



**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY**

PRESS RELEASE

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**New Captain takes helm at global biodiversity treaty,
calls for a global alliance to combat biodiversity loss**

Montreal, 3 January 2006 – Calling on the citizens of the world to join in the effort to preserve life on earth, a 52 year-old Algerian man with a passion for poetry and forest walks takes up the helm of the world's key biological treaty today. United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaif as the new Executive Secretary to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Mr. Djoghlaif, formerly a senior member of the management team at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), begins his term with a call for the engagement of the men, women and youth of this world in a common endeavour – reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by the year 2010.

“Biodiversity is essential to all of us – it is life on Earth, nothing less. During the past 50 years we have squandered one-fourth of the world's topsoil, one-fifth of its agricultural land, and one-third of its forests, while at the same time increasing our population from 2.5 billion to over 6.1 billion. We simply cannot sustain life on earth if we proceed at this rate” he cautioned.

“The Convention on Biological Diversity is about our life and the future of our children. When it comes to our life no one, individual or state, can afford to be an observer. We need all to be actively engaged in promoting in a sustainable manner, life on Earth” he said.

“The Convention has the unique potential to establish a genuine partnership for sustainable development, with all stakeholders and with all countries of the world, without exception” he stressed.

“The most important challenge facing the environment community as a whole is the fulfillment of the commitment taken by the world's Heads of State in Johannesburg at the World Summit on Sustainable Development to achieve by 2010 a substantial reduction in the rate of the loss of the biodiversity of our planet. We have only four years to fulfill this commitment. We need to redouble our efforts and join forces to ensure the success of this strategic objective. It is for this reason that I have issued today a message to all citizens of the world to join the global alliance for the promotion of life on Earth,” said Mr. Djoghlaif.

"We need to galvanize and more deeply engage with all facets of national and international society, including governments, local authorities, women, children, youth, indigenous and local communities, non-governmental organizations, business, industry, scientific community and all others members of the civil society. We also need to demonstrate to all the economic, social and cultural values of biodiversity and the need to conserve, sustainably use and share it fairly and equitably," he added.

"The time for talking is over and the time for action is now. Given that the pressures on biological diversity are probably higher than at any time in the history of the world, achieving the 2010 target is without doubt a tremendous challenge. But we must take up this challenge. We have no other alternative than to win the battle for life on Earth for our own sake and for the benefit of our children, grandchildren and those generations yet to be born," said Mr Djoghlaf.

The text of Mr. Djoghlaf's message is below. It can also be read on the website of the Convention on Biological Diversity at www.biodiv.org

Notes to Editors

An Algerian national, Mr. Djoghlaf has pursued a distinguished diplomatic career that has included postings with the government of Algeria and UNEP.

He was appointed Assistant Executive Director of UNEP in June 2003, following his success as Director and Coordinator of UNEP's Division of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), a position he held from 1996 and where he played a key role in raising UNEP'S profile. During his tenure, the portfolio of projects grew from 6 projects worth US\$ 28 million to 600 projects worth more than US\$1 billion implemented in 155 countries.

Mr. Djoghlaf has a long history of working within the CBD process. He held numerous positions including Acting Principal Officer on intergovernmental issues and cooperative arrangements at the Secretariat of the CBD. Here he was in charge of meetings including the First and Second Conference of the Parties. He was, in 1994, also Special Adviser to the Executive Secretary of CBD in charge of, for example, the preparations for the First Conference of the Parties held in Nassau, Bahamas, in December that year.

Prior to joining the United Nations, Mr. Djoghlaf held a variety of important positions. He was advisor on environmental issues to the Prime Minister of Algeria and prior to that to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Algeria. Mr. Djoghlaf was the General rapporteur of the preparatory committee of the Rio Summit and Vice President of the Negotiating committee on the Framework Convention on Climate Change as well as Chair of one of the two negotiating committees of the Convention to Combat Desertification. He holds a PhD from the University of Nancy, France, as well as four other post university degrees including Master of Arts, Government and Politics from St. John's University, New York.

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(Statement follows)

**ACHIEVING THE 2010 BIODIVERSITY TARGET
MESSAGE OF DR. AHMED DJOGLAF,
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY,
TO CITIZENS OF THE WORLD**



In the struggle to deliver a healthier, more just and environmentally-sound world one issue is clear. The Earth's life support systems, from its forests and flowers to its coral reefs and waterways, are under assault as never before.

Four years ago, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the leaders of the world agreed to achieve by 2010 "a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at global, regional and national levels as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on earth". In September 2005, 150 Heads of State, meeting at the World Summit in New York called on all states to fulfil their commitment and significantly reduce the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010.

Meanwhile the findings of a landmark 2005 study into the health of the planet's ecosystems, called the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, undertaken by over 1,300 experts from 95 countries, has added its voice to those of the politicians. Two thirds of the services provided by nature to humankind are in decline, worldwide. Humans have made unprecedented changes to ecosystems in recent decades to meet growing demands for food and other ecosystems services.

These changes have weakened nature's ability to deliver its vital services. Human activity is putting such strain on the natural functions of Earth that the ability of the planet's ecosystems to sustain future generations can no longer be taken for granted.

This landmark study concludes that to attain the 2010 biodiversity target will require not only fine words, but an unprecedented effort by all sections of society.

The Convention on Biological Diversity is about life on earth. The achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target is of a crucial importance for everyone alive today and for our children and grandchildren and generations to be born.

I would like to call on everyone to join this unprecedented effort to conserve life on Earth and to realize the 2010 target.

What is needed is a Global Alliance that brings governments, business, industry, non governmental organizations, and the men, women, and youth of this world together in a common endeavor.

The next Conference of the Parties, the meeting of governments to the Convention on Biological Diversity, will be held in Curitiba, Brazil on 20-31 March 2006. It is a unique opportunity to forge such a global alliance for the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target. So I call on all citizens of our planet Earth to join us in making a Global Alliance a reality, to bring their unique skills and contributions to bear, so that the meeting in Curitiba will be remembered as the birthplace of our renewed commitment to urgently sustain and restore Earth's life support systems.

Montreal, 3 January 2006

The **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** (www.biodiv.org) is an agreement among the vast majority of the world's governments to conserve biological diversity, use its components sustainably and ensure the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources. Parties to the CBD have taken steps to translate the Convention into practical action including the initiation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans in over 100 countries, the raising of awareness about biodiversity, and the adoption of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, a an international regulatory framework for the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. The CBD has been ratified by 187 countries and the European Community.