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INTERLINKAGES BETWEEN BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

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Advice on the integration of biodiversity considerations
into the implementation of the *United Nations
Framework Convention on Climate Change* and
its *Kyoto Protocol*



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Ad hoc Technical Expert Group on Biological Diversity and Climate Change

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FOREWORD BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

The human pressure on our planet's natural systems is unprecedented. Loss of biological diversity threatens to unravel the intricate ecosystems that life of Earth depends. Climate change is having profound and long-term impacts on human welfare and adds yet another pressure on terrestrial and marine ecosystems that are already under threat from land-use change, pollution, over-harvesting, and the introduction of alien species.

At the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the world's leaders reaffirmed the need to tackle these issues and endorsed the target set by the Convention on Biological Diversity's Conference of the Parties to achieve, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss of biological diversity. The World Summit also reaffirmed the central importance of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change—the conventions adopted at the Rio Earth Summit 10 years earlier—in addressing these issues.

The objectives of these two conventions are closely inter-related:

- Climate change is a major cause of biodiversity loss and one of the obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is to identify and address such threats. At the same time, the ultimate objective of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) includes the stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations within a timeframe sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt to climate change;
- Biodiversity management can contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combating desertification. Indeed, the UNFCCC calls for the conservation and enhancement of terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems as sinks for greenhouse gases;
- Both conventions, as well as the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, are intended to contribute to sustainable development.

The impacts of climate change on biodiversity are of major concern to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Conference of the Parties has highlighted the risks, in particular, to coral reefs and to forest ecosystems, and has drawn attention to the serious impacts of loss of biodiversity of these systems on people's livelihoods. More recently, the Conference of the Parties has also turned its attention to the potential impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems of the various options for mitigating or adapting to climate change and requested the Convention's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) to develop scientific advice on these issues.

SBSTTA established an ad hoc technical expert group to carry out an assessment of the inter-linkages between biodiversity and climate change. The results are contained in the present report, which draws upon best available scientific knowledge, including that provided by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The report concludes that there are significant opportunities for mitigating climate change, and for adapting to climate change while enhancing the conservation of biodiversity. However, these synergies will not happen without a conscious attention to biodiversity concerns. The report identifies a wide range of tools that can help decision makers assess the likely impacts and make informed choices.

The report provides the scientific basis for the development of recommendations, as appropriate, under each Convention, for setting priorities for future research. I hope that it will also be used widely by countries as they seek to implement policies, programmes and activities under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

This report is a tangible product of cooperation among the Rio conventions. I trust that it will prove to be a useful step in promoting implementation of the three Rio Conventions in a mutually supportive manner.

Hamdallah Zedan
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