



Secretariat of the
Convention on Biological Diversity



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**BIODIVERSITY
AND AGRICULTURE**

STATEMENT

by the

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

AHMED DJOGHLAF

at the

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of the

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of the

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Mr. President,

Yesterday in Tokyo, at his meeting with Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the United Nations Secretary-General stated that: “Natural disasters, climate change, the food crisis and the surge in fuel prices are the top priority issues faced by the United Nations.” All these four priority challenges are deeply rooted in the unprecedented loss of biodiversity. According to the Imperial Household Agency of Japan, the Emperor stated that, “it is important for the general public to be fully aware of climate change”. Indeed, meeting the planetary challenges of the unprecedented loss of biodiversity in a warmer and increasingly urbanized planet calls for the active engagement of all the citizens of the world. It also requires a paradigm shift in the relation with mother nature, as well as societal changes of a structural and systemic nature.

Never since human beings first appeared on Earth has anthropogenic change to our planet’s natural functioning been so destructive as it has been over the last half-century, resulting in an unparalleled loss of biodiversity on Earth. The current rates of biodiversity loss are estimated to be up to 100 times the natural extinction rate. Some 60 per cent of ecosystem services are being degraded as a result of human activity. Pressure from human activities on the natural functioning of the planet has reached such a level that the ability of ecosystems to meet the needs of future generations is now seriously—perhaps irreversibly—jeopardized.

The unfolding global food crisis is unprecedented in nature. The price of basic staples—wheat, corn, rice—are at record highs, and global food stocks are at historical lows. It has been estimated that an increase of 1 per cent the cost of food results in more than 16 million “newly hungry” people. By 2025, more than 1.2 billion people may be affected, in particular in Africa. By 2050, the world will have to feed a population of 9 billion which is 50% more than today. The urban population in Africa alone will triple in less than two decades. Two thirds of humanity will be living in cities rather than in rural areas, and 150 growing cities will soon reach the size of New York. The global food crisis is not a cyclical one. It is of a structural nature.

The era of cheap food is over, and the era of perceived unlimited and infinite natural resources is also over. This also applies to fossil fuels and other vital and non renewable natural resources. Of the 13 emergency humanitarian appeals launched last year by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 12 were related to climate-related events. Deforestation is contributing to 20 per cent of CO₂ emissions. Every minute, 20 hectares of forests are disappearing. At least 4.4 million trees are cut down every day.

More than 80 per cent of biodiversity is found in tropical forests. 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 owing to climate change. Victim of climate change, biodiversity is also of part of any effective response to the challenge of climate change

The Secretary General has made climate change one of his highest priorities and reminded the international community on the occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity, celebrated under the theme “Climate change and biodiversity”, that “[t]he conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity is an essential element of any strategy to adapt to climate change”. Biodiversity is therefore crucial in achieving sustainable development.

It is for this reason that in Johannesburg at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the leaders of the world agreed to reduce substantially the rate of loss of

biodiversity by 2010. It is also for this reason, as a follow-up of the World Review Summit of the Millennium Development Goals, the Johannesburg 2010 biodiversity target has been integrated at the initiative of the Secretary-General into Goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals.

As stated recently by Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda of Japan, “It is important for each country to address sincerely what they are able to do and what they should do toward the achievement of the biodiversity 2010 target and additional targets, by collaborating with other countries, international organizations, NGOs and so forth. Japan is determined, in Asia and in the international community, to actively contribute to such activities and make further efforts toward the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity as the host of the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.”

Last month, at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity, 5,000 participants endorsed the offer of Japan to host the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit in October 2010. Next week, at the Lake Toya in Hokkaido, at the initiative of Japan, the G8 leaders will have biodiversity as priority item on their agenda, together with climate change. The Kobe Call for Action for Biodiversity adopted on 26 May 2008 by the G8 ministers of the environment is a major contribution to achieving the 2010 biodiversity targets and the related Millennium Development Goals. At the Heiligendamm Summit, thanks to the leadership of Germany, biodiversity was included for the first time since the first summit in Rambouillet, as distinct section of the G8 Declaration.

Achieving the Kobe Call for Action on Biodiversity is essential for the success of the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit. Its implementation calls for strength of purpose, with a sense of leadership. Inspired and guided by the people and the Government of its host, Germany, 191 Parties and their partners attending the May meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, under the motto “One Nature, One World: Our Future”, demonstrated leadership in adopting the Bonn Biodiversity Compact, including the Bonn mandate for the international regime on access to genetic resources and the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from their utilization.

The implementation of the Bonn mandate calls for a sense of purpose by the United Nations and its relevant organs. In the coming months we will be working ever more closely with partners in the United Nations system as we gear up for the celebration of 2010—the International Year of Biodiversity. The Conference of the Parties has called for a special high-level event on the eve of the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2010. This will be preceded by a number of events, including a Summit on Women and Biodiversity, the billion-signatures campaign, the Green Wave initiative to encourage to every school to plant a tree, meeting of parliamentarians among others, which we hope will feed into and be integrated into the United Nations processes.

The year 2010 will be historic in many ways. At the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Nagoya, it is expected that we will be adopting not only targets for the reduction of the rate of biodiversity loss beyond 2010 but also landmark international regimes on access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from their use, as well as on liability and redress under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The Stern-like report on the economic valuation of biodiversity being prepared Mr. Pavan Sukhdev would also become available at that time.

The Economic and Social Council has a key role to play in adding value to the work of functional commissions such as the Commission on Sustainable Development. It is also a unique forum for dialogue with the Bretton Woods institutions, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and on development cooperation issues through the launching of the Development Cooperation Forum this year, to play this additional function in the commemoration of the International Year of Biodiversity by holding a special event or having a special focus on a theme such as biodiversity for development/achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, in both the Annual Ministerial Review and the Development Cooperation Forum. We will only be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals if we consciously seek to break out of our silo approach to sustainable development and attempt such integrated perspectives. We must demonstrate a sense of purpose to address the threat of biodiversity loss and to ensure that we manage this planet for the benefit of all people, all peoples, and all life on Earth.

In my capacity as the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, I look forward to working with all and your secretariat to ensure that your meeting in July 2010 on the occasion of the International Year of Biodiversity will make its distinct contribution for the success of the Nagoya biodiversity vision for the benefit of all people and all life on Earth.

As Gro Harlem Brundtland said, “The time for diagnosis is over and the time for action is now”.

I thank you for your kind attention.