

**MESSAGE FROM AHMED DJOGLAF, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, ON THE OCCASION OF
WORLD HEALTH DAY 2010**

Our lives depend on biodiversity. Our health depends on biodiversity. Species and ecosystems are part of a complex web that provides all the elements for human well-being. This is true no matter where we live on this planet, but it is particularly relevant for the urban dwellers of our global society. As of 2007, the Earth's population became mostly urban. This is why, during this International Year of Biodiversity, we add our voice to the celebrations of World Health Day under the theme of 1000 cities, 1000 lives.

We all know now that well-managed protected areas support healthy ecosystems that in turn support healthy people. For example, protected areas provide a wealth of ecosystem invaluable goods and services such as foods, natural medicines, air and water purification, and the moderation of floods, droughts, and temperature and wind extremes. Indeed, globally 33 of the largest cities on the planet enjoy clean drinking water thanks to protected areas.

Parks are also spaces for physical activity, sanctuaries from urban stress, places for people to connect and havens for children to explore the wonders of the natural world. Protected areas help provide us with a sense of place, cultural identity and spiritual nourishment. We experience a greater sense of health and wellbeing, of connection and meaning when immersed in the living systems that sustain us.

Conserving biodiversity inside and around our cities is a way to ensure healthy populations. And indeed, biodiversity is first and foremost a local issue. It is through our daily activities that we impact biodiversity and it is through local actions that the situation can be addressed most efficiently. Humankind depends on healthy ecosystems to survive, and producers and consumers at the local level can take direct action to protect these invaluable resources.

To encourage such actions, we are working to build a global network of cities for biodiversity. Cities around the world are working together to share lessons in integrating biodiversity into many aspects of urban planning, and to build a network sharing best practices.

During this International Year of Biodiversity, we also support the inaugural International Healthy Parks Healthy People Congress, taking place 11-16 in Melbourne, Australia. Participants will come from many different sectors including urban planning, community development, physical and mental health, tourism, education, recreation, ecology and park management (urban and protected areas), industry and technology. This diversity of perspectives will allow delegates to appreciate the benefits of nature through the eyes of many.

As you seek to build a network of 1000 cities, we too join you in your quest, driven by the wisdom of the unknown author who said: "Take care of the earth and she will take care of you."
