

9 November 2009



Secretary-General
SG/SM/12597
ENV/DEV/1087
OBV/826

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

**SECRETARY-GENERAL CALLS FOR 'NEW VISION' FOR YEAR OF BIODIVERSITY, STRESSING
SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT, WATERSHED PROTECTION, CORAL CONSERVATION**

Following is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message for the International Year of Biodiversity (2010), the initial celebrations for which begin today, 9 November 2009:

Over the past half-century, human activities have caused an unprecedented decline in biological diversity. Species are going extinct a thousand times faster than the natural rate -- a loss now being further compounded by climate change. A wide variety of environmental goods and services that we take for granted are under threat, with profound and damaging consequences for ecosystems, economies and livelihoods.

In 2002, world leaders agreed to substantially reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. The 2010 Biodiversity Target was subsequently integrated into the Millennium Development Goals. It will not be met.

Tropical forests continue to be felled, destroying valuable endemic species and disrupting local, regional and global climates. Climate change and ocean acidification are destroying coral reefs. Fisheries are increasingly overexploited, condemning millions of the world's poorest people to unemployment and malnutrition.

The failure to protect biodiversity should be a wake-up call. Business as usual is not an option. We need a new biodiversity vision. We must manage our forests sustainably so they can store carbon, protect watersheds and provide resources and income. We must conserve coral reefs so they can continue to protect coasts from storms and support livelihoods for hundreds of millions of people. We must ensure the long-term viability of our seas and oceans.

To raise awareness of the impending crisis and to spur the world to act, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity. In September 2010, the General Assembly will hold a special high-level meeting on the subject. It will give the international community an opportunity to demonstrate much-needed leadership in advance of the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit, which will adopt a new strategic plan for implementing the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

In this International Year, we must counter the perception that people are disconnected from our natural environment. We must increase understanding of the implications of losing biodiversity. In 2010, I call on every country and each citizen of our planet to engage in a global alliance to protect life on Earth. We must generate a greater sense of urgency and establish clear and concrete targets. Biodiversity is life. Biodiversity is *our* life.

