STATEMENT

BY MR. AHMED DJOGHLAF

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

ON THE OCCASION OF

INTEGRATED RESEARCH SYSTEM FOR SUSTAINABILITY SCIENCE (IR3S) PUBLIC SYMPOSIUM TO COMMEMORATE THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF BIODIVERSITY

"BIODIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABILITY: REBUILDING SOCIETY IN HARMONY WITH NATURE"

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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,

You have just heard the message of Mr. Ban Ki-moon, the United Nations Secretary-General, addressed to the international community on the occasion of the celebration of the 2010 International Year on Biodiversity. The philosopher Watsuji Tetsuro said that, "A moral personality is one who takes responsibility for his own acts." This is valid for individual as well as institutions and organizations. And, indeed, we must take responsibility for our failure to date the save life on Earth—however much we have done, we have not done enough. Now is the time to forge a new way forward.

Watsuji Tetsuro was one of the great alumini of this great institution hosting this great event today with the participation of so many of you. It is an honour to be speaking at not only one of the most prestigious universities in Japan, but also at one of the top-tier universities in the world. In 2009, the University of Tokyo ranked first in Asia and third globally in the RatER Global University Rankings. One of the reasons for its success, no doubt, is the that the university places strong emphasis on cooperation in research and education at all levels, including between faculties, between disciplines, as well as with other universities both here in Japan and abroad. One other reason of such a success is the close integration of the university with Japanese society, the Japanese economy and the Japanese people.

In the words of Louis Pasteur: "Science knows no country, because knowledge belongs to humanity, and is the torch which illuminates the world." This wisdom has guided the establishment five year ago, in 2005, of the Integrated Research System for Sustainability Science (IR3S). The two last public symposia were rightly devoted to climate change. It is therefore fitting that this fifth symposium is devoted to biodiversity. Indeed, there is a close link between climate change and biodiversity, and, if climate change is a problem, biodiversity is part of the solution.

The report of the Second Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Climate Change and Biodiversity, submitted to the last December's climate summit in Copenhagen, showed that climate change presents a near unprecedented threat to the innumerable ecosystems that humans depend of for their health and well-being. Approximately 10 per cent of species assessed so far have an increasingly high risk of extinction for every 1^{o}C rise in global mean surface temperature, a trend that is expected to hold true up to at least a 5^{o}C increase.

At the same time, the AHTEG report showed that healthy ecosystems can provide natural buffers to the impacts of climate change. For example, the sustainable management of river basins, aquifers, flood-plains and their associated vegetation can improve water storage and flood regulation. Restoration of coastal habitats such as mangroves can protect against storm surges, coastal erosion and flooding. The sustainable management of grasslands and rangelands can reduce soil erosion and desertification and enhance pastoral livelihoods. Indigenous knowledge can be used to maintain the genetic diversity of crops and livestock, conserving diverse agricultural landscapes and securing food provisioning under changing local climatic conditions.

Moreover, several practical reasons make ecosystem-based approaches to biodiversity conservation and management a particularly effective method of adapting to climate change. First, they can be applied at regional, national and local levels, and benefits can be realized over short and long time-scales. Second, they may be more cost-effective and more accessible to rural or poor communities than measures based on hard infrastructure and engineering. And third, they can integrate and maintain traditional and local knowledge and cultural values.

It is fitting that the fifth edition of this symposium be devoted to biodiversity as 2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity. In choosing this theme, IR3S is living up to its mandate of tackling issues relating to the global sustainability of human society.

The kind of global cooperation promoted by the University of Tokyo and exemplified by IR3S will be particularly important during 2010. The international community stands at a crossroads. Almost twenty years ago, the Rio Earth Summit saw the opening for signature of the Convention on Biological Diversity, a legally-binding internationally treaty with the objectives of the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of biological resources, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. In 2002, the Parties to the Convention adopted the 2010 biodiversity target, a commitment to significantly slow the rate of biodiversity loss worldwide by 2010 as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth.

But with 2010 now upon us it is all but certain that, as the third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook will soon show, the target will not be met. The Strömstad meeting of the European Union held in September last year confirmed that the European Union will not meet its 2010 biodiversity target. A similar conclusion was reached at the Kobe Biodiversity Dialogue in October last year, as well as at the first ASEAN Biodiversity Conference held the same month in Singapore. The more than 100 national reports received to date from Parties have demonstrated that we continue to lose biodiversity at an unprecedented rate.

It is in this spirit that the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity is being celebrated. The goals of this historic event in the life of the Convention are to raise awareness about the importance of biodiversity, to communicate the human costs of its ongoing loss, and to get people and, in particular youth and children, involved in efforts to conserve and sustainably use our natural heritage.

As host of the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, to be held this October in Nagoya, the country of Japan, its people and its institutions have a central role to play in this process. This was clearly recognized by Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama—another alumnus of the University of Tokyo, I should point out—in his policy speech one month ago at the 174th session of the Diet. His words show a precise understanding the situation we are in:

> "As a society we must act to slow, even by a little bit, the dwindling of the time remaining for our planet. This is the responsibility that we, who live today, have towards the future. This year, Japan serves as chair of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. In order to be able pass on this irreplaceable Earth to the generations of our children and grandchildren, we must transcend national borders and join forces."

His words are also in tune with the purpose of this symposium. We are gathered here to explore ways to link the building of a sustainable society through the scientific assessment of ecosystem services, and thereby provide a foundation for structuring long-term strategies for preserving life on Earth. And nothing transcends national borders more than science.

There is no question that ecosystems services must be a major area of research as we head toward Nagoya and into the post-2010 era. One important focal point is the economic value of biodiversity. As you know, we depend on biodiversity for everything from food, fuel and medicines, to the purification of air and water and the pollination of wild plants and crops. Articulating the value of nature is the rationale behind the ongoing study "The Economics of

Ecosystems and Biodiversity" or the TEEB, headed by Mr. Pavan Sukhdev of Deutsche Bank, which is synthesizing a broad range of scientific, economic and social studies in order to develop a much-needed economic valuation framework for our biological resources. With a number of phases already published, the remainder of the study will come out over the course of 2010, with the final synthesis being launched in Nagoya. To build on and complement the TEEB project, we need more long-term research into the societal ramifications biodiversity loss.

This last point brings me to another important contribution that Japan is making to the International Year of Biodiversity and to long-term conservation efforts. Two years ago in Kobe, G8 Environment Ministers issued a call to action and put forward the ancient Japanese land-management practice of *satoyama* as a model of how humans should live in and interact with nature. The Kobe Call to Action gave birth to the *Satoyama* initiative, a Japanese-led project to promote *satoyama*-like practices internationally. The initiative gained impetus at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, held in Bonn, Germany, in May 2008, and at international *satoyama* forums held in Japan in September 2008 and March 2009, and at the UNESCO *satoyama* forum held in Paris one month ago.

I hope that the Japanese research community will give their full support to this initiative. Just as Watsuji Tetsuro helped to bring Japanese philosophy to the attention of world in the twentieth century, you must now help to bring the wisdom of *satoyama* to the attention of the international community in the twenty-first century. Progress reports on the *Satoyama* initiative are scheduled to be presented at the fourteenth meeting of the Convention's scientific body in Nairobi in May, as well in Nagoya at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. The more scientific support the initiative receives, the more quickly we can put it into practice.

I also hope that today's event will stimulate continued involvement of the research community throughout the International Year of Biodiversity. During 2010 it is extremely important that scientists participate in events where they can identify emerging issues, build capacity and extend networks, highlight and launch biodiversity-relevant research, and liaise with policy-makers and national governments. Scientific involvement will be particularly important in the lead up to the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly this September in New York, where a high-level meeting on biodiversity with the participation of Heads of State and Government will be convened for the first time ever. And it will also be integral at the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit, where the Convention's post-2010 Strategic Plan and post-2010 biodiversity targets will be finalized.

Indeed, researchers must help shape the discussion of the Convention's post-2010 agenda, as the new strategic plan will set the course for the next ten years as well as beyond. It will be guided by targets that address, *inter alia*, the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss, "tipping points" for irreversible ecosystem damage, as well as climate change. It is therefore absolutely critical that this agenda has sound scientific underpinnings.

As we head toward Nagoya, let us remember the words of the great Japanese poet, Ryunosuke Satoro: "Individually we are one drop. Together we are an ocean." The International Year of Biodiversity is already unfolding in this spirit. Last month it was officially launched in Berlin by German Chancellor Angela Merkel. The launch was preceded by a Brazilian celebration in Curitiba and followed by events in Paris, London, Nagoya, Madrid, and New York, as well as here in Tokyo. My hope is that by the time we reach the closing ceremonies in

Kanazawa and begin the transition to the 2011 International Year of Forests, we will have achieved an unprecedented level of international cooperation on all fronts in the fight to save life on Earth. "Biodiversity is life," as the slogan of the International Year reminds us. "Biodiversity is OUR life."

Thank you for your kind attention.