

**Message of Luc Gnacadja
Executive Secretary
UN Convention to Combat Desertification**

**On the occasion of
World Environment Day
5 June 2010**

Each generation has a history and legacy. The conservation of biological diversity promises to be one of our legacies, but success depends on our ability to stem the root causes of biodiversity loss. Only then will we truly celebrate “Many Species. One Planet. One Future.” We know where the real action is required, given that inappropriate land use practices and management that clear the land of its cover, degrade the soil and fail to nurture its biodiversity are at the core of this challenge.

In marking the World Environment Day this year under the theme, “Many Species. One Planet. One Future,” my call is towards action that pays unprecedented attention to the soil. By improving the condition of the soil, we create the possibility to enhance human, animal and plant life everywhere. One exemplar of this reality is Rwanda, host country to this year’s World Environment Day observance event.

Set in the heart of Africa, on the edge of Africa’s largest tropical Rainforest, Rwanda is a natural home to vast plant and animal species. But this once lush country suffered extensive land degradation over at least five decades, which not only eroded its rich biological diversity but subsequently also threatened the long term well being of the people of Rwanda.

In order to break and reverse this trend, the Government of Rwanda has prioritized land rehabilitation and recovery in its development and investment plans. Rwanda knows from experience that by restoring the land the country will recover its watersheds, revive its agriculture, restore its biological diversity and secure its future. A powerful demonstration of the UNCCD’s belief that *enhancing soils anywhere enhances life everywhere*.

I congratulate the United Nations Environment Programme on the occasion of the World Environment Day and for its call, and the people and Government of Rwanda for a visionary and holistic land-based approach to environment and natural resource management. I also wish you fruitful celebrations.