



**Convention on
Biological Diversity**



2010 International Year of Biodiversity

STATEMENT

BY MR AHMED DJOGLAF

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

ON THE OCCASION OF

**THE PRESENTATION/LAUNCHING OF THE
INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF BIODIVERSITY IN ARGENTINA**

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USHUAIA, ARGENTINA**



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Life in harmony, into the future
いのちの共生を、未来へ
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Two weeks ago in London we celebrated the 150th anniversary of Charles Darwin's publication *On the Origin of Species*, the landmark work so central to our understanding of the diversity of life on Earth. One of Darwin's stops on his seminal voyage on the HMS Beagle was Tierra del Fuego, of which he wrote: "A single glance at the landscape was sufficient to show me how widely different it was from anything I had ever beheld." After travelling inland he would go on to write of the region: "There was a degree of mysterious grandeur in mountain behind mountain, with the deep intervening valleys, all covered by one thick, dusky mass of forest."

How fitting therefore that you are now gathered in the land that so affected Darwin. How fitting as well that you are meeting next to the Beagle Channel, which bears the name of the ship that carried the great naturalist on his epochal journey. If he were there today in Ushuaia, Darwin would no doubt once again be moved by the rugged mountains, dusky forests and icy blue seas that make Tierra del Fuego such a breathtaking location. He would undoubtedly delight in our current knowledge of the region's vast and varied biodiversity, with its more than 500 species of flowering plant and its beautiful assortment of ferns, lichens, fungi, moss, and wildlife. And if, to his chagrin, he knew the sad fact of how quickly the world's biodiversity was being destroyed 150 years after he helped us to explain how it came about, he would certainly share my great pleasure in knowing that Ushuaia is surrounded by a series of Natural Protected Areas, including the National Park of Tierra del Fuego, and that the region has a strong commitment towards preserving its natural heritage. With its Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development and its emphasis on compliance with the national law on forest conservation, Tierra del Fuego is showing the way forward to rest of the world.

By organizing the celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity three weeks before the start of 2010, Tierra del Fuego is here too showing the way forward to the rest of the world. The 2010 International Year of Biodiversity provides a unique opportunity to put biodiversity at the top of the agenda and create a universal alliance with all stakeholders to protect life on Earth. On the 8th of January, Curitiba will hold an international event to celebrate the International Year, which will be officially launched on the 11th of January in Berlin with the participation of the Chancellor HEM Angela Merkel. The International Year will culminate with the convening of a high-level segment on biodiversity during the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York in September with the participation of heads of state and government. And then next year's celebrations, so historic in the life of the Convention, will be closed in Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan, coinciding with the launch of the 2011 International Year of Forests.

Your event today is another testimony of Argentina's dedication to preserving biodiversity. Argentina has shown a firm and longstanding commitment to international environmental treaties, being the only country in world to have hosted a Conference of the Parties of each of the three Rio Conventions: the CBD COP-3 in 1996, the UNFCCC COP-4 in 1998, and the UNCCD COP-9 less than three months ago. By doing so Argentina has helped to uphold the vision of its great 20th-century economist Raúl Prebisch, who stated of international affairs that "a new rationality must be sought, but not one based on hegemonic interests; rather, one based not merely on economic and social objectives but on eminently ethical ones." The International Year of Biodiversity will give Argentina an opportunity to spread this vision even further, by helping the world to protect and sustainably use the diversity of biological goods and ecosystems services that are so fundamental to humanity's health and wellbeing.

The importance of our efforts next year is reflected in slogan of the International Year: "Biodiversity is life. Biodiversity is our life." I look forward to working with you over the course of next year's celebrations, and wish you all the best at today's roundtable.

Thank you for your kind attention.