



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity



INTERNATIONAL
DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY
22 May 2008
**BIODIVERSITY
AND AGRICULTURE**

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**Message by the Executive Secretary
Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif
on the occasion of the
World Migratory Bird Day 2008
Migratory Birds - Ambassadors for Biodiversity
10 - 11 May 2008**

The 10,000 or so species of birds worldwide are a prime example of the enormous biodiversity of our planet. Many of these migrate over long distances, often between or across continents. As I write this message from Montreal, the arrival of spring is heralded by the return of the Canada Geese to their summer habitat from their winter sojourn. Along with similar migrations occurring throughout the world, they remind us of the inter-connectedness of our planet and the need for coordinated action at the international level in order to sustain not only their future but our own. Birds are one of the best indicators for the status and trends of wider biodiversity and they play an important role in monitoring changes in our environment. Their conspicuousness and the esteem by which they are held, not only by indigenous and local communities but by us all, makes migratory birds truly “ambassadors for biodiversity”.

Birds face many threats. The causes of their declines in populations world-wide are many and often act in combination. Habitat loss is the largest threat, particularly from expanding agriculture, whereas biofuels threaten to drive large and possibly rapid changes in land use, resulting in loss of high-value bird habitats such as wetlands, wet meadows, grasslands and scrub. Invasive alien species jeopardise over a quarter of threatened species (particularly on islands). Pollution has serious impacts on birds in particular, especially oil spills and plastic refuse. Unsustainable harvesting is decimating populations in many areas, especially in rainforests. As if not enough, such pressures are being compounded by climate change which is already having a demonstrable impact on birds, particularly in arctic regions, and worse is to come. These threats to our ambassadors of biodiversity must be dealt with through concerted global action.

From 19 to 30 May 2008, the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 9) will be held in Bonn. With Germany as chair, the global community will discuss measures to reduce these and other threats to combat the loss of biodiversity to significantly reduce the rate of loss of biological diversity by the year 2010.

On this World Migratory Bird Day, I commit to further strengthening efforts to work together with the organizers, the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), the Convention on Migratory Species, and all our other partners on migratory species, towards the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target.

Montreal, 09 May 2008



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