



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity



MESSAGE

From Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif
Executive Secretary
Convention on Biological Diversity
on the occasion of World Water Day, 22 March 2009

International World Water Day is held annually on 22 March as a means of focusing attention on the importance of freshwater and advocating for the sustainable management of freshwater resources. This year's theme for World Water Day is "Shared Water - Shared Opportunities", with a special focus on transboundary waters.

Water is essential to all life and to sustaining almost all aspects of human well-being. But our water resources are coming under increasing pressure. Freshwaters are amongst the world's most threatened ecosystems and the rate of loss of freshwater dependent biodiversity is the fastest of all the major biomes. This reflects the continuing loss of important ecosystem services provided to people.

Water knows no boundaries. The need to manage it at the ecosystem, or catchment/basin, level is well recognized. Where water flows across political borders improved international cooperation over its management is critical. This applies not only to the water itself, shared as a physical commodity, but also to the services that freshwater ecosystems provide which are underpinned by biodiversity. Article 5 of the Convention on Biological Diversity refers to the need for Parties to cooperate on matters of mutual interest. In few areas is such cooperation as critical as with water resources management. Such needs are well recognized in the programme of work on the biological diversity of inland waters.

The need for improved water resources management was considered at the most recent Conference of the Parties to the CBD held in Bonn, Germany, 19 – 30 May 2008. The 191 Parties represented noted the importance of improved arrangements for international cooperation on water resources management to the implementation of the programme of work on the biological diversity of inland water ecosystems and urged Parties and other Governments to strengthen relevant international cooperative arrangements for the management of inland watercourses and water-bodies consistent with Article 5 of the Convention and as a contribution towards the achievement of the 2010 target of achieving a substantial reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss. This decision recognizes that the benefits of improved transboundary cooperation include those accruing to people through the improved conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The decision adds substantial political weight to other efforts to improve transboundary cooperation in order to share water and share opportunities through its wise management.

On this World Water Day, we have the opportunity to further coordinate actions together as we move towards 2010. The International Year of Biodiversity will be celebrated that year. I invite you all to promote and deepen examples of cooperation for the upstream-downstream management of water, and contribute these as examples of the "2010 success stories" for the year. I also invite you to reflect on the ways that we can integrate even better the implementation of the CBD at National and International levels across all sectors, programmes and development efforts. I reaffirm my commitment to the Secretary General's call on the UN system and all stakeholders to forge even stronger partnerships and take more concerted action, not only this year, but throughout the entire International Decade for Action: "Water for Life", 2005-2015, and beyond.

By working together we can achieve our vision of a truly sustainable planet.

Montreal, 20 March 2009



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