



**Convention on  
Biological Diversity**

**INTERNATIONAL YEAR  
OF FORESTS • 2011**



**MESSAGE FROM AHMED DJOHLAF**  
**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**  
*on the occasion of the*  
**FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS**  
*2 February 2011*

Today marks the fortieth anniversary of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the beginning of a very deserving year-long celebration of the birth of this ground-breaking agreement. Adopted in the city of Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, we are reminded today that this is the oldest and most experienced of our global multilateral environment agreements.

Throughout its 40-year history the contribution of the Ramsar Convention to the improved conservation and wise use of wetlands, and the biodiversity they support, has been exemplary. Currently, the 1,912 Ramsar Sites—designated wetlands of international importance—covering a total area of 186,936,216 hectares, declared by the 160 Parties to the Convention, represent our most comprehensive network of protected areas worldwide. This alone is a significant achievement, but the Convention has also contributed to raising awareness and the improved management of all wetlands through the provision of sound policy advice and technical guidance on their management.

The importance of the Ramsar Convention was recognized early in the history of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Established as our lead partner for wetlands issues and policy guidance as early as the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 1996, it has played this role in an exceptional manner. Indeed, the CBD-Ramsar working relationship is acknowledged by the Parties to the CBD as a model for how multilateral environment agreements can work together. We are proud of this relationship and look forward to its next phase as we begin our mutual journey into the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity (2011-2020).

A cornerstone of this journey is the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, adopted at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010, as a framework for action by all stakeholders. We are pleased to acknowledge the significant inputs of the Ramsar Convention to the development of the Strategic Plan. We also note that the Ramsar Convention, through its Secretariat and Scientific and Technical Review Panel, has already begun this journey with us by starting work on implementation and monitoring progress in this regard. The Strategic Plan, and other decisions adopted at the tenth meeting of our Conference of the Parties, imply an increasingly prominent



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](mailto:secretariat@cbd.int) [www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int)



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role for the Ramsar Convention through, for example, the recognition of the importance of the ecosystem services that wetlands underpin, particularly regarding water, and that wetland services are central to helping us respond to climate change. We have no doubt that the Ramsar Convention will rise to these challenges and continue to lead the efforts towards the achievement of our common goals.

I look forward to using every opportunity over the coming year to celebrate this anniversary and to further promote the activities and objectives of the Ramsar Convention as one of our key and most experienced allies. I encourage all stakeholders to do the same.

Thank you, Ramsar, for the past 40 years - we will need you even more over the next 40!

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