



STATEMENT

BY MR AHMED DJOGLAF

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

ON THE OCCASION OF

**THE PAN-EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON BIODIVERSITY AND
THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

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GABALA, AZERBAIJAN**



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

Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Almost a century ago the great Azerbaijani statesman Mammed Amin Rasulzade said “the flag once raised will never fall”, a phrase that today is the motto of Azerbaijan. During this 2010 International Year of Biodiversity, Azerbaijan has decided to raise the flag of biodiversity and to never allow it to fall again. It has decided to do this not only to protect its rich natural heritage but also to take the lead and be an example at the pan-European level. In doing so as preparation for the historical summit of the United Nations General Assembly on biodiversity to be held on September 22nd in New York, Azerbaijan is providing leadership so as to ensure that the flag of biodiversity is raised all over the world for the benefit of life on Earth.

I would therefore have loved to be with you today in person in the historical city of Gabala to convey my deep gratitude to the people and authorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan for this unique contribution. Allow me to thank participants for joining forces with our host in our individual and collective effort to raise the flag of biodiversity all over the world, without exception, and with the full engagement of all stakeholders, for the benefit of life on Earth.

That is precisely the objective of this Pan-European Conference on Biodiversity and the Millennium Development Goals, serving as it does as a regional preparatory meeting for the UN General Assembly this September. The New York summit will provide a unique opportunity to raise awareness about the global biodiversity crisis and the urgent need for stronger action to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity. It will provide an occasion for the world’s 192 heads of state and government to lead a sustained global response to the continuing erosion of our biological resources. More than ever the mobilization of the international community is required to meet the challenges of the unprecedented loss of biodiversity compounded by climate change.

Indeed, the third edition of Global Biodiversity Outlook released last May shows that today species continue to go extinct at up to 1,000 times the natural background rate. Based on 120 national reports from Parties to the Convention as well as the scientific literature, GBO3 warns that massive further loss of biodiversity is projected to occur before the end of this century and that ecosystems are approaching tipping points beyond which irreversible degradation will take place. Ultimately, the Johannesburg promise of slowing biodiversity loss worldwide by 2010 has not been kept.

Nor has the Gothenburg promise of stopping biodiversity loss in Europe by 2010. For example, last year’s 2010 progress report by the European Environmental Agency reported that between 40 to 85 per cent of habitats and 40 to 70 per cent of species of European interest continue to have an unfavourable conservation status, while 45 per cent of assessed marine fishery resources are not being used sustainably, with some stocks still falling outside of safe biological limits. The overall risk of extinction of wildlife appears to have increased in Europe, while livestock genetic diversity also remains at risk.

The fourth national reports we have received from our Parties, including Azerbaijan and other countries in Europe, indicate that the five main direct drivers of biodiversity loss – habitat loss, overexploitation, invasive alien species, pollution and climate change – continue to be problematic. The reports also indicate that we have not yet effectively enabled people to reduce their impact on biodiversity while maintaining or improving their standards of living. Getting to

the root causes of biodiversity loss is main the challenge both European countries and countries worldwide now face.

Hence the importance of the UN General Assembly this September. At the high-level event on biodiversity, roundtable discussions will be held on post-2010 biodiversity targets, the links between climate change and biodiversity, and the importance of biodiversity to poverty alleviation, development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The vision emerging from these discussions, to be submitted in October to the high-level segment of the Convention's COP10 in Nagoya, Japan, needs to be robust and comprehensive.

In Nagoya, the Convention's 193 Parties will finalize a 2020 biodiversity target and a 2050 biodiversity vision as a part of our 2011-2020 strategic plan for stopping biodiversity loss in the future. This will be done with the participation of a broad range of stakeholders, including youth, local and indigenous authorities, parliamentarians, cooperative agencies and the private sector.

Our new strategic plan will promote concerted and concrete action by all sectors of government and society. It will emphasize that biodiversity loss is interlinked with issues such as poverty, climate change, water scarcity, growth in demand, development and international conflict, and therefore can no longer be treated as a stand-alone issue. Ultimately, the preservation of our biological resources must be mainstreamed into society at large, including our economic systems and markets.

Given the importance of the road to New York, Nagoya and beyond, I commend you for your participation in today's meeting and urge you to continue to promote European engagement in preserving biodiversity. At the official launch of the International Year of Biodiversity in January in Berlin, Chancellor Angela Merkel stated "we need a trend reversal - not at some point in the future, but immediately". She was exactly right. It is now or never for the future of humanity on Earth.

As the slogan of the International Year reminds us: Biodiversity is life...biodiversity is OUR life.

I wish you best of luck with the conference.

Thank you for your kind attention.