



STATEMENT BY

MR. AHMED DJOGLAF

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

ON THE OCCASION OF

EUROPEAN BIODIVERSITY DAY

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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



Life in harmony, into the future
いのちの共生を、未来へ
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Albert Schweitzer, the physician, philosopher, Nobel Laureate, and one-time resident of Strasbourg said that “a man is ethical only when life, as such, is sacred to him, that of plants and animals as that of his fellow men, and when he devotes himself helpfully to all life that is in need of help.”

That is precisely the wisdom underlying today’s celebration of European Biodiversity Day. It is also the wisdom driving worldwide celebrations of the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity, this landmark event in the struggle to save life on Earth.

Nine years ago in Gothenburg the leaders of the European Union decided to stop the loss of biodiversity by 2010. A year later the 110 Heads of State and Government attending the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development followed suit, committing to substantially reduce the rate of biodiversity loss worldwide by 2010.

And yet the third edition of Global Biodiversity Outlook will soon show that neither the Gothenburg nor the Johannesburg promise has been kept. Drawing from the over 120 national reports that the Convention has received from its Parties to date, GBO-3 conclusively shows that today humans are continuing to destroy biodiversity at an unprecedented rate.

This conclusion echoes that of last year’s 2010 progress report by the European Environmental Agency; between 40 to 85 per cent of habitats and 40 to 70 per cent of species of European interest continue to have an unfavourable conservation status. 45 per cent of assessed marine fishery resources are not being used sustainably, with some stocks still falling outside of safe biological limits.

The overall risk of extinction of wildlife appears to have increased in Europe, while livestock genetic diversity also remains at risk. Invasive alien species continue to be a threat, especially in marine systems. Urban sprawl and abandonment of agricultural land are putting pressure on natural and semi-natural areas, and the impact of climate change is starting to be visible.

The ecological footprint of Europe has been growing progressively since 1960, with overall demand increasingly exceeding the total capacity for biological production.

The International Year of Biodiversity represents a prime opportunity to change these trends. The goals of this historic event are to raise awareness about the importance of biodiversity, to communicate the human costs of its ongoing loss, and to get people, and particularly youth and children, involved in efforts to conserve and sustainably use our natural heritage.

To this end, in September 2010, the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly will convene for the first time ever a high-level meeting on biodiversity with the participation of Heads of State and Government. And at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, in October 2010, in Nagoya, Japan, the 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 of a broad range of stakeholders, including youth, indigenous and local authorities,

mayors, parliamentarians, the private sector, and development cooperative agencies.

Last spring, a conference on biodiversity held by the European Commission in Athens produced an eight-point action plan, stressing the need for the EU to improve its biodiversity protection efforts. Recommendations included improving communication about biodiversity loss and its consequences, better integrating the ecosystem approach into preservation efforts, and ensuring that available funds are effectively channelled towards nature protection projects. Building on these insights, the countries of Europe must take the lead in finalizing and implementing our post-2010 vision of how to save life on Earth.

In his great work *Tristan and Isolde*, the medieval poet Gottfried von Strassburg lamented that “we sow seed of deadly nightshade and wish it to bear lilies and roses.” When it comes to the future of life on Earth, we can no longer afford to make that mistake. All sectors of the society and all nations of the world must change their way of thinking if we are to aspire to a better outcome. And aspire we must, for as the slogan of the International Year of Biodiversity reminds us: Biodiversity is life... Biodiversity is OUR life.

Thank you for your kind attention.
