



**MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
M. AHMED DJOGHLAF**

on the occasion of

**THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
“INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES”**

Biosphere, Montreal, 22 May 2009

Greetings from Tokyo.

I am pleased to send this message to you on the occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity.

The celebration of the International Day for Biological Diversity has become a well established tradition in Montreal. May I therefore give a warm thank you to all involved, and in particular, Environment Canada, the Quebec authorities, Mayor Tremblay and the Montreal City authorities, and partner institutions, including the Montreal Nature's Museums.

Our special thanks go to Mr. Jean Langlais, Director of the Biosphere, who graciously agreed to host us in his renowned institution to celebrate this event.

We would also like to thank all of you present here today, who came in numbers to share this special moment. Your active participation is a sign of success for this annual event, which is celebrated across the world and which aims to sensitize and engage national and international civil societies for the protection of life on Earth.

The fragile balance of the Earth is at serious risk, as never before, because of human activities. This year, the celebration of the International Day for Biological Diversity is being held under the theme “Invasive alien species”. These species are a major source of biodiversity loss. Since the 17th century, invasive alien species have contributed to about 40 per cent of known animal extinctions. This figure might rise because of climate change, which favours the spread of such species. Invasive alien species threaten vulnerable ecosystems and result in a financial loss estimated to be several billion United States dollars a year, hence contributing to the aggravation of poverty around the world. Poverty is one of the causes of biodiversity loss, but it is also unfortunately one of its consequences.

The celebration of the International Day for Biological Diversity is an element inviting us to increase our efforts and mobilize. Indeed, responding to the major challenges we are facing requires the involvement of all the actor of the international civil society, without exception, for the sake of the protection of life on Earth. It calls for the implication of the children of tomorrow, the youth, and that is the reason why the celebration of the International Day for Biodiversity is associated with an extraordinary event, the *Green wave*, and today, I am delighted, by the active implication of Montreal schools in this initiative to create a human chain of solidarity across the planet, around the symbol of life that is the tree. This initiative is carried out in association with Airbus Industry and National Geographic



Society and will, as of now, be the largest educational programme in the world in the field of biodiversity for children and their families.

To answer these challenges, we also need the participation of those who have a special and wide implication and a large audience, and with this in mind, it is with great pleasure that I would like to pay tribute to our new partner, Mr. Jean Lemire, for his passionate commitment and his wonderful participation to open the eyes of the populations of the world to the fragility of the environmental balance of the ecosystems. His participation today is a sign of support of the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and this, only a few months away from a major event, the celebration of the International year on Biodiversity, in 2010, an event which will coincide with the Canadian presidency at the G-8.

We wish you all an excellent celebration of the International Day for Biological Diversity and we invite you all to be partners and make the year 2010 extraordinary towards the strengthening of the three objectives of the Convention on Life on Earth. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity is located here, in Montreal, which makes us very proud.

I thank you for your attention.