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**Convention on Biological Diversity**



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**BIODIVERSITY  
AND AGRICULTURE**

Message of the Executive Secretary

**Dr. Ahmed Djoghla**

on the occasion of the

**TECHNICAL WORKSHOP ON  
PROTECTED AREAS IN THE AMAZON**

*14-16 July 2008  
Amacayacú National Park, Colombia*



ONE NATURE - ONE WORLD - OUR FUTURE  
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Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity congratulates the World Wide Fund for Nature, the Latin –American Network of Protected Areas (REDPARQUES) and the IUCN for taking this initiative to convene a Technical Workshop on Protected Areas in the Amazon, to promote a regional dialogue on the implementation of the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas and to identify conservation priorities at the sub-regional levels.

The vital importance of the Amazon rain forests is well known. As the largest tract of tropical rainforests in the world, the Amazon basin has unparalleled biodiversity harboring one in ten known species in the world and one in five of all birds in the world. Amazon rain forests support highest diversity of plant species on earth with one square kilometer of Amazon rain forest can contain over 75,000 types of trees and 150,000 species of higher plants. Amazonian evergreen forests account for about 10% of the world's terrestrial primary productivity and 10% of the carbon stores in ecosystems of the order of  $1.1 \times 10^{11}$  metric tons of carbon. According to some estimates these precious ecosystems have accumulated 0.37 to 0.62 tons of carbon per hectare per year between 1975 and 1996. It is also home to a diverse array of indigenous communities, and the rich natural resources base provides a source of livelihoods for many both within and outside the region. In the words of famous Ecologist **Dan Nepstad** "*The Amazon is a canary in a coal mine for the Earth*".

However, as everywhere, this treasure trove of our planet, did not escape from the vauntum destruction to cater the gigantic appetite of unsustainable development. Between 1991 and 2000, the total area of forests lost in Amazon rose from 415,000 to 587,000 km, an area more than six times the size of Portugal. More than 20 percent of the Amazonian rain forests are already gone fallen victim to illegal logging, and much more is severely threatened as the destruction continues. The loss of tropical rain forests has a profound and devastating impact on the world because rainforests are so biologically diverse, more so than any other ecosystems of the world. Scientists estimate that we are losing more than 137 species of plants and animals every single day because of rain forest deforestation. To quote from **E.O Wilson** "*destroying rainforests for economic gain is like burning a Renaissance painting to cook a meal*". Illegal logging the most serious cause of deforestation has assumed alarming dimensions and warrants an effective international cooperation to combat it.

In the face of increasing human pressure on the planet's resources, an effective protected area system is the best hope for conserving ecosystems, habitats and species. In this background protected areas and the effective implementation of the programme of work on protected areas of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) need no further reiteration. The Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) provides a blueprint of how to establish protected areas, how to manage them, how to govern them and what tools can be used to achieve the planned work. It charts the way forward in detail and with clear targets. The end result will be protected areas that fulfill their key role of conserving *in situ* biodiversity of the world and help achieving the 2010 Biodiversity Target. It is a framework for cooperation between Governments, donors, NGOs and local people – without such collaboration no projects will be sustainable over the long-term.

The programme of work is now four years old and some of its ambitious deadlines have passed. There are many signs of progress. At its eighth meeting in 2006, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the CBD, against the backdrop of the decree by the President of Brazil that 6.4 million hectares of the Amazon rainforest were to be protected, recognized that developing countries were facing capacity-building constraints and a lack of implementation, and requested the Secretariat to organize regional workshops to review the implementation of the programme of work and to build capacity. I am very pleased to report that in partnership with an informal consortium of partners we call the "POWPA Friends" the Secretariat has organized a series of nine sub-regional workshops attended by nearly 600 planners, practitioners and policy makers from some 100 countries. WWF is one of the active members of the POWPA Friends and I pay tribute to WWF for its outstanding role.

The programme of work is clearly catalyzing political will and commitment. Since the adoption of the programme of work, some 2,300 new terrestrial protected areas and 50 new marine protected areas, covering approximately 60 million hectares, have been established. The programme of work also triggered countries declaring ambitious protection goals. In May this year, at the ninth meeting of the COP to the CBD in Bonn, the Brazilian Environment Minister, Carlos Minc announced the creation of four new protected areas, three of them in the Brazilian Amazon, totaling 2.3 million hectares. In Bonn, Environment Ministers from 65 countries signed on support to WWF's call for zero net deforestation by 2020. I sincerely applaud WWF for taking this initiative.

During the Bonn COP meeting, the Government of Germany launched the Life Web initiative, which acts as a clearing-house to link donors and recipients in the designation and improvement of protected areas globally. The main aim of the Life Web initiative is to match voluntary commitments by States to designate new protected areas, and/or improve highly underfunded existing sites, with the respective commitment of donors for dedicated (co-)financing for these areas.

In the Bonn meeting 5,000 participants adopted a landmark decision to enhance implementation of the CBD PoWPA. In this decision the COP requested the Parties to designate a national focal point for the POWPA to coordinate its effective implementation. The COP encouraged Parties, relevant international organizations and NGOs to enhance activities and resources towards organizing and forming regional technical support networks to assist countries in implementing the PoWPA inter alia through convening regional and sub-regional capacity building workshops, making available tools, sharing of information, establishment of sub-regional forums for undertaking cooperation in the establishment of transboundary protected areas, regional networks of protected areas and implementation of regional capacity building plans.

In this background organization of this technical workshop assumes significance and is essential to scale up the capacity of national parks technical staff for effective implementation of the programme of work. Bringing together Government actors, NGOs, indigenous and local communities and building a bridge between all stakeholders and national interests is of a crucial importance. The Secretariat fully supports organization of such workshops for accelerated implementation of PowPA. We are confident that the workshop will yield fruitful results to promote a regional dialogue and plan for safeguarding the Amazon.

The need for conserving Amazon can not be expressed well than in the words of **Chico Mendes**, the Brazilian rubber tapper and environmental activist: *“At first, I thought fighting to save rubber tress. Then, I thought I was fighting to save the Amazon rain forests. Now, I realize I am fighting for humanity”*.

Today when the world is reeling under threat of climate change, conserving the large intact tropical rainforests assume paramount importance. The REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) initiatives have the potential to shift the balance away from the economic incentives currently driving the deforestation and to make the conservation and sustainable use of forests a more viable alternative. These actions also reduce climate change impacts and can have significant co-benefits by maintaining multiple economic goods and ecological services. In this regard, I welcome the references contained in the 9<sup>th</sup> July declaration of G8 leaders summit to the CBD Bonn COP 9 meeting, commitment to increasing the efforts to achieve the 2010 target and biodiversity benefits of REDD.

I wish you success in your meeting and encourage you to disseminate your proceedings widely to all stakeholders so that we can all continue to work towards effective protected area systems for safeguarding our future and the future of our children.

I thank you for your attention.

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