



**MESSAGE BY
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**On the occasion of the
International Year of Biodiversity**

**“Meeting the biodiversity crisis as a united human
family”**

United Nations, 9 November 2009

I am pleased to convey a message on the occasion of the International Year of Biodiversity. Today, there is increased recognition of the impact of loss of biodiversity on life on earth. We have to collectively face the challenges arising from the crisis of biodiversity loss. Climate change is further compounding this challenge as depicted in the recent food crisis and the natural disasters that now hit our planet with inexorable regularity.

Seventy per cent of the world's poor live in rural areas. They depend directly on biological resources for as much as 90 per cent of their needs such as food, fuel, medicine, shelter and transportation. Over three billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity, while more than 1.6 billion rely on forests and non-timber forest products for their livelihoods. The degradation of habitat and the loss of biodiversity are threatening the livelihoods of more than one billion people living in dry and sub-humid lands, particularly in Africa, the continent most affected by drought and desertification.

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the world leaders had pledged to reduce the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010 as a contribution to poverty eradication. However, biodiversity continues to be lost at unprecedented rate, thus threatening the capacity of the planet to provide the required goods and services. The current rate of extinction is estimated to be 1,000 times higher than the natural rate. Halting and reversing the current loss of biodiversity is therefore vital.

Biodiversity loss is no longer solely an environmental issue. It is also an economic one. Biodiversity loss is also affecting the human health and the condition of the atmosphere.

The General Assembly has proclaimed 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. In that regard, the range of activities and high level events planned by the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity provide a valuable platform to effect the necessary paradigm shift if the international community were to live in harmony with nature.

The High level event of United Nations General Assembly on Biodiversity to be convened in New York in September 2010 with the participation of Heads of State and Government offers a unique opportunity to fully engage the world leaders to respond collectively to the magnitude of the biodiversity crisis.

Postponing action to protect life on earth is not an option. The need to act is now to achieve the changes vital to the well-being of all life on Earth.

Ali Treki