STATEMENT

BY MR AHMED DJOGHLAF

THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

ON THE OCCASION OF

THE XVI CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING AND THE XVI GENERAL AUTHORITY MEETING OF THE PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT AND COASTAL AREAS OF THE SOUTHEAST PACIFIC

20 JANUARY 2010
GUAYAQUIL, ECUADOR

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

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Convention on Biological Diversity deeply appreciates its long-term partnership with the CPPS. I would like to congratulate you for hosting this important meeting at the start of the International Year of Biodiversity. We have much work ahead of us over the months and years to come.

Despite various efforts made at the national, regional and global levels toward meeting 2010 biodiversity target to achieve a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss, recent global marine environmental assessments have observed serious declines in marine living resources, losses of coastal habitats, elevated pollution levels, and poor water quality in many areas. More significantly, overall deterioration of the marine environment is being exacerbated by the effects of climate change, and coastal communities and local economies are adversely impacted by such trends as poverty, land use changes, overfishing, nutrient loading, sewage, and coastal developments, which put the capacity of the marine environment beyond its sustainable limit.

An equally serious situation is also observed in deep-seabed habitats, which were long perceived to be a biological desert, but host a wealth of species. For example, hydrothermal vents were the first ecosystem on Earth found to be independent from the sun as an original source of energy, relying instead on chemosynthesis. Deep-sea hydrothermal vent organisms tolerate great extremes in water temperature and survive potentially toxic concentrations of heavy metals. They are therefore of particular interest because of their adaptation to a high pressure and high temperature environment. Seamounts and the water column above them serve as important habitats, feeding grounds, and reproduction sites for many open-ocean and deep-sea species of fish, sharks, sea turtles, marine mammals, seabirds, and benthic organisms of great variety. As such, seamounts may form biological hotspots with a distinct, abundant and diverse fauna, and sometimes contain many species new to science. Cold-water coral reefs may be many thousands to millions of years old. Because of their age and slow growth rates, reefs contain high-resolution records of long-term climate change and may also be important speciation centres in the deep sea.

With the rapidly increasing speed of scientific and technological advancement in accessing the once hidden deep sea habitats and resources, human activities impose threats on sustainability of these valuable ecosystems in unprecedented pace and intensity. The adverse impacts of global climate change, such as ocean acidification, further compound the situations at global scale, and limit our scientific and managerial ability to respond in timely and adequate manner. For example, the CBD publication, launched at Copenhagen Climate Change Conference last December, on scientific synthesis on the impacts of ocean acidification on marine biodiversity shows that increasing ocean acidification reduces the availability of carbonate minerals in seawater that are important building blocks for marine plants and animals, and by 2100 it has been predicted that 70 per cent of cold water corals, key refuges and feeding grounds for commercial fish species, will be exposed to corrosive waters.

As an effective way of addressing these threats to marine biodiversity, the Convention on Biological Diversity, convened two marine expert workshops last year, as called for by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in its ninth meeting. Two workshops have developed a set of scientific guidance on the application of CBD scientific criteria for identifying ecologically or biologically significant areas in need of protection as well as the use of

environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction, building upon the CBD voluntary guidelines on biodiversity-inclusive environmental impact assessment and the draft guidance on biodiversity-inclusive strategic environmental assessment in decision VIII/28. These results will be considered at the forthcoming 14th meeting of the SBSTTA, scheduled for May 2010.

We sincerely hope that the CBD's efforts on conserving marine and coastal biodiversity can further strengthen the existing activities and achievements of CPPS. We also inviteyou to help further our shared agenda by participating in the celebrations of the International Year of Biodiversity. This is important year for the biodiversity family has three main goals: encouraging people everywhere to discover and explore the great diversity of life that surrounds them; helping them realize its value, their connection to it and the terrible consequences of its ongoing loss; and most importantly, empowering them to do all they can to save it.

To this end, in September the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly will convene for the first time ever a high-level segment on biodiversity with the participation of heads of state and government. And in October in Nagoya, Japan, the CBD Parties will make a final assessment of progress toward the 2010 Biodiversity Target, create new biodiversity targets for 2020 and 2050, finalize a comprehensive post-2010 strategic plan for ultimately stopping biodiversity loss in the years to come, and establish an International Regime on Access and Benefit-Sharing. All of this will be done using a bottom-up approach, with the participation and input of a broad range of stakeholders, including youth, indigenous and local authorities, parliamentarians, the private sector, and cooperative agencies. As the President of Ecuador Rafael Correa has said, "Our understanding of development obliges us to recognize one another, understand one another and appreciate one another, so that we can move towards self-realization and the building of a shared future."

I wish you great success with the meeting, and look forward to continued collaboration between the CBD and CPPS.

Thank you for your kind attention.