



Secretariat of the
Convention on Biological Diversity



INTERNATIONAL
DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY
22 May 2008
**BIODIVERSITY
AND AGRICULTURE**

STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

DR. AHMED DJOGLAF

on the occasion of the

**EXPERT MEETING ON SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION
ON BIODIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT**

Montreal, 6 November 2008

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ONE NATURE • ONE WORLD • OUR FUTURE
COP 9 MOP 4 Bonn Germany 2008



United Nations
Environment Programme

413 Saint-Jacques Street, Suite 800
Montreal, QC H2Y 1N9, Canada

Tel : +1 514 288 2220
Fax : +1 514 288 6588

<http://www.cbd.int>
secretariat@cbd.int

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The unfolding financial crisis demonstrates the limitations of the current international financial system as well as the urgent need to reconcile the virtual economy with the real economy. The recent food crisis, which has resulted in an additional 75 million newly poor people, ushers in a new era of scarce resources and demonstrates the need to use our natural resources in a more sustainable manner—especially in a planet that is becoming warmer, more urbanized and more populated. These two unprecedented crises are major threats to global peace and stability. Yet, they also offer a unique opportunity for a paradigm shift in the relationship between man and nature.

The *Living Planet Report 2008*, issued a few days ago by the WWF, emphasizes that the global community is consuming natural resources much too fast—faster than they can be replenished. In the foreword to this report James Leape, Director-General of WWF International writes: “Just as reckless spending is causing recession, so reckless consumption is depleting the world’s natural capital to a point where we are endangering our future prosperity.”

Under the Convention on Biological Diversity, tools and guidance have been developed to address some of the key challenges that the planet is facing. However, solutions need to be developed in a holistic manner. In a manner that takes into account biodiversity as well as all economic sectors. In a manner that addresses all Millennium Development Goals collectively, not individually.

The implementation of the three objectives of the Convention on Life on Earth calls not only for enhanced North-South cooperation but also enhanced South-South cooperation. Developing countries, which make up the majority of Parties to the Convention, are the stewards of 65 per cent of the world’s remaining forest cover. Eighty-five per cent of the world’s biodiversity hotspots are in developing countries. Technical and financial resources, including from the South, need to be mobilized systematically to ensure that these global treasures can be maintained and that the burden of doing so is shared equitably by the global community.

Since the inception of the concept, South South Cooperation has emerged as a unique mechanism to foster global solidarity and cohesion among developing countries. The emerging economies of the South have recently given new impetus to South-South Cooperation. Among developing countries, merchandise trade has expanded dramatically, growing from 577 billion dollars in 1995 to 2.1 trillion dollars in 2006—a threefold increase in 10 years. With current growth rates, it is likely that by the end of the decade, over 50 per cent of the trade in developing countries will be with each other. Additionally, foreign direct investment by developing countries surged from 53 billion dollars in 2002 to 193 billion dollars in 2006. For example:

- Gulf countries have invested over 700 billion dollars, primarily in the South, over the last six years;
- The Malaysian government, through its “prosper-thy-neighbour” policy, invested over 4.8 billion dollars in other developing countries in 2006 and also signed 56 investment guarantee agreements with countries of the South;
- Since 2004, India has disbursed a total 1.4 billion dollars in concessional lines of credit to developing countries and has pledged 100 million dollars for poverty alleviation among countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC);

- India has also established a forum of cooperation with African countries and earmarked about 200 million dollars for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD);
- China has pledged to double aid to Africa by 2009 to approximately 1 billion dollars and has established a 5 billion China-Africa development fund.
- Brazil has decided to grant duty-free access to its market for products from the 50 least developed countries and has donated locally produced anti-retroviral drugs for HIV/AIDs to at least 11 other developing countries;
- South Africa has created its own international development agency aimed at expanding the country's Official Development Assistance; and
- A Summit of the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Dialogue Forum has been established.

As a result of these initiatives and more, private companies of the South have emerged as a major force in the world economy. According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), half of the Secretary-General's Global Compact's 2,300 participating companies are based in developing countries.

In 2006, the Chairman of the Group of 77, Ambassador Kumalo, invited the Convention Secretariat to organize an expert meeting to develop a multi-year plan of action on biodiversity for development, which led to a very productive brainstorming meeting in Montreal in November 2006. More recently, the G-77 adopted earlier this year in Cote d'Ivoire the Development Platform for the South, which recognizes biodiversity as one of its core issues.

Under the leadership of Antigua and Barbuda, the G-77 suggested to the 5,000 participants attending the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 9), held in Bonn in May 2008, a unique initiative on South South Cooperation. The adoption of decision IX/25 aimed at promoting a multi-year plan of action on South-South Cooperation for the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention is a unique initiative in the history of the environmental movement. Decision IX/25 also requests the Executive Secretary to report on a multi-year plan of action on biodiversity for development at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010, which could also be presented at a planned South-South Cooperation Forum on Biodiversity for Development to be held at the margins of the meeting.

There is an African proverb that says, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." This is what the Group of 77 has done. As then Chairman, Sheikh Mohamed bin Ahmad bin Jassim Al-Thani, stated at the celebration of the Group's fortieth anniversary: "[Your] solidarity is not only aimed at strengthening our collective bargaining but it is the most potent instrument in the cooperation among developing countries themselves."

I would like therefore to pay tribute to Ambassador John Ashe and Ambassador Conrad Hunte for their leadership and to Executive Secretary of the Group of 77, Mr. Mourad Ahmia, for his continued support. I would like to thank each of you here present for accepting the invitation to attend this meeting and assist the joint secretariat of the Convention and the Group of 77 in preparing the elements of a multi-year plan of action on South-South Cooperation for the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention, to be submitted to the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The Nagoya meeting of the Parties will coincide with the celebration

of the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010, as well as with the high-level segment of the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly, which will be devoted to biodiversity. We in the Secretariat are very proud of being associated with this unique initiative and we look forward to working with all of you in the months to our common journey to Nagoya. In doing so let's be inspired by the wisdom of the President of the South Commission, H.E. Julius Nyerere., the former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, who referred to developing countries as “the prime movers of their own destiny”.

I thank you very much for your kind attention.