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GUIDANCE FOR PROMOTING SYNERGY AMONG ACTIVITIES ADDRESSING BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, DESERTIFICATION, LAND DEGRADATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

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GUIDANCE FOR PROMOTING SYNERGY AMONG ACTIVITIES ADDRESSING BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, DESERTIFICATION, LAND DEGRADATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Ad hoc Technical Expert Group on Biodiversity and Adaptation to Climate Change

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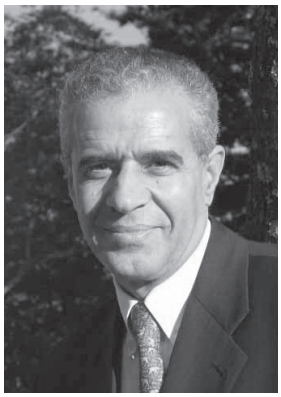
FOREWORD

Major scientific findings during the last few years have confirmed that the biophysical consequences of climate change are no longer theoretical; they are real and they are occurring at this very moment. Atmospheric and ocean temperatures keep increasing, and associated natural disturbances such as hurricanes are becoming more intense due in part to these changes. Hydrological cycles are also being altered: droughts and floods are becoming more frequent, while mountain snowmelt is occurring earlier every year, limiting water supply during periods of peak demand later in the season. Humans have already evacuated low-lying oceanic islands due to unprecedented sea-level rise. Climate change is also expected to significantly alter global food supply. There is also enough evidence to support the fact that the Earth's biodiversity is being directly and indirectly affected, from the ecosystem to the species level. For example, the permafrost is melting in the boreal zone; plant and animal species in many regions across the globe are either moving to cooler environments or are in the process of disappearing; and global warming has been identified in driving disease outbreaks that are causing widespread amphibian extinctions.



The available evidence also clearly indicates that even if we were to stop greenhouse emissions today, climate change impacts would still be felt for decades to come. Hence it is imperative that society adapt to climate change. It is particularly urgent to identify and apply tools and approaches that incorporate biodiversity considerations into the design and implementation of activities aimed at adapting to climate change. The information contained in the present report, prepared by the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Biodiversity and Adaptation to Climate Change, aims to provide preliminary guidance on the issue. The Group, composed of 15 experts nominated by Governments, eight experts from indigenous and local communities, international organizations, United Nations bodies and other biodiversity conventions, and two resource persons, met in Helsinki in September 2005. The report was posted for wider review between February and April 2006 before its final publication.

The report highlights the major biological factors that contribute to ecosystem resilience under the projected impacts of global climate change, assesses the potential consequences for biodiversity of particular adaptation activities under the thematic areas of the Convention, provides methodological considerations when implementing these activities, and highlights research and knowledge gaps. The report both recognizes the potential of, and stresses the need for, synergy in the implementation of activities that interlink biodiversity conservation, mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, and land degradation and desertification in the context of the objectives of the three Rio Conventions and other relevant multilateral environmental agreements.

I wish to thank the Government of Finland for its continued support to the Secretariat in its work on climate change and biodiversity. In particular, for hosting the expert meeting, and for providing funds for the participation of country experts and the publication of this report.

Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaf
Executive Secretary

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