



Convention on  
Biological Diversity



INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR  
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES

Statement by

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Executive Secretary of the  
Convention on Biological Diversity

On the occasion of the

**Indigenous and Local Community, Business and  
Biodiversity Consultation**

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Distinguished Delegates,

The Convention for Life on Earth values our partners in the private sector and indigenous and local communities. Both are essential partners if we are to save Life on Earth.

It is a real pleasure and an inspiration to see creative partnerships between the private sector and indigenous and local communities which benefit biodiversity, the environment and indigenous and local communities – it is a win-win situation.

Such initiatives help to dispel the various myths surrounding both the private sector and indigenous and local communities and help us to achieve the goals of the Convention: conservation, sustainable use and equitable sharing of benefits.

In the very real way, raw materials purchased directly from indigenous and local communities – can help to foster sustainable development, entrepreneurship and sustainable use of biodiversity at the local level, where our battle to save life on earth will be won or lost.

In particular, I want to recognize this challenge to self-regulate, the importance of which cannot be underestimated, in view of the current economic crisis.

Consider this against the even graver background of the 6<sup>th</sup> extinction crisis faced by the planet and the first one caused directly by humanity.

Therefore, your initiative today to include environmentally sustainable and socially ethical practices by providing clear advice/guidance is a good practice that we can only support in the interest of the public good. Indeed, in time it may serve as a useful model for other industrial sectors to consider.

The second challenge that you are meeting today is even more important and that is about supporting indigenous knowledge. This knowledge or shall I say wisdom not only provides significant contribution to global knowledge but it is also the social capital of the poor, their main asset to invest in the struggle for survival, to produce food, to provide for shelter and to achieve control of their own lives.

Today, many indigenous knowledge systems are at risk of becoming extinct because of rapidly changing social and natural environments and a failure to consider to real value of such knowledge. This is a pity, especially for the more than 400 million indigenous peoples in the world who remain the keepers of linguistic and cultural diversity, and custodians of the world's biological diversity. Yet they remain marginalized and over-represented in all social indicators of disadvantage and poverty.

When traditional communities become destabilized or go extinct – all of us suffer – all of us are impoverished. For these communities are a storehouse of knowledge about local flora and fauna – it is embedded in their languages – including valuable information about their traits and potential uses, as well how to live in the midst of biodiversity - generation after generation in a sustainable manner. We should not underestimate the breadth of this knowledge: it had been estimated that there are literally tens of thousands of plants used by indigenous peoples and local communities for traditional medicines and other purposes, but perhaps less than 1% of these are known to scientists and used commercially. Thus, it is to everyone's benefit to protect the rights and livelihood of traditional communities.

This brings me to your third objective, integrating an eco-responsible approach, which would include promotion of biological diversity which we believe is more than plants, animals and micro organisms and their ecosystems – it is about people and our need for food security, medicines, fresh air and water, shelter, and a clean and healthy environment in which to live.

The initial assessment of the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity project is that global economy is currently losing more money from the disappearance of forests than through the current banking crisis. The report puts the annual cost of forest loss at between \$2 trillion and \$5 trillion by adding the value of the various services that forests perform, such as providing clean water and absorbing carbon dioxide.

The ability of your industry and indeed all humanity to continue to benefit from services provided by biodiversity is under threat. Human activities are creating the greatest wave of extinction since the natural disaster that wiped out the dinosaurs 65 million years ago. Species are disappearing at up to 1000 times the natural rate and I can go on providing statistics about how many birds or mammals have already become extinct.

Looking to the future, with current loss rates it is projected that by 2050 an additional 1.3 billion hectares of land will lose its entire original biodiversity – an area about 1.5 times the size of the United States.

This is a major risk to global economy and definitely not desirable. To quote the French biologist Jean Claude Lefeuvre, “safeguarding the planet’s biodiversity is not a cost, not a luxury of rich countries, but on the contrary, richness for the days to come, the guarantor of a viable future.”

To prevent such a worst-case future scenario, the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity have committed to slowing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010, which has been designated the International Year of Biodiversity. I ask you to join us in recognizing and promoting the international year in 2010.

I commend your important initiative to foster sustainable relationships between indigenous peoples and local communities and the Private Sector, through self-regulation and preservation of the environment.

We, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity support you in this noble endeavour and will work with you to ensure that the important Declaration that was adopted by your industry on October 2008 becomes a reality through the guidance developed by this meeting. What you are doing is translated noble aspirations into real action.

Thank you.

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