

VIDEO MESSAGE FOR CITIES on IDB 2009
Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary, CBD

Dear friends,

It is a pleasure for me to share a few thoughts with you on the occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity in 2009. Many cities, like yours, are using this date to spread the word about one of the most critical contemporary challenges: the campaign for the basis of life on Earth. Biodiversity is the foundation of our food, medicines, clean air and water. Unfortunately, urban residents are often not aware of the importance of biodiversity for their basic well-being. This special day reminds us that without biodiversity, we cannot live well – or not for very long...

Currently, human activities are causing an extinction wave, with species disappearing at 50-100 times the natural rate. These extinctions are irreversible and, given cities' dependence on biological resources, pose a threat to the well-being of the majority of the world's population.

As of 2007, most people have come to live in cities. Their inhabitants' patterns of consumption affect the entire planet. Cities have become a critical part of the problem – and are therefore also part of the solution!

Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) recognized this by adopting decision IX/28, in Bonn, in 2008. The decision highlights the role of cities and local authorities in national biodiversity strategies and plans, and invites national governments to support local authorities in applying the tools and guidelines developed by the Convention.

One way to support biodiversity and the CBD is to celebrate May 22 each year. This year's theme is invasive alien species – organisms taken from their natural habitats that invade other ecosystems and out-compete local species, causing losses and damage. They have contributed to nearly 40% of all animal extinctions for which the cause is known. They also exacerbate poverty and threaten sustainable development through their impact on agriculture, forestry, fisheries, human health and wild biodiversity, on which people in developing countries particularly depend. Once these species spread, it is quite difficult and costly to control or eradicate them.

Cities can help reduce their spread by designing local landscapes to accommodate native species. Urban residents can select native ornamental plants, control the spread of exotic plants, not allow exotic pets to escape, and follow biosafety norms when traveling. This day is an opportunity for us to learn what invasive alien species look like learn how we can help to control them.

Several leading cities around the world are members of our Global Partnership on Cities and Biodiversity. Let me take this opportunity to pay tribute to them for their valuable contributions to this year's celebrations:

- The Curitiba City Government and its partners are inviting children and youth, civil servants, landowners and experts to celebrate during an all-day event. They will participate in seminars on invasive species and continue to promote *The Green Wave*, as they did earlier this year when 175 municipal schools and 630

students were involved, planting over 300 native trees with ceremonies in 9 different places spaced over time to characterize a wave.

- In Bonn, IDB will be taking place during the Bonn's Museum Mile Festival. Amongst other activities, the Museum Koenig will have special events focussing on Charles Darwin and the development of species. The "Haus der Natur" and the "Path of Biodiversity" are also inviting the public to attend special events and learn more about biodiversity.
- Aichi Prefecture will hold a tree planting ceremony at the EXPO 2005 Aichi Commemorative Park. Local schools within the prefecture will plant trees in the spirit of the "Green Wave". In parallel, Nagoya will invite citizens to take part in biodiversity-related activities and experience the wonder of nature at the zoo and botanical gardens.
- Curitiba the host of COP8, Bonn the host of COP9 and Nagoiya, the host of COP10 are providing leadership.
- Montreal, the host of the secretariat is also leading by example. Our host is inviting the general public to the Museum Nature institutions, where the city's first educational activities on invasive alien species will be taking place. In parks around the city, experts and horticulturists will be raising awareness about invasive plants to avoid using close to municipal parks.
- In Singapore, a public talk will be given on invasive alien species, 17 schools will be participating in *The Green Wave*, and there will be a nature photography exhibition held at Sungei Buloh Nature Reserve.
- Algeria has contributed to *The Green Wave* by planting 345082 trees, by 335775 students, from 3865 schools. *The Green Wave* website is now translated in Japanese and Aichi prefecture together with Ishikawa prefecture will make a significant contribution to *The Green Wave* this year.
- Airbus, in partnership with the National Geographic Society, will lead a fantastic programme in support of *The Green Wave*.
- Many other Parties will take part to this international global biodiversity educational programme for youth and children aimed at creating a chain of solidarity between the citizen of tomorrow and the children of today.

I also want to applaud the contribution of our partner networks of cities: IUCN-Countdown 2010, which has invited all 300 local government members of Countdown 2010, as well as Local Governments for Sustainability-Local Action for Biodiversity Initiative, which has sent a call to their 21 member cities inviting them to contribute to and report on the IDB celebrations. These leading cities and partners, among others, have proven that local authorities contribute greatly toward the 2010 target and the

objectives of the Convention. Information about their activities will be available at our website, cbd.int/idb/2009/.

Next year's celebrations will be even larger since the UN General Assembly has chosen 2010 as the International Year of Biological Diversity. Various events are planned for our tenth Conference of the Parties in Nagoya in October, including a City Biodiversity Summit. You are invited to follow our preparations and participate in big numbers during these historical celebrations.

The campaign for life on Earth will be won – or lost – at the local level. We need urban residents to get involved and make a difference! I wish you a most successful celebration on this International Day for Biodiversity and invite you to take an active part in the celebration of the 2010 International Year on Biodiversity which will coincide with the 10th meeting of the Conference of the parties.

I look forward to welcoming all of you at the City and Biodiversity Summit to be held in October 2010 in Nagoya, Aichi prefecture, Japan.