

FOREWORD

The Convention on Biological Diversity was adopted in 1992, as a result of a growing recognition that isolated actions targeting individual species or ecosystems were insufficient to stem the increasing loss of the natural resource base that underpins all human societies and whose maintenance is essential for sustainable development. The Convention was – and still is – an ambitious undertaking. Its scope is broad, and its commitments so general that much work has been needed by the Conference of the Parties to translate them into practical actions. The Convention is, however, clear on one thing: that, if the impending catastrophe of biodiversity loss is to be averted, action is needed at the national and international levels and that this action must be facilitated through cooperation among all countries and, in particular, the transfer of the necessary financial and technological resources from North to South to enable developing countries – the countries that are home to the majority of the world's natural wealth – to meet their commitments.

Since the adoption of the Convention, assessments of biological diversity produced by a number of international agencies and an improved understanding of biological processes have confirmed that biodiversity loss is occurring at unprecedented rates. To address this crisis, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention has over the years adopted more than one hundred decisions and launched several programmes of work; some one billion dollars have been channelled to biodiversity-related projects through the financial mechanism under the Convention; and cooperative programmes have been established with a number of other environmental conventions and processes.

Now, nine years on, the Convention has some 180 Parties and its coverage is virtually universal. With the institutional structures under the Convention now mature and the programmes of work

in place, it is time to take stock of progress achieved and to identify barriers and priorities for implementation. *The Global Biodiversity Outlook*, which I am proud to introduce here, responds to this need. It is the first comprehensive attempt to date to assess the status of biodiversity and the state of implementation of the Convention at the national, regional and international levels. It is the first in a series intended to assist policy makers and other stakeholders to measure progress and help chart the way forward toward meeting the lofty aspirations placed by the international community in the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Global Biodiversity Outlook is the result of an ambitious collective effort that points at some of the critical issues that must be addressed if the Convention is to succeed in meeting its three objectives, namely, the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of genetic resources. I hope that it will serve as an important tool in evaluating options for the future action needed to stave off one of the most serious – if poorly understood and underestimated – environmental threats of our era.

It is therefore with a deep debt of gratitude to all those individuals and organizations involved in its preparation that I commend this first *Global Biodiversity Outlook* to everyone with an interest in the future of the Convention on Biological Diversity as a key instrument in the quest for sustainable development.

Hamdallah Zedan
Executive Secretary
Convention on Biological Diversity