



STATEMENT

BY MR AHMED DJOGLAF

**THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

ON THE OCCASION OF

**THE INTERNATIONAL CORAL REEF INITIATIVE GENERAL
MEETING**

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MONACO**

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Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
United Nations Environment Programme
413 Saint-Jacques Street, Suite 800, Montreal, QC, H2Y 1N9, Canada
Tel : +1 514 288 2220, Fax : +1 514 288 6588
secretariat@cbd.int www.cbd.int



Life in harmony, into the future
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Speaking about the creation of the Prince Albert II Foundation, its eponymous founder the Prince of Monaco stated: “I decided to set up a Foundation whose purpose is to protect the environment and to encourage sustainable development....By definition, this is a common global challenge that requires urgent and concrete action in response to three major environmental issues: climate change, biodiversity and water.” And he is exactly right: the future of humanity intimately depends on our ability to synergistically address these three pressing topics. I am sure you will agree that there is no better place for the 2010 ICRI General Meeting to be held than Monaco, a country whose leader has such clear foresight and has shown such commitment to protecting the natural world.

Now is critical time in the fight to save life on Earth. As you know, eight years ago the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity established the 2010 Biodiversity Target, a commitment to significantly slow biodiversity loss worldwide by 2010. Subsequently, the 2010 Target was incorporated as a new target under the Millennium Development Goals, and 2010 was declared the International Year of Biodiversity by the United Nations.

And yet with 2010 now beginning, preliminary indications are that the Target will not be met. I do not have to tell you that the long-term consequences of this failure will be severe. As the slogan of the International Year reminds us, “Biodiversity is life, biodiversity is OUR life”- which is particularly true when it comes to ocean ecosystems, a critical source of biological goods and ecosystems services for people across the planet.

That is why during the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity released a major new study, *Scientific Synthesis of the Impacts of Ocean Acidification on Marine Biological Diversity*. Prepared in collaboration with the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), its launch was a major event to mark Oceans Day, highlighting the direct link between climate change, ocean health, and human well-being.

Based on an analysis of more than 300 scientific papers, the study provided a synthesis of scientific information on the impacts of ocean acidification. Overall, it described an alarming picture of possible ecological scenarios and adverse impacts of ocean acidification on marine biodiversity, in particular on coral reefs. Among other findings, it showed that increasing ocean acidification will mean that by 2100 some 70 per cent of cold water corals, a key refuge and feeding ground for commercial fish species, will be exposed to corrosive waters. It also showed that ocean acidification is irreversible on timescales of at least tens of thousands of years, and that substantial damage to ocean ecosystems can only be avoided by urgent and rapid reductions in global emissions of CO₂.

We at the CBD therefore hope that, over the course of 2010 and beyond, we can collaborate with international organizations such as ICRI, as well as the scientific community, to build upon this study, further enhancing scientific research on ocean acidification, particularly on its biological and biogeochemical consequences. More generally, we hope to put biodiversity at the top of the international agenda during this most important year. Now is the time to create a truly universal alliance of all stakeholders to protect our biological resources.

With this in mind, our goals during the International Year of Biodiversity are threefold. The first is to encourage people everywhere to discover and explore the great diversity of life that surrounds them. The second is to help them realize the value of biodiversity, their connection to

it and the consequences of its ongoing loss. And the third is to empower them to do all they can to save it.

Two key events during 2010 will help us achieve these ends. In September, the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly will convene a high-level segment on biodiversity with the participation of heads of state and government for the first time ever. And in October, the CBD's tenth Conference of the Parties in Nagoya, Japan, will make a final assessment of progress toward the 2010 Biodiversity Target, create new biodiversity targets for 2020 and 2050, finalize a comprehensive post-2010 strategic plan for ultimately stopping biodiversity loss in the years to come, and establish an International Regime on Access and Benefit-Sharing. Needless to say, in the lead up to these events we must continue to raise awareness about the interrelationship between biodiversity, climate change and water, keeping it at forefront of this year's celebrations.

Thank you for your kind attention.