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**Convention on Biological Diversity**



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**BIODIVERSITY  
AND AGRICULTURE**

**STATEMENT**

by

**THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

**AHMED DJOGHLAF**

**on the occasion of the**

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

The unprecedented unfolding food crisis is not of a cyclical nature. It requires structural and long term responses. Indeed, one of the most important challenges facing mankind is to feed a growing population in an increasingly urbanized world confronted with the combined impacts of climate change and the unprecedented loss of biodiversity. The world's population is expected to reach 9.2 billion by 2050. Most of the growth will occur in developing countries and in cities. Every year, more than 50 million people, the equivalent of the populations of Spain and Portugal combined are added to the population of the world's cities. The world's urban population has now reached 3.2 billion. It has increased nearly fourfold since 1950.

For the first time in history, the world's urban population now exceeds that of rural areas. A new era is born—the era of “*Homo Urbanus*”, the city dweller. The impact is expected to have far-reaching implications on humanity and on biodiversity.

The growing urban world represents one of the most dramatic changes experienced by humanity in recent history. In 1820, London became the first modern city with a population of more than one million. Sixteenth other cities had joined the list by 1900. Today, the list includes 411 cities.

In 1950, only two cities—New York and Tokyo—had a population of more than 10 million. Today, there are more than 20 megacities on the planet, and, with the exception of New York and Tokyo, they are all located in developing countries. By 2030, four out of five urban residents in the world will live in developing countries and most of them in slums. Already about 1 billion urban dwellers live in slums. As recalled by Dr. Jacques Diouf, the Director-General of FAO, 150 growing cities will soon reach the size of New York.

If not managed adequately, the growth of the urban population may accelerate the unprecedented loss of biodiversity of our planet. Cities occupy 2 per cent of the planet's surface but their residents use 75 per cent of the Earth's natural resources. Large populations living in megacities consume massive amounts of energy, thus contributing to climate change, which has been identified as one of the main drivers of the unprecedented loss of biodiversity. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) up to 30 per cent of all known species may disappear before the end of this century as a result of climate change.

The pressures exerted on the planet's natural functions by human activity have reached such a level that the ability of ecosystems to meet the needs of future generations is now seriously, and perhaps irretrievably, compromised.

However, the loss of biodiversity is not a human fatality and the unsound urban management is not the unavoidable destiny of cities. Sound urbanization and environmentally well managed cities can exist. Singapore, the garden in the city, is indeed a living testimony of this reality.

Last month, at the Bonn Biodiversity Summit, Minister Mah Bow Tan, the Minister for National Development of Singapore, our host of the World Cities Summit, join the mayors of Curitiba, Bonn, Montreal and Nagoya as steering committee of the Cities and Biodiversity Initiative launched in Curitiba in March 2007, when 34 mayors adopted the “Curitiba Declaration on Cities and Biodiversity” and reaffirmed their resolve to integrate biodiversity concerns into urban planning and their commitment to actively contribute to the achievement of

the three objectives of the Convention and the Johannesburg Biodiversity target of substantially reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.

In Bonn, last month, fifty mayors, from 30 countries, representing over 100 million urban dwellers met under the theme “Local Action for Biodiversity” to underline the importance of urban biodiversity. The resultant “Bonn Call for Action” was submitted to the high-level segment of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, held with the participation of Heads of State and Government and more than 100 ministers of the environment. For the first time ever, for any United Nations environmental convention, cities spoke at the highest-level forum, thus setting a precedent for future meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and other related intergovernmental processes.

At the same time, 400 scientists, planners and other practitioners adopted the Erfurt Declaration “Urbio 2008” at the first ever international conference on Networking , Urban ecology, Urban biodiversity and design for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Towns and Cities. As a result, the 5,000 participants at the Bonn meeting representing 191 Parties adopted for the first time a decision on cities and biodiversity—decision IX/28.

This decision encourages Parties to recognize the role of cities in national strategies and plans, and invites Parties to support and assist cities in implementing the Convention at local level. Indeed, one of the greatest achievements of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties was the recognition that the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity requires the full engagement of cities and local authorities . To this end plan of action on cities and biodiversity will be submitted to the 10<sup>th</sup> United Nations Conference to be held in Aichi Prefecture, Nagoya city, Japan in October 2010 at the occasion of the celebration of the international year on biodiversity. A Nagoya Summit on Cities and biodiversity will be convened.

I would like therefore to pay tribute to our host, Minister Mah Bow Tan, for offering to share the unique experience of this city-state, the Garden in the city, with the international community by hosting in early 2009 here in Singapore an expert meetings on guidelines for the preparation of a cities and biodiversity plan of action for the achievement of the three objectives of the Convention.

When this “Garden City” was chosen to host the Champions of the Earth Awards of 2006, Klaus Töpfer, then Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), noted that “Singapore has become an inspiration for other nations striving to achieve the goal of sustainable development.” Indeed, the Singapore Green Plan 2012 is a road-map for achieving sustainable development, and many projects are being implemented to protect the environment and the well being of the people. It recognizes the challenge of protecting nature while pursuing economic development. The Master Plan 2008, unveiled last month, guides Singapore’s development over the next 15 years in a sustainable manner. Nine per cent of the total land is devoted to parks and nature reserves. The green cover represents today 46.5% an increase of more than 10% in a decade. By the 2015, 200 km will be devoted to park connectors, and the Garden in the Bay will be inaugurated in 2011 on the occasion of the International Year of Forests.

Singapore is such an urbanized city state that one does not expect to find much of biodiversity. But Professor Tommy Koh always reminds me of his discussion with a visiting

British scientist telling him that there were more species of trees and plants in Singapore than in the whole of North America. He also told me that, in 2005, a Belgian entomologist discovered 150 species of forest flies in Singapore after a year's study. Yesterday, while visiting Biodiversity Centre of Singapore, I learned that that there are 300 species of spider in Singapore and 200 at least have yet to be recorded. There are 200 species of dragon flies and many other have yet to be documented.

“Singa Pura” the Lion City, a country which has included nature as a national symbol has so much to share and to give to the rest of the region and to the world. Nature is part of the national heritage of the people of this great nation.

There is an African proverb that says, “If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” Singapore has embraced this concept and put it into practice in various projects. Students, supported by corporate sponsorship, were the main actors in the mangroves restoration project. Businesses have driven the adoption of environmentally friendly technologies. Politicians have ensured that catchment areas are protected. It is only too true that “Close partnership among the public, private and people sectors, [the 3Ps], is pivotal to [Singapore's] drive for environmental sustainability.” When visiting the Sungei Buloh wetland reserve, I had the opportunity to witness the wonder and achievement of the 3 Ps policy as well as a living nature class in action. The partners, including the private sector, should be proud of this achievement. I applaud once again the Singapore Environmental Council for its magnificent job. Indeed, you cannot protect if you don't know and you cannot protect if you don't have an interest to protect.

As the saying goes, we cannot manage what we cannot measure. I wholeheartedly welcome Minister Mah Bow Tan's offer to jointly facilitate the creation of an urban biodiversity index that will allow cities to measure their progress in conservation of biodiversity. Such an index to be developed at the next year's expert meeting will allow cities to benchmark and manage their performance on biodiversity initiatives. I pay tribute to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong for the decision announced during his opening statement this morning to establish a Centre for Liveable Cities here in Singapore, and we look forward to elevating this institution whose time has come into a collaborative centre of excellence for the development and implementation of the Convention's work programme on cities and biodiversity. Indeed, the blue dot is demonstrating its leadership to become the green dot of all the cities of the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen

While cities today may be part of the problem of the current unprecedented loss of biodiversity, they are also part of the solution. Indeed, the fight for life on Earth will be won or lost in cities. The hearts of citizen must be won. The local authorities have a major role to play as global change starts at the local level. The first time I met Mr. Takehisa Matubara , the Mayor of Nagoya, he told me that as a young boy, he used to play in streams and forests and developed and nurtured a love for nature and the need to live in harmony with mother Earth. But how many children today in our cities are in a position to enjoy this special relation with nature? How many children of tomorrow may enjoy such a natural privilege? The response will depend of the implementation of the action plan on cities and biodiversity to be adopted in October 2010 at the Nagoya Mayor Summit.

Today at the first ever World City Summit and the East Asia Summit Conference on Liveable Cities is a first step in the right direction. The biodiversity of our planet and its

capacity to continue sustaining life on earth depends on you. Your massive participation today is a clear message. We in the Secretariat of the Convention on Life on Earth look forward to working with all and with our host the people and Government of Singapore to translate our hope for equipping all the cities of the world to play their role in protecting life on Earth for the benefit of present and future generation. We owe this gift of life to ourselves and to our children.

Thank you for your attention.