

STATEMENT

BY MR AHMED DJOGLAF

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

ON THE OCCASION OF

**THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
BIODIVERSITY**

**11 JANUARY 2010
BERLIN, GERMANY**

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Excellency Angela Merkel,
Excellency Norbert Röttgen,
Excellency Jochen Flasbarth,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As we officially launch the International Year of Biodiversity 2010 today here in Germany, I am reminded of Goethe's famous words: "Nature is beneficent. I praise her and all her works." Offering such praise is precisely what the International Year is about. Over the next 12 months the nations of the world will engage in an unprecedented celebration of the diversity of life on Earth, paying homage to incredible biological richness that sustains our health and wellbeing and, ultimately, allows for our very existence.

There is no better place to launch the 2010 celebrations than Germany, for this country has been a true leader in international conservation efforts over the last few years. You will remember that it was in Potsdam in 2006 that G8 environment ministers delivered a call-to-arms on biodiversity loss, prompting G8 leaders subsequently gathered in Heiligendamm to agree to increase efforts toward achieving the 2010 Biodiversity Target. So effective was the Potsdam Initiative that it set a precedent that has been followed at G8 meetings every year since.

German leadership was also amply on display during the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD in Bonn in 2008. In opening the meeting chancellor Merkel emphatically stated: "The preservation of biological diversity is a matter to which the German Government – and I personally – attach great importance." Such passion from our host was in part why a true Global Biodiversity Partnership was born at the meeting. COP9 brought together 6,000 participants, including ministers and heads of state, non-governmental organizations, youth, women, indigenous and local authorities, the private sector, the media, artists, as well as many others. It also saw the launch of the 'Business and Biodiversity' initiative of the German government, bringing together a group of 34 companies across the globe to redefine the relationship between the private sector and biodiversity. Further still, COP9 saw the launch of the Life Web Initiative for protected areas, to which the government of Germany has been the major donor, committing 500 million Euros until 2012 for the conservation of forests and other important ecosystems, along with 70 million Euros within the framework of its International Climate Initiative and bilateral development cooperation.

Incredibly, having already done so much in Bonn, Germany was not then content to rest on its laurels – in fact quite the opposite. In March 2009, the German Presidency convened a high-level working group on the post-2010 targets. This important meeting took a critical look at why the 2010 target is unlikely to be achieved and looked at the framework for the post-2010 targets. The outcomes of this meeting will undoubtedly shape the strategic plan and the post-2010 targets, to be finalized at COP10 in Nagoya. Furthermore, in a major new initiative the German Presidency convened the first Global Private Donor Forum on Biodiversity in June 2009 here in Berlin. Overall, under the German Presidency the COP10 Bureau has held five meetings relating to 2010, and has been actively involved in providing guidance to the Secretariat on a number of issues.

The nations of the world are deeply indebted to Germany for such committed leadership. I would therefore like to sincerely thank Chancellor Merkel, Environment Minister Norbert Röttgen and his predecessor Sigmar Gabriel, COP9 Bureau president Jochen Flasbarth, and the government and people of Germany more generally for their wonderful work both in the lead-up

to Bonn and in the year and a half since then. It is no exaggeration to say that without their commitment, we would not be where we are today.

I should also add that it is fitting that we are launching the International Year of Biodiversity not only in Germany, but specifically here in the great city of Berlin, which the German writer Jean Paul Richter called “more a part of the world than just a city”. It was here in 2007 that Germany launched its national biodiversity strategy, in many ways a model for other countries to follow, with its clearly-stated action areas, flagship projects, specific measures on innovation and employment, and concrete activities to combat poverty and promote justice. And as I mentioned, it was here last June that the first-ever Global Private Donor Forum on Biodiversity was held, bringing an important new constituency into our global partnership.

Let us take the unique opportunity provided by the International Year of Biodiversity to put biodiversity at the top of the international agenda. Let us create a long-lasting, universal alliance of all stakeholders to protect life on Earth. Let us encourage people everywhere to discover and explore the great diversity of life that surrounds them. Let us help them realize its value, their connection to it and the terrible consequences of its ongoing loss. And most importantly, let us empower them to do all they can to save it.

Many different events have been planned over the course of the year to help us achieve these goals. In a few days a high-level scientific conference in Paris will launch UNESCO’s exhibition on the International Year of Biodiversity. In February the 6th Trondheim Conference on Biodiversity will take place in Norway, as well as a Global Ministerial Environmental Forum in Bali. In May the third edition of Global Biodiversity Outlook will be launched, offering a first global assessment of progress made toward the 2010 target, an analysis of attempts thus far to implement the objectives of the Convention, and a projection of future changes in biodiversity levels and possible response measures. Then, in September, one of the most important events of the year will take place: the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, where for the first time ever a high-level segment on biodiversity with the participation of heads of state and government will be convened. Afterward, in October, the Convention’s tenth Conference of the Parties will be held in Nagoya, Japan. And then the closing ceremonies of the International Year will take place in December in Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture, along with a ceremony looking forward to the 2011 International Year of Forests.

COP10 in Nagoya promises to be a truly extraordinary event. In Nagoya the Parties will make a final assessment of progress toward the 2010 Biodiversity Target, create new biodiversity targets for 2020 and 2050, finalize a comprehensive post-2010 strategic plan for ultimately stopping biodiversity loss in the years to come, and establish an International Regime on Access and Benefit-Sharing. All of this will be done using a bottom-up approach, with the participation and input of a broad range of stakeholders. To this end COP10 will include a summit on Cities and Biodiversity, as well as forums for, amongst others, parliamentarians, cooperative agencies and the private sector. A high-level ministerial segment will also take place from the 27th to the 29th of October. Ultimately, a grand global alliance of all sectors of society will be formed in Nagoya, making it a truly watershed moment in the struggle to preserve the diversity of life on Earth.

I would also like to point out that the call for nominations for the UNDP Equator Prize 2010 officially opens today, 11 January 2010. The prize is awarded to outstanding local, indigenous and community efforts to reduce poverty through the conservation and sustainable use

of biodiversity. Past recipients span sustainable forestry, eco-enterprises, seed banks, eco-agriculture initiatives, apiculture, community-conserved areas, community conservancies, agricultural diversification, sustainable fishing initiatives, eco-tourism ventures, marine resource conservation activities, conservation of medicinal plants, adaptation to climate change and many other fields of work. Nominations will be accepted through 28 February 2010. For further information on the Equator Prize, selection criteria and to nominate, go to the UNDP Equator Initiative website at www.equatorinitiative.org.

There can be no doubt that the task before us this year is supremely urgent. To quote Chancellor Merkel again: “The question is not whether we are able to change but whether we are changing fast enough.” These words are a true call-to-action coming from the leader of a country that has done so much for biodiversity over the last few years.

With our sights now firmly set on Nagoya and the post-2010 world, let us also remember the words of G.W.F. Hegel: “Nothing great in the world has been accomplished without passion.” And indeed passion is what we need over coming months: the passion and commitment to protect the biological resources on which our health, wellbeing and prosperity so intimately depend. “Biodiversity is life”, as the slogan of the International Year reminds us. “Biodiversity is OUR life.”

Thank you for your kind attention.