



MESSAGE FROM AHMED DJOHLAF, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, ON THE OCCASION OF
INTERNATIONAL MOTHER EARTH DAY, 22 APRIL 2010

Last year, at the initiative of the Government of Bolivia, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted International Mother Earth Day on 22 April as an official observance of the United Nations. Its adoption recognizes humanity's common interest in the protection of the planet and its environment and the development of Earth Day as the largest secular civic event in the world.

In his message for International Mother Earth Day, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has noted that, "too often we have drawn on nature's capital without putting back. We are now beginning to see the consequences of failing to safeguard our investment".

Indeed, the international community has failed to deliver on its promise to reduce the loss of biodiversity by 2010. We continue to lose biodiversity at an unprecedented rate. Compounded by climate change, this loss undermines our wellbeing and prosperity and jeopardizes the future of all those who will come after us. Not a single county, not a single citizen, will be immune from the impact. But poor countries and the most vulnerable segments of society will suffer the most.

The loss of biodiversity will have far reaching implications on indigenous people and local communities. Preserving and maintaining the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities is central to achievement of the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The important task we have before us is to work with all the citizens of the world, including indigenous and local communities as custodians of biological and cultural diversity, to ensure that the great treasures of Mother Earth and of humanity are not squandered or lost.

This first observance of International Mother Earth Day on 22 April 2010 coincides with the International Year of Biodiversity and the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, and comes exactly one month before the celebration on 22 May 2010 of the International Day for Biological Diversity, celebrated this year under the theme, "Biodiversity for development and poverty alleviation". The observance coincides also with the ongoing session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on indigenous issues that this year is considering the relationship between development, identity and culture.

2010 offers a unique opportunity to redouble our efforts to protect life on Earth for the benefit of present and future generations. Indeed, "Biodiversity is life...Biodiversity is *our* life".



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