

**MESSAGE FROM AHMED DJOGLAF, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, ON THE OCCASION OF
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2010**

Equal rights, equal opportunities: Progress for all

Although International Women's Day first emerged from the activities of labour movements at the turn of the twentieth century in North America and across Europe, the Charter of the United Nations signed in 1945, was the first international agreement to establish the principle of equality between women and men.

It has been twenty-five years that the United Nations has been celebrating 8 March as International Women's Day. In adopting its 1977 resolution proclaiming a United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace, the General Assembly gave two reasons for dedicating a day to celebrate the world's women. The resolution aimed to: recognize that in order to secure peace, social progress, the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms require the active participation, equality and development of women; and to acknowledge the contribution of women to the strengthening of international peace and security.

The Convention on Biological Diversity is strongly committed to recognizing and promoting the integral yet distinct roles that women and men play in conserving, celebrating and sharing biodiversity and has developed a Gender Plan of Action, the first of its kind for any multilateral environmental agreement. The Plan defines the role of the Convention Secretariat in stimulating and facilitating efforts on national, regional, and global levels to promote gender equality and mainstream a gender perspective.

As recognized in Millennium Development Goal 7, biodiversity is important for the well-being of all humans on the planet, now and in the future. The Millennium Development Goals emphasize clear linkages between gender equality, poverty alleviation, biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. Gender roles affect the economic, political, social and ecological opportunities and constraints faced by both men and women. Recognizing women's roles as primary land and resource managers is central to the success of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. For example, women farmers currently account for 60-80% of all food production in developing countries. However, gender often remains overlooked in decision-making on access to and the use of biological resources.

This International Women's Day is especially significant to the Convention as it is taking place during the celebrations of the United Nations International Year of Biodiversity and in the lead-up to the high-level meeting on biodiversity during the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly in New York September 2010 and the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to be held in Nagoya in October. As we reflect on the achievements of the Beijing Declaration let us also include such insights into our outlook and approach to reversing biodiversity loss, reducing poverty and improving human well-being.
