



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

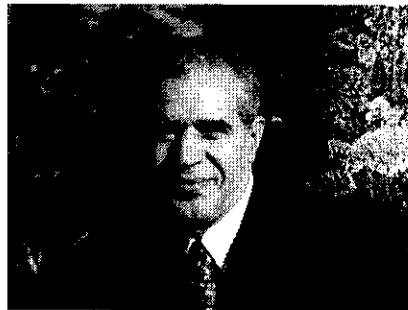
INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIODIVERSITY
PROTECT BIODIVERSITY IN DRYLANDS

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ACHIEVING THE 2010 TARGET!

MESSAGE OF DR. AHMED DJOGLAF, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, TO PARLIAMENTARIANS



Biodiversity—or the web of life—covers every form of life, from the smallest microbe to the largest animal, and the ecosystems of which they are part, whether they be forests or deserts; farmers' fields, pastures or home gardens; rivers, lakes or oceans.

Biodiversity is vital for all human societies. The millions of life forms that exist on Earth and their interactions with each other and with the rest of the environment have made our planet a uniquely habitable place for humans and allow the natural environment to evolve in response to outside changes, thus imparting resilience to the system as a whole.

Biodiversity directly provides products such as food, fresh water, fuel wood, fibre, biochemicals, genetic resources, medicines, and materials for industry. It performs a regulating role in terms of climate stabilization, flood and drought moderation, disease control, waste detoxification and decomposition, and air and water purification. It is responsible for services that support and maintain the conditions of life on Earth, such as soil formation, nutrient cycling and pollination and seed dispersal. It is also at the heart of many cultural values and provides a range of non-material benefits as a result of its spiritual, aesthetic and recreational value.

Yet it is an under-appreciated resource and one that is being lost at an alarming and unprecedented rate. It is being lost at every level—from genetic diversity within species to the extinction of whole species to the destruction of entire ecosystems.

The adoption of the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1992 was as a result of the increasing awareness of the seriousness of the loss and its implications for human well-being. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, in 2002, biodiversity was selected by the Secretary-General of the United Nations as one of the five priority issues, together with water, energy, health and agriculture. The Summit itself recognized the critical role played by biodiversity in overall poverty eradication and sustainable development and described the



Convention as the key instrument for its conservation and sustainable use and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources. The World Summit also endorsed the target set by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention earlier in that same year of achieving a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss by the year 2010.

Nevertheless, despite the progress and the raised profile of biodiversity issues at the international level, one cannot help feeling that those issues are still somewhat marginalized when it comes to discussions on national policies and priorities. Given that the main responsibility for implementation of the Convention lies at the national level, it is very important for biodiversity to be given a more prominent and central role in the political mainstream of all countries. Here, I believe that national parliaments have a crucial role to play.

What can Parliaments and Parliamentarians Do?

The overall challenge is to increase the visibility of biodiversity, to make more people aware of the consequences of its loss and to put biodiversity considerations squarely in the forefront of all national and local policy debates. Parliaments and parliamentarians are in a pre-eminent position to do all of those things, being as they are at the interface of Government, public policy formulation and the general public.

National parliaments and their members can play an important role in promoting implementation of the Convention at the national level as legislators, monitors of government policy, and as guardians of the public will and conscience.

More specifically, parliaments have the responsibility to ensure that Parties take the necessary legislative, administrative and/or policy actions needed to honour the obligations of the Convention that have been entered into through ratification of this legal instrument.

In many countries, biodiversity issues have low profile in national policy agendas. Policy and legislative frameworks are underdeveloped; relevant agencies are under-funded and understaffed; there is often poor enforcement and lack of monitoring mechanisms; and biodiversity concerns are not integrated into sectoral and cross-sectoral policies and programmes, in particular socio-economic policies and programmes. Parliaments can contribute towards the elevation of biodiversity concerns in national policy, legislative and budgetary frameworks.

In particular, with regard to the 2010 biodiversity target, parliaments could promote the establishment of national targets for 2010 and beyond and ensure that the necessary policies and programmes are put in place, and the required budgetary resources are made available, to achieve these targets.

Parliaments could also require the publication and laying before parliament of periodical reports on the state of biodiversity nationally and on measures taken to promote implementation of the Convention. Through parliamentary committees and similar mechanisms, national parliaments can ensure independent review of activities that are taken in support of Convention implementation with a view to improving their effectiveness.

Parliaments can promote a well-orchestrated legislative programme, including for example, specific legislation, as necessary, for: rules on sustainable use; the establishment of

protected areas; requirements for the use of environment impact assessments and strategic environment assessments that include biodiversity criteria; the protection of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices; biosafety; and measures to ensure compliance with the Convention's provisions on access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing.

Finally, in addition to their activities in the parliament itself, parliamentarians could promote awareness of biodiversity issues and promote conservation and sustainable use at local level in their constituencies, working as appropriate with local government and with civil society and business organizations.

I would like to call upon all Parliamentarians to join the global effort to significantly reduce the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010 by initiating and supporting concrete national policy and legislative measures and by mobilizing their constituents in conservation and sustainable use activities at the local level.

The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity is willing to develop cooperative arrangements with relevant global parliamentary organizations with a view to more effective implementation of the Convention at the national level. To this end, Mr. Dan Bondi Ogolla, Legal Advisor at the Secretariat, has been designated as your focal point.

Montreal, 28 March 2006

