



**MESSAGE OF H.E. MIGUEL D'ESCOTO BROCKMANN,
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY,
ON THE OCCASION OF
THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

NEW YORK 22 MAY 2009

On the occasion of the International Day of Biodiversity, let us recommit ourselves to the promises we have made to the people of world at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 and to Mother Nature to significantly reduce the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010 and beyond. I believe it is not too late to act, individually and collectively, in response to the ever-growing distress signals from the natural systems that sustain our daily needs and livelihoods.

The ongoing loss of precious biodiversity can no longer be considered as simply an environmental issue. Biodiversity must be seen not only as the foundation of life on Earth, but the foundation of our world economy as well.

Until recently, we believed that the natural resources were infinite and Mother Earth would sustain our modern life style forever. Our hyper-consumerism, reckless industrial production and disregard for our planet's miraculous biological diversity have ended that illusion. Indeed, human pressures on the planet have reached such a level that the ability of ecosystems to meet the needs of future generations is now

seriously, and perhaps irretrievably, compromised if we do not take decisive action. The unprecedented loss of biodiversity is being compounded by climate change. It is reflected in the recent food, water and energy crises and the natural disasters that disrupt the lives of our vulnerable human populations and other species with accelerating frequency.

Keeping our promises to stem the loss of biodiversity will help reduce poverty and enhance our world for all living things. Over three billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity, while more than 1.6 billion people rely on forests and non-timber forest products for their livelihoods. The degradation of our habitat and the loss of biodiversity threaten the livelihoods of more than one billion people living in dry and sub-humid lands.

Estimates suggest that the cost implications of lost biodiversity are close to three trillion dollars. Seen in this light, the reversal of biodiversity loss, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity contribute directly to poverty eradication, sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

We all want to live in an environment in which we can breathe the air, drink the water, swim in our rivers and sea, live, work and play on land which has not been poisoned by chemicals, and are protected from excessive noise pollution. These are human rights that we must fight to protect.

To achieve this will require a paradigm shift. We will need to move away from our compulsive drive to exploit nature and reassume our roles as stewards of our environment, one among millions of species on this

Earth. Mother Earth will do very without us. We, on the other hand, cannot survive without her.

Initiatives such as Greenwave, established by the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, aims at preparing the citizens of tomorrow to live in harmony with nature. Through such efforts, we must win the hearts and minds of the citizens of the world and inspire every child with a love of nature. We must transform our daily habits and lifestyles and persuade consumers in every country to internalize the ethic of reduce, re-use and recycle.

Let us therefore join our voices and our efforts in a global campaign to achieve the changes vital to the well-being of all life on Earth. It is up to each of us to ensure that humankind is no longer a threat to ourselves and to the biosphere in which we live.

In October 2010 on the occasion of the celebration of the International Year on Biodiversity, there will be a high-level event of United Nations General Assembly on biodiversity. I believe that the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit in Japan will offer an important opportunity for us to turn our promises into action and begin the transformation of people into stewards of the Earth. I call on all Heads of State and government to participate actively and ensure that their promises set an example for all of us to embrace.