



STATEMENT

BY MR AHMED DJOGLAF

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

ON THE OCCASION OF

AFRICA ENVIRONMENT DAY

**3 MARCH 2010
ARUSHA, TANZANIA**

Please check against delivery



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

Africa is the sole region of the world to have an environmental day. The theme of this year's Africa Environment Day, *Africa Resilience to Climate Change: Biodiversity Conservation and Enhancing Traditional Knowledge*, is extremely well-chosen. Not only do the negative impacts of climate change on biodiversity have significant economic, ecological and human costs, but traditional communities will be disproportionately impacted because their livelihoods and cultural ways of life are being undermined by changes to local ecosystems.

The ramifications of biodiversity loss will be particularly severe in Africa, where agriculture and agricultural biodiversity account for 20 to 60 per cent of national GDP. Most of this production takes place in dry and sub-humid lands, and yet almost half of African dry and sub-humid lands are vulnerable to desertification under changing climatic conditions. Hence, addressing climate change and biodiversity loss is absolutely central to the long-term prosperity of the African peoples. As Wangari Maathai, winner of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize, has stated: "We need to promote development that does not destroy our environment."

To make matters worse, the Convention on Biological Diversity's recent technical report on climate change and biodiversity shows that shifts in phenology and geographic ranges of species could impact the cultural and religious lives of traditional communities. Many traditional peoples use wildlife as integral parts of their cultural and religious ceremonies. For example, a number of ethnic groups in sub-Saharan Africa use animal skins and bird feathers in this context. In Boran ceremonies in Kenya, the selection of tribal leaders involves rituals requiring ostrich feathers.

At the same time, because the livelihoods of indigenous peoples and local communities depend on ecosystems that are directly affected by climate change, these communities are holders of key knowledge, innovations and practices that can be used to in the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss. Such knowledge, based on life-long observations and interactions with nature, typically covers areas such as traditional livelihoods, health, medicine, plants, animals, weather conditions, environment and climate conditions, and environmental management as the basis of indigenous well-being. In Tanzania the Maasai are putting their knowledge into practice by working to preserve their traditional cattle breeds, which are robust, adaptable, and drought resistant, and therefore superior to introduced cattle.

Ultimately, however, the potential impacts of climate change on biodiversity, biodiversity-related livelihoods, and the cultures of indigenous people and local communities remains poorly known. Such impacts are rarely considered in academic, policy and public discourse. I therefore urge you to continue to emphasize the importance of traditional knowledge whenever you can. We must start monitoring the impacts of climate change on biodiversity in partnership with indigenous and local communities: there is a strong need to enhance links between traditional knowledge and scientific practices.

This task is particularly important during 2010, which as you know is the International Year of Biodiversity. The goals of this unique event in the life of the Convention are to raise awareness about the importance of biodiversity, to communicate the human costs of its ongoing loss, and to get people involved in efforts to conserve and sustainably use our natural heritage. These goals are reflected in the slogan of the International Year: "Biodiversity is life. Biodiversity is OUR life."

Overall, the 2010 celebrations offer a historic opportunity to place the issue of biodiversity loss, including its connection with climate change and the importance of traditional

knowledge, firmly onto the political agenda. To this end, in September the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly will convene for the first time ever a high-level segment on biodiversity with the participation of heads of state and government. And at our tenth meeting in October in Nagoya, Japan, the Parties to the CBD 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, including youth, indigenous and local authorities, parliamentarians, the private sector, and cooperative agencies.

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 the wisdom that will be guiding us throughout this historic year as we work to build a long-term, global alliance to save life on Earth. Traditional communities, with the irreplaceable knowledge they possess, have an important role to play in this process and during the years ahead.

As far back as 1968 Africa adopted its Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. It was amended at the Maputo Summit in 2003, and yet seven years later the Convention has yet to enter into force. Let us work together to ensure that it does before the end of this year. That will be the best contribution that African leaders can make to the celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity.

Thank you for your kind attention.