



Convention on
Biological Diversity



**MESSAGE FROM AHMED DJOGLAF, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, ON THE OCCASION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM FOR LOCAL AND REGIONAL POLICYMAKERS
ON THE VALUE OF NATURE FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT**

Curitiba, 9–10 September 2010

Ten out of the twenty largest cities in Latin America obtain a significant proportion of their drinking water directly from watersheds in protected areas. In Rio de Janeiro, for instance, fourteen protected areas and the Atlantic Rainforest Biosphere Reserve help to protect its water sources. This is just one example of the multitude of economic services provided by healthy ecosystems and their biodiversity, illustrating their tremendous role for human well-being and economic development in particular at the local level.

It is therefore alarming that the target agreed by the world's Governments in 2002, to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at all levels, has not been met. This is the conclusion of the latest issue of the Global Biodiversity Outlook, the Convention's flagship publication, released in May this year. GBO-3 notes that, despite progress being made in slowing the rate of loss for tropical forests and mangroves in some regions, natural habitats in most parts of the world continue to decline in extent and integrity. Of relevance to the example above, GBO-3 also notes that inland water ecosystems are often still poorly served by the terrestrial protected areas network, which rarely takes account of upstream and downstream impacts.

As the International Year of Biodiversity, 2010 provides a vital opportunity for renewed commitments, and for stepping up efforts to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. In October, the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-10) in Nagoya, Japan, will adopt the new Strategic Plan for the Convention for 2011-2020. It will present clear and measurable targets to achieve the objectives of the Convention by 2020. Prior to COP-10, the High Level Event on Biodiversity of the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly, on 22 September, will provide a unique opportunity to heads of state and government in shaping the new biodiversity agenda and providing leadership to the Nagoya meeting.

The International Symposium on the Value of Nature for Local Development will consider two reports: the TEEB Report for Local and Regional Policy, and the UNDP regional report *Biodiversity and Ecosystems: Why these are important for sustained growth and equity in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Both reports are extremely important and timely, and I am proud to note that the Secretariat is an active and close partner in their preparation and the dissemination of their results. The reports further raise awareness and advance our understanding of the critical role of ecosystems and biodiversity as 'ecological infrastructure' – of equal if not greater importance for sustainable economic development than made-made infrastructure.



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The new Strategic Plan of the Convention will contain strengthened references to the importance of local decision-making as well as to the role of economic analysis and policy. By providing concrete guidance to local policy-makers and resource managers on how to harness biodiversity's contribution to economic development, the reports provide a practical toolkit for capacity-building for implementing the new Strategic Plan – which will be our main challenge over the years to come.

The TEEB report in particular underscores the specific importance of local policy and decision-making in maintaining and supporting biodiversity. This is increasingly recognized under the Convention, and I am pleased to note the path-breaking contribution of the Global Partnership on Cities and Biodiversity in this regard. I am particularly pleased to laud the relentless commitment of the present host, the city of Curitiba, through its past Mayor, Beto Richa, and continuing with Mayor Luciano Ducci, to advance the work of the Global Partnership, including by convening two decisive global meetings that led to its establishment. It was here in Curitiba, in January of this year, that the Plan of Action on Cities, Local Authorities and Biodiversity was first discussed, and the upcoming City Biodiversity Summit, which will take place back-to-back to COP-10 in Nagoya, Japan, will provide a key opportunity to further underscore the indispensable role of cities and local administrators in effective biodiversity policies, and to further mobilize this important group of stakeholders.

One key objective of the international symposium is to share insights and experiences on the contribution of biodiversity and ecosystem services to local development. Sharing such insights and experiences is certainly important within the region – but it is equally important to bring them to global recognition. We need to learn more at global level about this important region: not only about the value its biodiversity has in terms of providing critical ecosystem services, but also about good practices and lessons learnt in finding innovative solutions to the biodiversity challenge. One example is the application of payment programmes for ecosystem services, an innovative instrument on which the region is certainly an innovator and early adopter. Another example is the recent launch of the groundbreaking 'Lasting Initiative for Earth' or LIFE initiative: this initiative promotes the certification of public and private organizations committed to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development initiatives, thus ensuring the protection of ecosystem integrity and the continuous provision of ecosystem services. Since its launch in 2009, the LIFE Institute, hosted by Curitiba, finalized pilot audits and developed an expansion plan for Mercosul countries, and will present its consolidated tool at COP-10 in Nagoya, with the full support of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

In this spirit, I wish you every success in the upcoming symposium.