



**Convention on  
Biological Diversity**



2010 International Year of Biodiversity

## **STATEMENT**

**BY MR. AHMED DJOGHLAF**

**THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE  
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE**

**TWENTY-NINTH MEETING**

**OF THE**

**STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE CONVENTION ON THE  
CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL  
HABITATS (BERN CONVENTION)**

***Bern, 23-26 November 2009***

*Please check against delivery*



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Life in harmony, into the future  
いのちの共生を、未来へ  
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

One year ago, in Strasbourg, I had the immense privilege of attending for the first time the twenty-eighth meeting of your Standing Committee, which coincided with the celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The meeting took place sixth month after the signature in Bonn on the margins of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity of the enhanced Memorandum of Understanding between our two conventions. This Memorandum is of great significance, as our two conventions are critical tools in the fight to preserve the world's natural resources. The Bern Convention is among the earliest legally binding legislation on biodiversity protection, while the Convention on Biological Diversity is the premier international instrument allowing all nations of the world to come together for the conservation, sustainable use of biodiversity and access and fair and equitable sharing of genetic resources. With the recent accession of Iraq and Somalia, the Convention has now 193 Parties and we hope to be joined in the early future by Andorra. We also hope to that the family of all nations without exception will gather in Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture, Japan, at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Your meeting today is taking place at the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of your Convention. It is taking place in the same city where the Convention was born. It is therefore taking place at the right time and the right place to ponder on past achievements but, most importantly, to shape the way forward of the new Bern Convention in sinc with today's world and its institutions.

The capacity of the planet to continue providing its goods and services is being seriously undermined by anthropogenic factors. Life on Earth is under siege everywhere. Because of human activities, some 20 per cent of the world's coral reefs have been effectively destroyed, and approximately 24 per cent of remaining reefs are under imminent risk of collapse. A third of all assessed freshwater species are threatened with extinction, with overall population levels having declined by 30 per cent. Over the last 25 years, 3.6 million hectares of mangroves, about 20 per cent of the total extent found in 1980, have disappeared worldwide. Forests have completely disappeared in 25 countries, and another 29 countries have lost more than 90 per cent of their forest cover. The list goes on: approximately 60 per cent of the Earth's ecosystem services have been degraded in the last 50 years, with human impacts being the root cause.

It is for this reason that in 2001 in Göteborg, the leaders of the European Union decided to stop the loss of biodiversity in 2010 and, a year later, the 110 Heads of State and Government attending the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development decided to substantially reduce the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010. Your meeting today in Bern is taking place less than 38 days before the dawn of 2010 and, unfortunately, we have failed to fulfil our commitment. Last September, in Strömstad at the leaders of the European Union confirmed the Athens message that 2010 will not be met in Europe in spite substantial progress achieved. The same message has been confirmed by the 86 national reports received by the Convention Secretariat. In that connection, would like to call upon the Europeans countries that have not done so to submit their national as soon as possible and no later than the end of this year.

Based on the national reports submitted by Parties, the third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook will be issued on 10 September 2010 and will guide the negotiation on the new Strategic Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity covering the period 2011-2020.

The Plan will include a 2050 biodiversity vision and 2020 biodiversity targets associated with means of implementation and monitoring and evaluation. Last week in Montreal, the joint meeting of the bureaux of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice reviewed the draft Strategic Plan prepared by the Secretariat and I have the pleasure to submit to you and to the members of the Bern Convention the draft and invite you to offer us your comments and suggestions.

On the 9 November, the Aichi-Nagoya international e-conference on biodiversity was launched to seek the views of a larger audience. The final version will be submitted to the Parties in February 2010. I would like therefore to pay tribute to you for the suggestion to adopt the Bern Declaration on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in Europe on 2010 and beyond and I look forward to receiving the final version. I also look very much forward to the collective and individual contribution of the members of the Bern Convention to contribute to the success of the celebration of the 2010 International Year on Biodiversity. The official launch of this unique event will take place in Berlin on 11 January under the leadership of Dr. Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany. It will be followed on 21-22 January by a high-level event in Paris at the headquarters of UNESCO as well as by an event to be convened in Madrid under the Spanish Presidency of the European Union. The International Year will culminate by a high-level event during the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly to be held in New York on 20 September with the participation of Heads of State and Government and it will be closed on 11-12 December 2010 in Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan. The closing ceremony will also coincide with the launch of the 2011 International Year of Forests to be organized in partnership with the Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests. .

Albert Schweitzer, the physician, philosopher, Nobel Laureate, and one-time resident of Strasbourg, once said that “a man is ethical only when life, as such, is sacred to him, that of plants and animals as that of his fellow men, and when he devotes himself helpfully to all life that is in need of help.” In tackling the biodiversity crisis, we need to make people realize that it is *we* who are in need of help – that the relentless extermination of flora and fauna across the planet, on top of being a tragedy in its own right, is a gross infringement on our own fundamental rights. This is what the International Year of Biodiversity is about, and I therefore look very much forward to the contribution of the members of the Bern Convention to the success of the International Year of Biodiversity