UNITED NATIONS **NATIONS UNIES**

Message from

Ban Ki Moon

The Secretary-General*

ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

22 May 2007

Biodiversity is the foundation of life on earth and one of the pillars of sustainable development. The richness and variety of life on earth makes possible the ecosystem services on which we depend: clean water, food, shelter, medicine and clothing. Environments rich in biodiversity are resilient when stricken by natural disaster. All of this is of particularly importance for the poorest citizens of our world. Those who live on only a few dollars a day need biodiversity to meet their basic needs. Without the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, we will not achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

However, biodiversity is being lost at an unprecedented rate. This, in turn, is seriously eroding the capacity of our planet to sustain life of earth. It is for this reason that world leaders attending the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 agreed to achieve, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss of biodiversity. This commitment was reiterated at the 2005 World Summit. The 2010 biodiversity target is now fully integrated into the framework of the Millennium Development Goals and, as a sign of further support, the international community decided to declare 2010 the International Year for Biological Diversity.

As the world also focuses more attention on climate change, the links between climate change and biodiversity are also being articulated. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment - a state-of-the-art appraisal of the world's ecosystems and the services they provide -- has identified climate change as one of the biggest causes of our planet's loss of biodiversity, along with changing land use patterns. In addition, the recently released report of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change made it crystal clear that climate change is real and will continue to affect our lives and ecosystems for many years to come. Those impacts will include the extinction of ever increasing numbers of species, further weakening a number of already fragile ecosystems.

It is therefore timely that the theme of this year's observance of the International Day for Biological Diversity is "Biodiversity and Climate Change". Indeed, the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity is an essential element of any strategy to adapt to climate change. Mangrove forests and other coastal wetlands represent a bulwark against extreme weather events and rising sea-levels. As agricultural landscapes become warmer and drier, the diversity of livestock and cereal crops can provide farmers with options to cope with new conditions.

Forests, peatlands and other ecosystems contribute to sequestering carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, thereby helping to mitigate increases in greenhouse gas emissions. Through the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the international community is committed to conserving biodiversity and combating climate change. The global response to these challenges needs to move much more rapidly, and with more determination at all levels - global, national and local. For the sake of current and future generations, we must achieve the goals of these landmark instruments.

*Message released at the UN website on 22 May 2007 in observance of IBD (reproduced)

Message from

Ahmed Djoghlaf

The Executive Secretary
Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity*

ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
22 May 2007

Climate change is real. The United Nations lead scientific authority on climate change, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in its most recent report, prepared by 2,500 experts from 130 countries, has indicated that the concentration of carbon dioxide (CO_2) in the Earth's atmosphere is at a level not seen for some 650,000 years. The cause: human activities.

Biodiversity loss is real. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the most authoritative statement on the health of the Earth's ecosystems, prepared by 1,395 scientists from 95 countries, has demonstrated the negative impact of human activities on the natural functioning of the planet. As a result, the ability of the planet to provide the goods and services that we, and future generations, need for our well-being is seriously and perhaps irreversibly jeopardized. We are indeed experiencing the greatest wave of extinctions since the disappearance of the dinosaurs. Extinction rates are rising by a factor of up to 1,000 above natural rates. Every hour, three species disappear. Every day, up to 150 species are lost. Every year, between 18,000 and 55,000 species become extinct. The cause: human activities.

Climate change is one of the major driving forces behind the unprecedented loss of biodiversity. The second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook, recently issued by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, demonstrates that before the end of the century, species and ecosystems will struggle to keep pace with changes in temperature and rainfall and extinction rates will increase. This is already evident in the Arctic, the environmental "barometer" of our planet, where reduced sea-ice threatens to lead to the disappearance of the iconic polar bear and other unique species. The consequences of climate change will be distributed unequally around the globe, but will affect the most vulnerable countries. Africa, which contributes the least to climate change, will be the first to suffer. Climate change has already caused the level of Lake Victoria to drop by about 30%. Between 25 and 40 per cent of Africa's unique species could be lost by 2085.

The relationship between biodiversity and climate change runs both ways. Climate change is an important driver of the loss of biodiversity. At the same time, the loss of biodiversity and the deterioration of natural habitats also contribute to climate change. It is said that every human being on Earth owes one breath to forests and a second to the oceans. The loss of coral reefs and the destruction of intact forests and mangroves will exacerbate climate change, biodiversity loss and their impacts.

Maintaining biodiversity will make ecosystems resilient in the face of a changing climate. Forests and peatlands represent an important storage place for carbon dioxide. Intact mangroves are an important protection against sea-level rise. A variety of crops and livestock are important resources against changes to the rhythm of the seasons.

Climate change is indeed an energy and a security issue but is also an environmental issue. Biodiversity loss is an environmental issue but it is also an economic, financial, cultural, ethical as well as a security issue. Coinciding with the Polar Year, this year's celebration by the international community of the International Day for Biological Diversity, on 22 May, offers a unique opportunity to acknowledge that climate change and biodiversity are two faces of the same coin of life. Addressing both requires the mutually supportive implementation of the Rio conventions for the benefit of life on Earth. We in the Secretariat of the Convention on life on Earth shall spare no effort to achieve such a strategic objective.

We wish all the countries of the world and their people a successful and memorable celebration.

*Message released at the CBD website on 22 May 2007 in observance of IBD (reproduced)

bionet

Message From

Dr. Richard Smith

Director, BioNET-INTERNATIONAL

Chittagong International Biodiversity Conference 2007

www.bionet-intl.org

May 22-24 2007

When thinking of the theme for Biodiversity Day this year - "Biodiversity and climate change" - some may think: do we need taxonomy to help us cope with climate change? What role can taxonomy have in addressing the climate crisis that has, belatedly, gripped politicians in much of the world - witness the increasing frequency of statements of concern from China, Europe, North America, India…? The connection with taxonomy is, in fact, strong. Indeed, the taxonomic community has an important and urgent contribution to make. Climate change is affecting the potential distributions of many species, causing new health and food security dangers. Identifying such species and comparing information on where they were found in the past, where they are found now and predictions of where they could survive in the near future, is important for determining where, when and how fast climate change is happening and how risks can be managed to minimise threats to agriculture, health and biodiversity. A major risk is that from invasive species. According to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, probably the most authoritative and comprehensive assessment of the planet's well-being ever undertaken, climate change and invasives are the two most persistent drivers of ecosystem change threatening human well-being. Taxonomy makes a fundamental contribution to predicting, adapting to and mitigating the impacts of climate change and the related problems caused by invasive alien species.

Since January 2002, we have been working patiently with institutions and governments across South Asia with the goal of establishing a South Asian partnership for taxonomy to be known as BioNET-SACNET. First, we held the Formulation Workshop for BioNET-SACNET in Dhaka, June 2003. Subsequently, the governments of Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and most recently, Nepal endorsed the proposal to establish SACNET. Following UNDP guidelines, BioNET-SACNET is now established as a government-endorsed Technical Cooperation Network for all South Asian countries. The goals of BioNET-SACNET are set out in the proposal endorsed by governments. Now, we are working with National Coordinating Institutes - such as BRGB in Bangladesh - and IUCN at the regional level to develop a SACNET programme and attract resources for its implementation. The joint meeting with *Species 2000 Asia Oceania* group on 24 May is an important step in this process. It will focus on designing a programme to complete a Catalogue of Life for South Asia. The shape of the initiative will be determined by the meeting you are holding in Chittagong.

A Catalogue of Life for South Asia will be a timely and important taxonomic product. It will be a major contribution to the Catalogue of Life initiative, with its goal of completing an index of known species by 2011. The index will be of immense value to environmental managers, biologists and anyone working with species. Names of species change as taxonomy progresses. Local, national and regional differences cause confusion and inaccuracies and can cause environmental risks to go unchecked. An authoritative, automatically updated index will become, I am sure, an indispensable tool for all in biodiversity management, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, veterinary and health services and quarantine sectors among others.

In January 2002, I had the very great pleasure of being where you are today. At that time, I was participating in the "1st National Biodiversity Workshop". Today, however, I cannot be with you in person. But you shall most certainly be in my thoughts. And I confident in knowing that all scientific, technical and logistical have been very ably taken care of under the leadership of BRGB. I hereby record BioNET's sincere thanks for the very great efforts of all involved in organising the events.

Lastly, let me, on behalf of BioNET, join BRGB, *Species 2000 Asia Oceania*, University of Chittagong and distinguished guests in warmly welcoming all participants to the Chittagong International Biodiversity Conference, including the Linnaeus Tercentenary Celebratory Seminar. We hope and trust the events fulfil your expectations for learning, debating and planning collaborative work. More than this, we hope you thoroughly enjoy celebrating Biodiversity Day!

NIWA
Science

Message from

Dr. Dennis P Gordon
Principal Scientist

Aquatic Biodiversity & Biosecurity
National Institute for Water and Atmospheric Research

Private Bag 14901, Kilbirnie, Wellington
New Zealand

The Biodiversity Research Group of Bangladesh is to be congratulated for organising biodiversity symposia commemorating the International Day of Biodiversity and the Linnaeus Tercentenary, as well as the associated meetings of *Species 2000 Asia-Oceania* and SACNET. I wish the organisers every success for these auspicious gatherings, in full anticipation of fruitful outcomes.