



# Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity



**MESSAGE  
OF  
MR. AHMED DJOGHLAF  
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL  
DIVERSITY  
“BIODIVERSITY AND AGRICULTURE”  
22 MAY 2008**

The grains, legumes and fruits produced around the world are a testament to the ability of farmers to obtain nutritious food from ecosystems. The foundation for their success is biodiversity. However, biodiversity is being lost at unprecedented rate. During the past 50 years, humans have altered ecosystems more rapidly and extensively than in any other period in human history. Indeed, more land was converted to cropland during the last fifty years than in the previous two centuries. These transformations have an impact on ecosystems and the ecosystem services upon which all life relies. 60% of ecosystem services are being degraded as a result of human activity. As a result, one of the most important challenges facing mankind is to feed a growing population in an increasingly urbanized world confronted with the combined impacts of climate change and the unprecedented loss of biodiversity.

The recent extreme weather events associated with climate change have contributed to what the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon has called the “new face of hunger in the world” owing to the emergence of the “newly hungry”. The prices of basic staples—wheat, corn, rice—are at record highs, and global food stocks are at historical lows. Because of climate change, in sub-Saharan Africa, yields from rain-fed agriculture could fall by 50 per cent by 2020. It is for this reason that, according to the World Food Programme (WFP), “the scarcity of food is the biggest crisis looming in the world”. For the first time in its history, WFP launched an extraordinary emergency appeal owing to a market-generated crisis. In 2050, the world will have to feed a population of 9 billion inhabitants, which is 50 per cent more than today. Two thirds of humanity will be living in cities rather than in rural areas and, as stated by Mr. Jacques Diouf, the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 150 growing cities will soon reach the size of New York. Although cities occupy only 2.8 per cent of the Earth’s surface, urban dwellers use 75 per cent of the planet’s natural resources.

Meeting these unprecedented challenges requires enhanced and concerted efforts at all levels for the effective implementation of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity. It calls on the international community to redouble its efforts to achieve by 2010, the International Year of



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Biodiversity, the target of substantially reducing the loss of biodiversity and adopting an international regime on access to genetic resources and the equitable sharing of the benefits from their utilization.

The celebration of the International Day for Biological Diversity this year coincides for the first time with the biennial meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. This important gathering of the biodiversity family here in Bonn, on the occasion of the Bonn Summit on Biodiversity, provides a unique opportunity to enhance, through concerted action, our collective and individual commitments, as citizens of the world, for protecting life on Earth for the benefit of present and future generations to come. Let us not fail the coming generations. Let us not fail each other. I wish you a memorable celebration.