

22 September 2010

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss,
President of the 65th Session of the General Assembly,
at the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly as a
Contribution to the International Year of Biodiversity**

Heads of State and Government,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

"Biodiversity is central to life"

In proclaiming 2010 the Year of Biodiversity, the General Assembly launched an appeal for celebration of life on earth and of the value of biodiversity. The Year of Biodiversity is an invitation to take action - not only this year, but in all the years to come - to safeguard the diversity of life on earth.

I am very happy that a meeting of the General Assembly is being held at the beginning of the sixty-fifth session as a contribution to the International Year of Biodiversity, and I welcome you to this meeting.

Biodiversity has always been essential to the existence of humankind. But it is often difficult to raise awareness of its importance and, above all, of the risks entailed by its loss. And yet....

We get our food from plants and animals, insects ensure pollination and are an essential link in the food chain, rainwater becomes drinkable by being filtered through soil and the oxygen that we breathe comes from the photosynthesis of algae and green plants.

Today, biodiversity is being lost throughout the world, largely as a result of the actions of human beings. Climate change is further worsening this problem. What is more, degradation of many of the essential services rendered by ecosystems is threatening to undermine progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

While we are all threatened by the loss of biodiversity, the consequences are even more serious for the poorest among us. Many biodiversity-rich areas are in developing countries whose people are particularly dependent on agriculture, fishing and forestry for their subsistence.

It is encouraging that the international community is mobilizing in response to this threat. The 2002 adoption of the "2010 biodiversity target" was a milestone. This target - which was also included in the Millennium Goal on the environment - has not been reached, but many States have used it as a basis for concrete biodiversity protection measures.

Furthermore, many initiatives are aimed at finding a better balance between biodiversity and the economy and measuring the economic value of the services rendered by ecosystems. A better understanding of the cost of biodiversity loss is essential to increasing the effectiveness of our efforts to preserve it. It is essential if businesses are to recognize the advantages of biodiversity and move towards more environmentally friendly patterns of production and a green economy.

We must continue our efforts.

Quite recently, last June, in Busan, Republic of Korea, the international community decided to establish an intergovernmental science-policy platform in order to bridge the gap between scientific knowledge about deterioration of the natural environment and action by governments. This is a major breakthrough for the organization of a coherent, effective multilateral response to biodiversity loss.

Next month, the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity will be held in Nagoya, Japan, where the new strategic plan for the Convention will be adopted. I hope that our discussions today at this high-level meeting will make a useful contribution to the negotiations to be conducted in Nagoya in order to ensure that the new plan is exhaustive, ambitious and attainable.

Heads of State and Government,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

The preservation of biodiversity is inseparable from efforts to tackle poverty, to improve the health, prosperity and security of present and future generations, and to deal with climate change. Preserving biodiversity is not a luxury; it is a duty.

[Translation from French]