



**Convention on
Biological Diversity**



STATEMENT

BY MR AHMED DJOGLAF

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

ON THE OCCASION OF

THE HIGH-LEVEL ROUNDTABLE ON

**THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON
PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND
AGRICULTURE IN MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF
ENHANCING FOOD SECURITY IN THE FACE OF CLIMATE
CHANGE AND EROSION OF AGROBIODIVERSITY**

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COP 10 / MOP 5

Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In May the Secretariat of the Convention released the third edition of Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO3). Based on 120 national reports of Parties to the Convention and the scientific literature, GBO3 shows that species worldwide continue to disappear at up to 1,000 times the natural background rate. It warns that without concerted action massive further loss of biodiversity is projected to occur before the end of this century, and that ecosystems are approaching tipping-points beyond which they will be irreversibly degraded.

Agricultural biodiversity is also more threatened than ever. Seventy-five per cent of the food crop varieties we once grew have disappeared from our fields in the last 100 years. Twenty-one per cent of the world's 7,000 livestock breeds are classified as being at risk, while more than 60 breeds are reported to have become extinct during the first six years of this century alone. Of the 7,000 species of plants that have been domesticated over the history of agriculture, a mere 30 account for 90 per cent of all the food that we eat every day.

This loss of genetic diversity has potentially devastating consequences. For example, widespread failure in our handful of remaining major crops and animal breeds due to disease or pest outbreaks is a very real possibility. Given that pest and pathogens are constantly evolving, a diverse gene pool is essential if we are to develop insect- and disease-resistant strains in the future.

Moreover, our reliance on so few plants and animal breeds makes human populations that much more vulnerable to climate change, which is already destabilizing the global food supply. The Food Security Risk Index 2010, compiled by the British risk analysis firm Maplecroft on the basis of 12 factors drawn up in collaboration with the UN's World Food Programme, highlights that the recent heat wave in Russia and the devastating floods in Pakistan will have long term effects on the food security of those countries. The situation is equally worrying in Africa, which has 36 of the 50 nations most at risk in the index and is particularly vulnerable to extreme weather events and desertification under changing climatic conditions.

Given all of this, the Treaty is vital to ensuring the continued availability of the plant genetic resources that countries will need to feed their citizens. The Convention on Biological Diversity recognizes the Treaty's contribution to the implementation of the Programme of Work on Agriculture and welcomes the Treaty's contribution to the cross-cutting initiative on biodiversity for food and nutrition. Efforts to link biodiversity, food and nutrition issues contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, in particular Target 2 of Goal 1 - to reduce by half, by 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. Through the conservation of plant genetic resources, the Treaty also supports the Convention's Global Strategy for Plant Conservation, in particular target 9. As you know, plants are universally recognized as a vital part of the world's biological diversity and an essential resource for the planet.

Preserving agricultural biodiversity and plant genetic resources will play a large role in the Convention's 2011-2020 Strategic Plan, which is expected to be adopted at COP10 later this month in Nagoya, Japan. Also expected is the adoption of an international protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing, which will give greater legal certainty and clarity to both users and providers of genetic resources by providing an incentive for public and private sector research while ensuring that a fair and equitable share of benefits arising from this research accrues to the

countries providing the genetic resources.

With so much at stake, I hope the Convention will have the continued support of the Food and Agriculture Organization and the Treaty in the future. Continued collaboration throughout this 2010 International Year of Biodiversity and beyond is vital if we are to successfully achieve our common mandate. As we together face the challenges ahead, let us keep in mind the words of the great Roman philosopher Seneca who said “If you live according to nature, you will never be poor; if you live according to the opinions of the world, you will never be rich.”

I wish you all the best with the conference.

Thank you kindly.