



CBD

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

MESSAGE

FROM

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ON THE OCCASION OF

THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

22 May 2007

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International Day for Biological Diversity



Biodiversity and Climate Change



Climate change is real. The United Nations lead scientific authority on climate change, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in its most recent report, prepared by 2,500 experts from 130 countries, has indicated that the concentration of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the Earth's atmosphere is at a level not seen for some 650,000 years. The cause: human activities.

Biodiversity loss is real. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the most authoritative statement on the health of the Earth's ecosystems, prepared by 1,395 scientists from 95 countries, has demonstrated the negative impact of human activities on the natural functioning of the planet. As a result, the ability of the planet to provide the goods and services that we, and future generations, need for our well-being is seriously and perhaps irreversibly jeopardized. We are indeed experiencing the greatest wave of extinctions since the disappearance of the dinosaurs. Extinction rates are rising by a factor of up to 1,000 above natural rates. Every hour, three species disappear. Every day, up to 150 species are lost. Every year, between 18,000 and 55,000 species become extinct. The cause: human activities.

Climate change is one of the major driving forces behind the unprecedented loss of biodiversity. The second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook, recently issued by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, demonstrates that before the end of the century, species and ecosystems will struggle to keep pace with changes in temperature and rainfall and extinction rates will increase. This is already evident in the Arctic, the environmental "barometer" of our planet, where reduced sea-ice threatens to lead to the disappearance of the iconic polar bear and other unique species. The consequences of climate change will be distributed unequally around the globe, but will affect the most vulnerable countries. Africa, which contributes the least to climate change, will be the first to suffer. Climate change has already caused the level of Lake Victoria to drop by about 30%. Between 25 and 40 per cent of Africa's unique species could be lost by 2085.

The relationship between biodiversity and climate change runs both ways. Climate change is an important driver of the loss of biodiversity. At the same time, the loss of biodiversity and the deterioration of natural habitats also contribute to climate change. It is said that every human being on Earth owes one

breath to forests and a second to the oceans. The loss of coral reefs and the destruction of intact forests and mangroves will exacerbate climate change, biodiversity loss and their impacts.

Maintaining biodiversity will make ecosystems resilient in the face of a changing climate. Forests and peatlands represent an important storage place for carbon dioxide. Intact mangroves are an important protection against sea-level rise. A variety of crops and livestock are important resources against changes to the rhythm of the seasons.

Climate change is indeed an energy and a security issue but is also an environmental issue. Biodiversity loss is an environmental issue but it is also an economic, financial, cultural, ethical as well as a security issue. Coinciding with the Polar Year, this year's celebration by the international community of the International Day for Biological Diversity, on 22 May, offers a unique opportunity to acknowledge that climate change and biodiversity are two faces of the same coin of life. Addressing both requires the mutually supportive implementation of the Rio conventions for the benefit of life on Earth. We in the Secretariat of the Convention on life on Earth shall spare no effort to achieve such a strategic objective.

We wish all the countries of the world and their people a successful and memorable celebration.