



Convention on
Biological Diversity



STATEMENT BY
MR. AHMED DJOGHLAF
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

ON THE OCCASION OF

THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE BERN CONVENTION
GROUP OF EXPERTS ON INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES

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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

Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations proclaimed 22 May the International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues. The theme for the International Day in 2009 is invasive alien species (IAS)—one of the greatest threats to biodiversity, and to the ecological and economic well-being of society and the planet.

Coming right before the International Day, this meeting of the experts of the Bern Convention at Brijuni in Croatia can be seen as a take-off point for the numerous events that will be held in various parts of the world on this important United Nations' day of celebration.

It should also be noted that the first national workshop on IAS was held in Zagreb, in May 2006, at the initiative of the Croatian Government and in collaboration with the Bern Convention Group of Experts on IAS, as well as other institutions, such as the European Plant Protection Organization. With the rich historical memory of microbiology successfully being used to eradicate malaria in Brijuni, the return of the experts of the Bern Convention to Croatia inspires a feeling of long-term commitment in addressing the problem of invasive alien species.

At global level, the Secretariat has been working closely with other United Nations agencies and other organizations to fill regulatory framework gaps and to facilitate implementation. Among such organizations are the International Plant Protection Convention, the World Organization for Animal Health, the World Trade Organization, the Committee on Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the International Maritime Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialists Group and the Global Invasive Species Programme

However, real implementation occurs at the national level and depends on the capacity to develop strategies and monitor threats from invasive alien species at the front of introduction. Effective prevention, control and management of invasive alien species are dependent on strong national regulation and harmonised coordination at the regional level, where the pathways of introduction are interconnected.

In 2008, at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Parties reviewed the ongoing work on invasive alien species. One of its decisions noted how the European strategy on invasive alien species facilitated national implementation and provided coordination among countries, encouraging other regions to consider exploring the benefits of regional cooperative mechanisms. In the same decision, a science-based approach to addressing threats from invasive alien species was also highlighted.

Trade and transportation of living natural resources and tourism across the world are continuously growing. These human activities have opened new pathways for invasive alien species across aquatic and terrestrial habitats. Although the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity have aimed at reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by next year, today the 2010 target does not appear easy to achieve in many parts of the world. However, in some protected areas, such as Natura 2000 in Europe, the network of sites tasked with the preservation of natural heritage has made a significant difference in reducing the rate of biodiversity loss. The successful practices of European colleagues need to be shared with the rest of the world to encourage further protection of biological diversity beyond 2010.

There are only seven months left before the targeted day in 2010. The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. As such, 2010 will not only be a celebration of biodiversity, but the busiest year for all relevant bodies of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The fourteenth meeting of the Convention's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) will be held in May. In addition, Heads of State and Government will meet to discuss biological diversity during the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations prior to the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Nagoya, Japan. The evidence obtained and practices and lessons learned from your countries and region will be very important in influencing the discussion at the high-level meeting.

I wish you every success with the meeting.
