



**Convention on
Biological Diversity**



2010 International Year of Biodiversity

STATEMENT

BY MR AHMED DJOGLAF

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

ON THE OCCASION OF

**THE LAUNCH OF THE UK PARTNERSHIP SUPPORTING
BIODIVERSITY IS LIFE – THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
BIODIVERSITY 2010**

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Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
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
secretariat@cbd.int www.cbd.int



Life in harmony, into the future
いのちの共生を、未来へ
COP 10 / MOP 5

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assembled today near the magnificent Darwin Centre, the latest creation of our prestigious host, the Natural History Museum, we are all reminded of the vision of Charles Darwin which is as accurate today as it was 150 years ago. Indeed Charles Robert Darwin once said: “Believing as I do that man in the distant future will be a far more perfect creature than he now is, it is an intolerable thought that he and all other sentient beings are doomed to complete annihilation after such long-continued slow progress.”

The distant future referred to by Mr. Charles Darwin is now. The unprecedented loss of biodiversity compounded by climate change will soon make into an intolerable reality the intolerable thought of the man that we are gathered here today to celebrate, 150 years after the publication of *On the Origin of Species*. Today, the rate of species extinction may be 1,000 times higher than the natural background rate. Two thirds of all ecosystems reviewed by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment are in an advanced state of degradation. Climate change is emerging as one of the most significant drivers of biodiversity loss. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 30 per cent of all known species may disappear before the end of the century due to climate change. Ten per cent of species assessed to date will face an increasingly high risk of extinction for every 1°C rise in global mean surface temperature. Ocean acidification is now proceeding at a rate 100 times faster than any change in acidity experienced in the marine environment over the last 20 million years. It has been predicted that, by 2100, 70 per cent of cold water corals— key refuges and feeding grounds for commercial fish species—will be exposed to corrosive waters. The 5,000 new marine species discovered by British scientists in deep water as announced yesterday by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) will be at risk, as well as many other unknown species.

In the less than 36 days left before the start of the new decade, we can state without risk of being contradicted that we human beings have failed to fulfil the Johannesburg promise made to our children in 2002 by Heads of State and Government to substantially reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. Last September in Strömstad, Sweden, the 27 European ministers of the environment or their representatives admitted that the 2010 target will not be met in spite substantial efforts. In October, the 400 participants at the first ASEAN Conference on Biodiversity reached the same conclusion. The 87 national reports received so far by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity confirm this sad reality, which is compounded by the lack of awareness of the impact of this failure on the capacity of the planet to continue providing its goods and services. The lack of urgency to act to stop the loss of biodiversity is indeed an “intolerable thought”.

It is for this reason that the General Assembly of the United Nations declared 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity and called on all Governments, international and non-governmental organizations to contribute to the objectives of this unique event in the life of the United Nations. The International Year will also see, in New York in September 2010, a high-level event during the sixty-fifth session of General Assembly with the participation of Heads of State and Government.

For the first time ever, the 192 Heads of State and Government attending the General Assembly will discuss the 2050 biodiversity vision and 2020 biodiversity target, including the means of implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This new biodiversity agenda will be integrated into the Strategic Plan of the Convention for the period 2011-2020 and be translated

into national priorities before 2012 through the national strategies and action plans. I am very grateful to the Right Honourable Hilary Benn MP and to you Honorable Huw Irranca Daviers for convening here in London in January 2010, and in partnership with Brazil, a global meeting on the post-2010 biodiversity strategy.

As Charles Darwin stated: “It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change.” This is valid not only for human beings but also for institutions and processes. The world has changed and the global partnership for biodiversity will need to adapt to these changes. This is what the UK-Brazil partnership for the post-2010 era is all about. This is also what the IYB-UK partnership is all about. Last month in Montreal we signed an agreement with the Canadian Network on Environment a network of 600 NGO from coast to coast. Through this agreement the Network of the Canadian Friends of the CBD was established with twining arrangements with the Japan Civil Society Network for CBD established in January this year and now comprising more than 200 members. I sincerely hope that your 300 partners of the IYB-UK can evolve into UK friends of the CBD.

Indeed, the post-2010 target will not be achieved without the full engagement of all stakeholders, including the business community. This is what the International Year of Biodiversity is all about. This new biodiversity strategy will not be achieved without a broad-based partnership with all the stakeholders.

As Darwin said, “In the long history of humankind...those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed.” The launching today, here in the newly created Darwin Centre, of the UK-IYB partnership comprising 300 partners is the best homage that we can offer on the occasion of the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the publication of *On the Origin of Species* and the best contribution to celebrating life and celebrating biodiversity. In this over 100-year-old cathedral of nature, the Natural History Museum, with its vast new storehouse, research and educational temple, the Darwin Centre, I would like to sincerely thank you, Dr. Bob Bloomfield, and your fantastic team and partners for an example that needs to be emulated by the other 192 Parties to the Convention.

Thank you for kind attention.