



# Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity



## MESSAGE

From Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary  
Convention on Biological Diversity  
On the occasion of International Youth Day, 12 August 2008

For information only

International Youth Day celebrates the potential of youth in molding our society for a better future for all. Today, we will hear from young people around the world about how they can harness ideas and commitment in advancing a better world for all, and to celebrate hope. Biodiversity, the variety of life on Earth, will be a pivotal component of such a world and is threatened by climate change.

Therefore the theme of this year's celebration – youth and climate change: time for action – is very relevant to the Convention on Biological Diversity as it highlights the urgency of action for sustaining life on Earth. Indeed, all life on Earth, from the tiniest microorganisms to the largest blue whales, and from the sparse arctic tundra to the vast tropical savannahs, needs committed human actions to ensure survival – and the survival of humans.

Around the world, we witness significant implications of climate change on life as we know it. As a result of climate change, we see that: between 25 and 40 per cent of mammals in national parks in sub-Saharan Africa will become endangered; up to 88 per cent of reefs may be lost over the next 30 years in Asia; in the Amazon basin, more than 40 per cent of plant species studied could face extinction; in Indonesia, iconic species such as the orangutan could suffer as a result of the projected increases in forest fires; in Java, sea-level rise may destroy vast tracts of the coastal ecosystem. And the list goes on.

The interconnectivity between biodiversity and climate change is therefore indisputable. Biodiversity loss is both a consequence of, and a contributing factor to, climate change. Seriously affected by climate change, biodiversity loss can also aggravate the challenges of climate change. Healthy oceans and healthy forests help address the climate-change challenges. While climate change is indeed an energy, economic, environmental and poverty issue, it is also a security issue. In addition to being a cultural and ethical issue, biodiversity loss also has environmental, economic, and security repercussions.

Each level of society is responsible for the environmental integrity of the community. The world in which we are currently living, and the one that today's youth will inherit, is a world that requires preparedness, risk reduction, adaptation and mitigation. It will demand that young people become fully engaged in important issues such as biodiversity and climate change, build networks and share experiences. Most importantly, it will demand that youth take action.

The Convention on Biological Diversity supports opportunities for youth to develop key skills and contacts. In May 2008, in partnership with the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, it launched *The Green Wave*, a global campaign to educate children and youth on biodiversity and the need to reduce its loss. This campaign enables young people to make a tangible contribution towards both biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation. Action, through education and tree-planting, is a key component of *The Green Wave* campaign ([www.greenwave.cbd.int](http://www.greenwave.cbd.int)). Each year, the Convention on Biological Diversity also supports learning and networking opportunities for young people through its contributions to various local and international children and youth conferences.



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In marking International Youth Day, I invite young people around the world to take a pledge to discover the biological diversity around them and explore ways to communicate their knowledge to others so that people learn the threat of climate change on this life sustaining resource but also use it to minimize the adverse impacts of climate change. These may sound simple steps, but added together can grow into a global effort to learn, use and sustain the biological diversity around us.

Your action can be our biggest reason for hope.

Montreal, 12 August 2008