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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
22 May 2010

The planet's species and habitats, and the goods and services they provide, form the basis of our wealth, our health and our well-being. Yet, despite repeated global commitments to protect this heritage, the variety of life on Earth continues to decline at an unprecedented rate. Biodiversity loss is moving ecological systems ever closer to a tipping point beyond which they will no longer be able to fulfil their vital functions.

Communities everywhere will reap the negative consequences, but the poorest people and the most vulnerable countries will suffer most. Seventy per cent of the world's poor live in rural areas, and depend directly on biodiversity for their daily sustenance and income. This is among the reasons why the target set by world leaders in 2002 -- to substantially reduce biodiversity loss by 2010 -- was integrated into the Millennium Development Goals.

The deadline has arrived, yet the deterioration of our natural resources continues apace. To refocus attention on this challenge, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. Later this year, the Assembly will hold a special high-level meeting, back-to-back with the September MDG Summit, to provide much-needed impetus to the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit in October. The goal is a new vision for biodiversity.

That new vision must promote the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits from its use. It must also recognize the close links between our natural capital and our development objectives, a point reflected in the theme for this year's International Day for Biological Diversity, "biodiversity for development and poverty alleviation".

In this International Year of Biodiversity, let us reflect on the root causes of biodiversity decline and take action to arrest it. Let us adjust policies and mind-sets to reflect the true value of species and habitats. Let us recognize that biodiversity is life – *our* life. Let us act now to preserve it, before it is too late.