



**STATEMENT BY AHMED DJOGLAF
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DIVERSITY**

on the occasion of

**THE WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION
17 June 2011**

The 2011 World Day to Combat Desertification is taking place during three important events. 2011 is not only the International Year of Forests, it also marks the start of the United Nations Decades on Biodiversity and The Fight Against Deserts and Desertification. With the theme 'Forests keep drylands working', today's celebrations therefore provide us with the opportunity not only to reflect on what forests provide for human well-being, but to undertake the long-term actions necessary to ensure a sustainable future for our children.

Dry forests can be found throughout the world and provide many essential ecosystem services upon which local communities and species rely. For example, dry forests are important terrestrial habitats for biodiversity as they contain unique species well adapted to the challenging climatic conditions found in these ecosystems, including prolonged periods of drought. Dry forests are particularly noted for high diversity among mammals including many species of monkeys such as howler and capuchin monkeys and a variety of gibbons.

Dry forests also support sustainable development. They are important as a source of food, medicine, fodder, and raw material for forest-based livelihoods. As such, the conservation and sustainable use of forest biodiversity underpins poverty alleviation and other development goals.

Our response to climate change in drylands is also found in dry forests. Dry forests can play a key role for mitigating the effects of climate change, and for adapting forest ecosystems to its impacts. Forests also have a potentially significant role to play in climate change adaptation planning through maintaining ecosystem services and providing livelihood options.

Unfortunately, dry forests are increasingly threatened as a result of deforestation, fragmentation, climate change and other stressors that can be linked to human activities. Dry forest ecosystems are identified as being particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. According to the IPCC, droughts and forest fires are projected to increase in semi-arid and arid lands; the effects of air pollution on forests will become more severe as our forests are weakened

by weather extremes; and a surge in frequencies and intensities of storms and floods will aggravate problems of erosion and disease.

The CBD is working with governments and stakeholders around the world to combat this problem through our programme of work on dryland ecosystems and our expanded programme of work on forest biodiversity. Perhaps more importantly the CBD, the UNCCD and the UNFCCC are increasingly working together to realise the policy synergy needed for sustainable development.

For example, the Rio Conventions' Ecosystems and Climate Change Pavilion is a collaborative outreach activity linking biodiversity, climate change and sustainable land management. The Pavilion is an important partnership platform for raising awareness and sharing information about the latest practices and scientific findings on the co-benefits that can be realized through joint implementation of the three Rio Conventions. Ultimately, it is only by working together that we will be able to tackle three of the world's most pressing problems: biodiversity loss, climate change, and desertification.
