



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

MESSAGE

from the

Executive Secretary

on the launch of the fourth

Global Environment Outlook (GEO-4)

Not an official document.

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International Day for Biological Diversity



Biodiversity and Climate Change

The launch by the United Nations Environment Programme of the fourth Global Environment Outlook serves as another important reminder that biodiversity decline and loss of ecosystem services continue to be major global threats to future development and of the urgent need for mankind to double efforts to protect life on Earth.

GEO-4 reiterates that we are witnessing and are responsible for a reduction in distribution and functioning of land, freshwater and marine biodiversity more rapid than at any time in human history. Rates of species extinction are increasing. The majority of well-studied species are declining in distribution or abundance, and genetic diversity of agricultural and other species is also in decline.

Terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems are being modified in extent and composition by people at an unprecedented rate, in some cases irreversibly degraded, with little understanding of the implications this will have in terms of their ability to function and provide services in the future.

These unprecedented changes are due to human activities in an increasingly globalized, industrialized and interconnected world, driven by expanding flows of goods, services, capital, people, technologies, information, ideas and labour, even affecting isolated populations.

Although there have been local successes in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, at a global level, and in most regions of the world, biodiversity continues to be lost. The report concludes that this loss is occurring because current policies and economic systems do not incorporate the values of biodiversity effectively in either the political or the market systems, and many policies that are already in place are yet to be fully implemented.

GEO-4 sets out areas that need to be incorporated into future decision-making and means of doing so, including integrating environmental activities into the broader development framework; creating enabling environments for innovations and emerging solutions; strengthening environmental knowledge, education and awareness; mobilizing financial resources; and enhancing treaty compliance.

As recognized by the Convention on Biological Diversity at the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 2006, there is an urgent need to act to strengthen



implementation of the Convention. This will require consideration and the value of biodiversity to be integrated into mainstream economic development which in turn requires building awareness on biodiversity among the public and decision-makers. GEO-4 and the messages it contains will play an invaluable role in doing that.

With the launch of GEO-4 the message could not be clearer: achievement of the Millennium Development Goal on environmental sustainability including the 2010 Biodiversity Target to bring about a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss will be foundational to achievement of all the others.

I would like to congratulate all who contributed to the preparation of this important global assessment.
