. This reflects the continuing loss of important ecosystem services provided to people.

Poor sanitation is still a major driver of the destruction of these ecosystems. For example, the estimated 200 million tonnes of human waste, and vast quantities of waste water and solid waste, go uncollected and untreated around the world. This fouls the environment and exposes millions of children to disease in an unbroken cycle of environmental decay and increasing squalor. This pollution causes further degradation of our rivers, lakes and wetlands and eventually enters coastal regions and the ocean beyond. The biodiversity of inland water ecosystems also plays a significant role in helping us deal with these wastes, through for example the contribution of wetlands to nutrient recycling, but the limits of these ecosystems to cope is being exceeded. Our second Global Biodiversity Outlook shows that whilst water quality is improving in some areas, particularly in richer countries, it continues to decline in many other regions.

Biodiversity plays a critical role in sustainable development. Freshwater biodiversity contributes to the provision of food, clean water, pharmaceutical products, etc. Mismanaging biodiversity results in the impairment of our health and even the loss of life - such as through the effects of water-related diseases and water pollution.

In April 2002, the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity committed themselves to achieving by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national levels as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth. Subsequently endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the United Nations General Assembly,



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the target was incorporated as a new target under the Millennium Development Goals, in recognition of the commonality of our purpose.

On this World Water Day, I reaffirm my commitment to the Secretary-General's call to the United Nations system and all stakeholders to forge stronger partnerships and take more concerted action, not only this year, but throughout the entire International Decade for Action "Water for Life", 2005-2015, and beyond. By working together we can achieve our vision of a truly sustainable planet through sound investments in improved sanitation which yield co-benefits for both the environment and human well-being - to promote a world in which biodiversity ceases to be the victim of our excesses and can fully support sustained human well-being.

Montreal, 22 March 2008