



# Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

22 May 2007  
International Day for Biological Diversity



Biodiversity and Climate Change

**MESSAGE OF AHMED DJOGLHAF, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF  
THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY ON THE  
OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL  
DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AT THE MILLENNIUM SEED  
BANK, ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, KEW, UNITED KINGDOM,  
22 MAY 2007**

Climate change is a real threat to our own future and to other species that share this planet. Following the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released earlier this year, this is crystal clear. We are already losing biodiversity at rates unprecedented since the demise of the dinosaurs, with extinction rates estimated to be between one hundred and one thousand times the “natural” rate. With climate change, extinction rates may be up to ten thousand times the “natural” rate by the end of the century.

Those IPCC reports also demonstrate that it is not too late to act to prevent catastrophic changes. Protecting biodiversity must be a key part of our strategy to deal with climate change. Healthy ecosystems based on biodiversity not only help to mitigate the threat of climate change by sequestering carbon, they also provide the resilience we need to adapt. And biodiversity also provides a treasure chest of genetic variation upon which we can draw to meet future challenges.

To highlight these links, “Biodiversity and Climate Change” was chosen as the theme for this year’s celebration of International Day for Biological Diversity.

Climate change is a long-term threat to biodiversity and to human well-being. The Millennium Seed Bank is a long term response to this threat. It is therefore fitting that we are marking International Day for Biological Diversity in the United Kingdom by the banking of the one billionth seed in this facility.

The Millennium Seed Bank is the world’s largest endeavour of its kind to safeguard wild flora. I would like to congratulate the team at Kew and the project’s partners worldwide for their achievements in conserving so far some 19,000 species. I am delighted to note that the project is well on target to safeguarding 100% of United Kingdom flora and 10% of the world’s flora by 2010. And I sincerely hope that that Kew is able to secure the funding needed to meet its longer term vision of safeguarding 25% of the world’s flora by 2020.

Five years ago the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity adopted the target of achieving by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss, as well as the sixteen targets of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation.

The Millennium Seed Bank is contributing to the implementation of the Convention, not only through its *ex situ* conservation programme, but also through training and capacity-building in partner countries and its important research activities. Thanks to these efforts and the wider efforts of Kew and its partners around the globe we are on track to meeting several of the targets of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation.



But to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target, much more needs to be done. Kew's contribution to these efforts will be further enhanced through its leading role in the Consortium of Scientific Institutions established at the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Brazil last year in support of capacity-building for biodiversity.

On this occasion, I would also like to pay tribute the leadership of the United Kingdom in its efforts to tackle climate change and to foster agreement internationally to address this great threat to biodiversity and to humanity. I would like to acknowledge too the United Kingdom's leading role in promoting the engagement of the private sector in the implementation of the Convention, which led to the first decision by the Conference of the Parties on this matter. I would also like to recognize the important contribution – and personal commitment – of the Minister for Biodiversity, Landscapes and Rural Affairs, Mr. Barry Gardiner, in championing the role of biodiversity and ecosystem services in efforts to address climate change.

Biodiversity is an essential asset in the fight against climate change. The time has come to realize that investing in biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems will ensure that future generations are not only bequeathed the dazzling variety of nature we take for granted, but are also much better able to cope with the less stable climate they will unfortunately inherit.

### **Background information**

The **Convention on Biological Diversity** is one of the most broadly subscribed international environmental treaties in the world. Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro Brazil in 1992, it currently has 190 Parties—189 States and the European Community—who have committed themselves to its three main goals: the conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of its components and the equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. The Secretariat of the Convention is located in Montreal. [www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int)

**International Biodiversity Day (IBD):** The United Nations proclaimed May 22 the International Day for Biological Diversity to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues. The theme for 2007 is biodiversity and climate change. For more information, please consult [www.cbd.int/ibd](http://www.cbd.int/ibd)

**The 2010 biodiversity target:** In April 2002, the Parties to the Convention committed themselves to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth. This target was subsequently endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the United Nations General Assembly and was incorporated as a new target under the Millennium Development Goals. [www.cbd.int/2010](http://www.cbd.int/2010)

**Global Strategy for Plant Conservation.** In 2002, the Conference of the Parties of the Convention adopted the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation. The Strategy's ultimate and long-term objective is to halt the current and continuing loss of plant diversity. The Strategy, which includes 16 outcome-oriented global targets set for 2010, was developed through a unique global partnership of organizations. Many countries, including the UK have developed national responses to the strategy. [www.cbd.int/gspc](http://www.cbd.int/gspc) and [www.plants2010.org](http://www.plants2010.org)

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