

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND BIODIVERSITY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



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A jointly convened UNESCO and UNEP
high-level Roundtable held on
3 September 2002 in Johannesburg
during the World Summit on Sustainable Development



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FOREWORD

On 3 September 2002, the high-level Roundtable on “Cultural Diversity and Biodiversity for Sustainable Development”, jointly organized by UNESCO and UNEP, took place in Johannesburg during the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Chaired by H.E. President Jacques Chirac, this prominent interdisciplinary panel underlined the importance of respecting and integrating the diversity of nature and culture as a prerequisite for sustainable development.

Decisions on concrete measures to safeguard the environment and cultural diversity should be grounded not only upon well-conducted research and reliable evidence but also upon values concerning the kind of world we would like our children to inherit. In the words of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, respect for cultural diversity “widens the range of options open to everyone” and, combined with maintaining biological diversity, is essential to our survival. If we lose diversity, the result will be a seriously reduced quality of life, if not the loss of the very meaning of life itself. If we allow languages and cultures to die, we directly reduce the sum of our knowledge about the environment and the various and many benefits that humankind can derive from it.

Today there is a wider understanding that reduced diversity in its cultural and environmental dimensions poses a threat to global stability and that it makes the world and its inhabitants increasingly vulnerable. It is heartening, therefore, that the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development emphasize that cultural and biological diversity are equally significant and important for sustainable development.

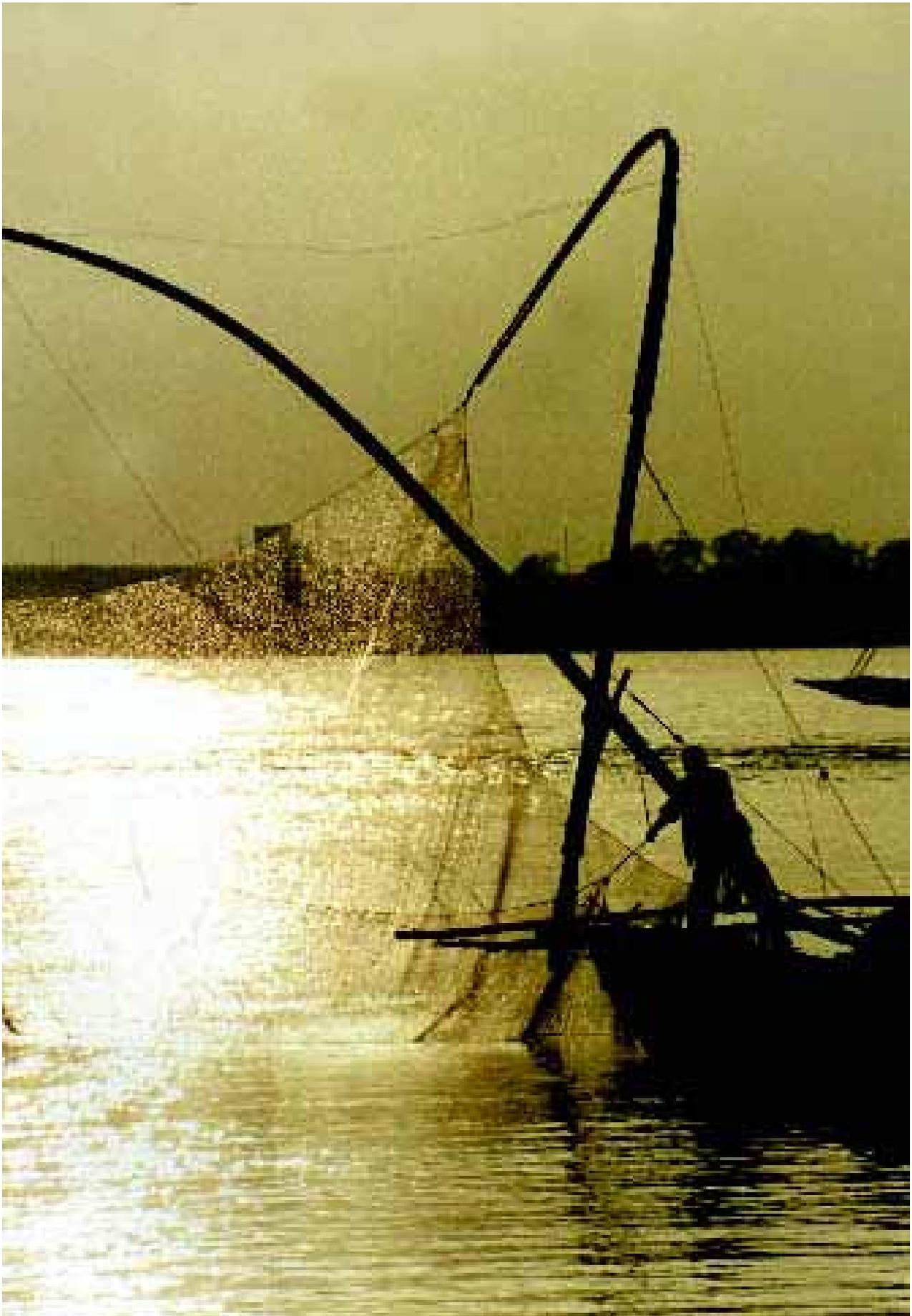
This report contains a compilation of the background documents that provided the Roundtable’s participants with food for thought and reflection. In addition, it presents the statements and speeches made during the Roundtable by the panelists and the heads of both organizations. The publication has been produced for the purpose and with the hope of furthering the dialogue on cultural diversity and biodiversity. We believe that the sustainability of both forms of diversity, which are closely inter-connected, is crucial for the very survival of humankind. Let us never forget that this interdependence is our past, our present and our future.



Koïchiro Matsuura
Director-General
UNESCO



Klaus Toepfer
Executive Director
UNEP



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I. CULTURAL DIVERSITY and BIODIVERSITY for SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Background documents

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000) called for “Respect for Nature” as one of the fundamental values for humanity. The Declaration urges: “Prudence must be shown in the management of all living species and natural resources, in accordance with the precepts of sustainable development. Only in this way can the immeasurable riches provided to us by nature be preserved and passed on to our descendants. The current unsustainable patterns of production and consumption must be changed in the interest of our future welfare and that of our descendants.” The Declaration calls for a new ethic of conservation and environmental stewardship.

Respect for biological diversity implies respect for human diversity. Both elements are fundamental to stability and durable peace on earth. The key to creating forms of development that are sustainable and in harmony with the needs and aspirations of each culture implies to abandon patterns that undermine the lives and perspectives of those cultures. Tolerance and reciprocal respect for cultural distinctiveness are indispensable conditions for increased mutual understanding among the world’s peoples and a recognition of our common humanity.

Cultural diversity—as a source of innovation, creativity and exchange—is the key to a mutually enriching future for humankind. Cultural diversity does not constitute an unchanging deposit that just needs preserving; it is a setting for continuous, unifying dialogue between all expressions of identity. What really needs to be asserted and preserved is acknowledgement of this daily dialogue as a founding principle. There is a reciprocal relationship between diversity and dialogue. The causal link that binds them cannot be severed without jeopardising development’s sustainability. This is the process that forges cultural diversity into a common language that the whole of humanity can speak and understand. Diversity of this kind, defined in this way, leads to the discovery of features that are common to all, since cultures - like individuals - encounter an irreplaceable element of their own humanity in others. Thus, cultural diversity unites individuals, societies and peoples.

Sustainable development requires that the moral vision of human beings be harnessed in as much harmony with local cultural aspirations as possible. Cultural diversity guarantees sustainability because it binds universal developmental goals to plausible and specific moral visions. Biological diversity provides an enabling environment for it.

TOWARDS A CULTURE OF SUSTAINABLE DIVERSITY

Background document by UNESCO

At the dawn of this new millennium, humankind has a historic opportunity, not to say responsibility, to make a case that is stronger than ever for a “culture of sustainability”, because cultural diversity and biodiversity are both values of and for the very long term. By focusing on “sustainable diversity”, we assume that human beings belong to the biological universe while, at the same time, they are the only species on earth that has the privilege of creating diverse forms of culture in time and space. Accordingly, they determine the earth’s whole future. This places a special obligation on them to ensure a proper balance between environmental health (especially biodiversity) and equitable development. Thus, cultural diversity should be regarded as a powerful guarantee of biodiversity.

The perceived separation between biological diversity and cultural diversity obscures the reality that both diversities are mutually reinforcing and mutually dependent. We cannot understand and conserve the natural environment unless we understand the human cultures that shape it. Each culture possesses its own sets of representations, knowledge and practices. Human action with respect to the environment, including management itself, is a social act and an expression of culture.

Development models produced since the 1970s have clearly failed, despite constant revision, to live up to the expectations they raised. The concept of sustainable development, based on a clear understanding of the role of biological and cultural diversity in maintaining ecological systems, cannot be viewed exclusively through an economic prism that puts technological progress to the fore. Globalization tends to create a context conducive to interdependence, often to the detriment of the least developed countries and without consideration for the diversity of cultures. The new challenges arising from globalization are making it increasingly important to redefine the relationship between culture and development or, to be more precise, between cultural diversity, biological diversity and development.

Cultural diversity—as a source of innovation, creativity and exchange—is humanity’s guarantee for a mutually enriching and sustainable future. As such, it ranks alongside biodiversity as a key means of securing the sustainability of every form or expression of development, tangible and intangible. Together, cultural diversity and biological diversity hold the key to ensuring resilience in both social

and ecological systems. The Seville Strategy for biosphere reserves shows the links between biodiversity and cultural diversity through sites which serve to test and demonstrate approaches to sustainable development.

Few people appreciate, however, the degree to which biological and cultural diversity are interconnected. Such an understanding extends well beyond the mere acknowledgment that people perceive and act upon nature in distinctive ways. There is a mutual dependency between biological diversity and culture. On the one hand, innumerable cultural practices depend upon specific elements of biodiversity for their continued existence and expression. On the other hand, significant ensembles of biological diversity are developed, maintained and managed by cultural groups, with language and knowledge as the media for their management.

Participation in the construction and creation of biological diversity takes many forms. The astounding diversity of domestic plant and animal varieties developed and conserved by human cultures around the world is one example of this creative force. In tropical agro-ecosystems, farmers commonly harbour scores of domestic plant species in their fields, including a profusion of varieties adapted to diverse environmental conditions and cultural needs. People have also created and continue to maintain cultural landscapes sustaining unique ecological and cultural values. The biologically diverse landscapes created and maintained by aboriginal Australians through their astute use of fire is but one well-documented example. Even the Amazonian rain forest, considered by many as the ultimate expression of pristine wilderness, has been shaped during millennia by the deliberate interventions of indigenous peoples.

What makes it so important for particular cultures and biological diversity to be sustained together? The answer is knowledge. It is through indigenous knowledge, rooted in local language, that a direct articulation is provided between cultural diversity and biological diversity. Cultures hold the knowledge about biological diversity from which it is born and nourished.

Cultural diversity does not constitute an inert reserve of curios in need of preservation alone. It is a site that induces continuously flowing and unifying dialogue open to each and every expression of identity. Acknowledgement of that daily dialogue as a founding principle is what needs to be asserted and preserved. Diversity and dialogue are mutually interrelated. The causal link that binds them cannot be severed without undermining sustainability. Nurturing that interrelationship makes a common language of cultural diversity that the whole

of humanity can speak and understand. Diversity defined in this way illuminates the elements of otherness that exist in the self, since cultures and human beings alike each encounter an irreplaceable part of their own humanity in others.

Cultural diversity, far from being divisive, unites individuals, societies and peoples, enabling them to share in a fund made up of the heritage of bygone ages, the experience of the present and the promise of the future. This shared fund, with all parties being both contributors and beneficiaries, is what underpins the sustainability of development for all.

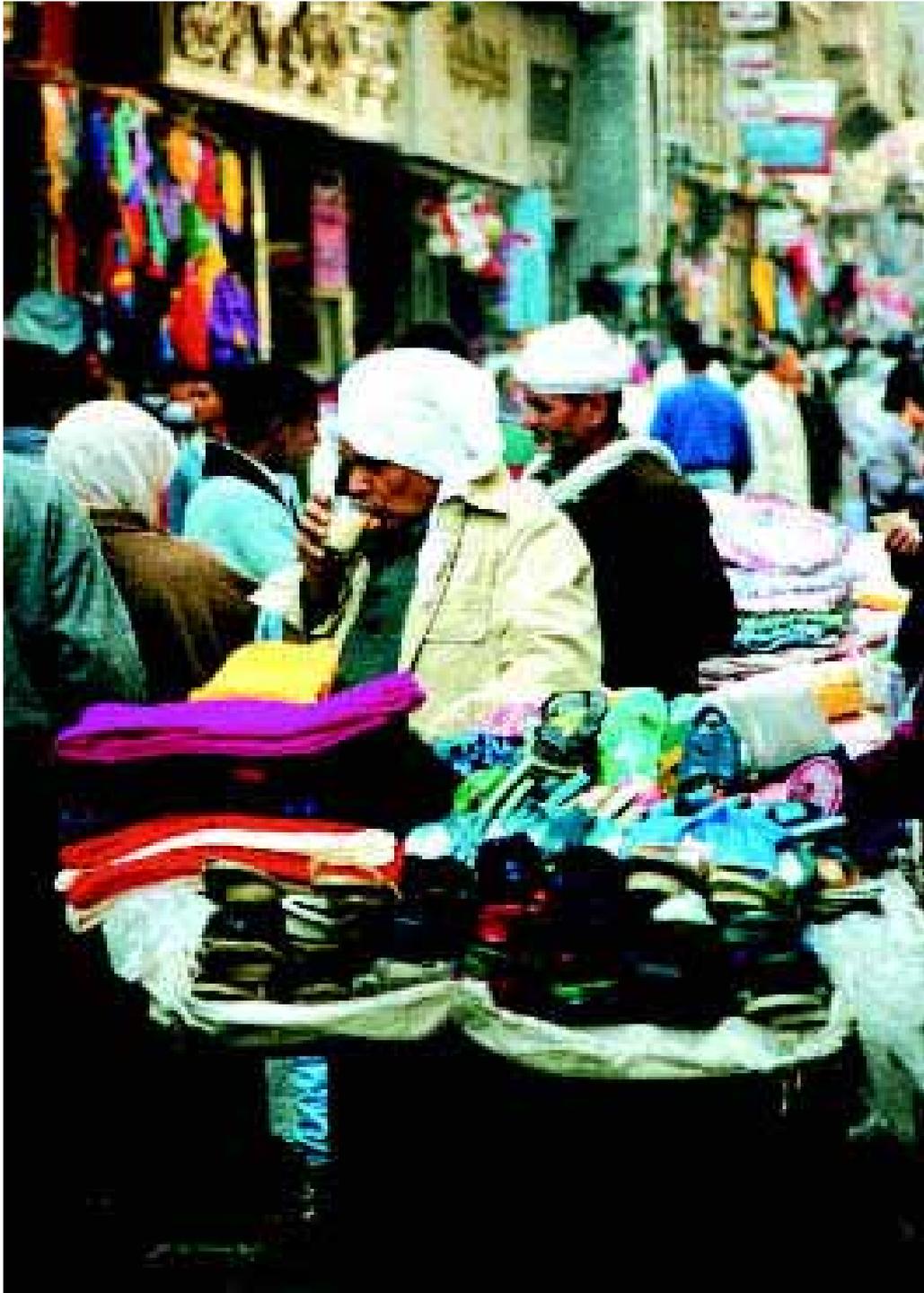
This is all the more time as globalization raises new questions and challenges: much more than an economic, it is also a cultural, technical and environmental phenomenon. Globalization poses the risk of an increased homogenization of both cultural and biological diversity. Political and legal measures need to be defined and implemented at the national and international levels so as to improve efforts to promote expression of the plurality of cultures, as well as to struggle against the loss of biological diversity.

Common actions for safeguarding both forms of diversity have to be undertaken, through a comprehensive approach based on the understanding that cultural and biological phenomena should not be dissociated, as is too often the case.

The Roundtable will set out to establish a new protocol designed to ensure that cultural diversity becomes a priority issue to be taken into account, on an equal footing to biodiversity, in all discussions relating to sustainable development. Previously, the notion of sustainable development embraced economic, environmental and social parameters, yet largely ignored those pertaining to cultural issues. A change in the strategy is clearly a must if the promotion of cultural diversity is to be restored to a central, rather than peripheral, place in the debate. This will mean having to identify the most effective means of fostering synergy between national priorities and the opportunities made possible by globalization.

The Roundtable could seek to achieve this aim by contemplating a variety of strategies geared to define key global policies, ranging from the institutional field to that of communication, with a view to fostering constructive dialogue at the national and international levels between the various partners from the world of politics, the public and private sectors and civil society.

UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) underscores the need for a stronger dialogue between cultural diversity and development. In this way, UNESCO could help foster such a dialogue because cultural diversity is, by definition, an enduring and central feature of its mandate, which is to ensure the preservation and "promotion of the fruitful diversity of cultures.



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DIVERSITY IN NATURE AND CULTURE

Background document by UNEP

In the history of Earth, the law of nature has led animals, plants and other forms of life to evolve into diversified species adapting themselves to unique environments and to become its integral part to form the ecosystems. Biological diversity represents this dynamic process spanning hundreds of millions of years, and has been the key to survival, sustainability and prosperity of those species and the ecosystems in which they flourish.

Human society has evolved in a process of adapting itself to such a diversified natural environment. Nature and natural resources have been the foundation of defining peoples' life, their society and civilizations. Various forms of cultures and institutions in human society - political, religious, social or economic - have been built upon services provided by a unique natural environment and natural resources arising from biological diversity.

Cultural diversity mirrors biological diversity. It is the concern of many people that biodiversity must be appreciated in terms of human diversity, since different cultures and people from different walks of life perceive and apprehend biodiversity in different ways due to their distinct heritage and experiences.

Diversity in humanity and diversity in nature are inseparable. They are assets of peoples and our planet for prosperity for present and future generations. These are essential for achieving sustainable development. However, they are now in imminent danger owing to present-day human activities.

As pointed out in the third Global Environment Outlook report (GEO-3), the most important driving forces of an unprecedented rate of change in global biodiversity are land conversion, climate change, pollution, unsustainable harvesting of natural resources and the introduction of alien species. The ultimate causes of biodiversity loss are human population growth together with unsustainable patterns of consumption, increasing production of waste and pollutants, urban development, international conflicts, and continuing inequities in the distribution of wealth and resources.

“Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity”, a UNEP report published in 1999, supplementing the Global Biodiversity Assessment, has alerted that human cultural diversity is also threatened on an unprecedented scale. Languages are

considered one of the major indicators of cultural diversity representing intellectual heritages and frameworks for each society's unique understanding of life. Yet, among the estimated 5,000-7,000 languages spoken today, nearly 2,500 languages are in immediate danger of extinction. The causes of loss of biodiversity are also major causes of depletion of the foundations of peoples' lives and their distinct cultures.

The Malmö Ministerial Declaration (2000) stressed that success in combating environmental degradation is dependent on the full participation of all actors in society, an aware and educated population, respect for ethical and spiritual values and cultural diversity, and the protection of indigenous knowledge. It is essential to understand and act upon the interlinkages between cultural diversity and biological diversity with a view to achieving sustainable development.

In human history we have repeatedly observed how dominant powers have been spreading their languages, cultures or commodities to wider areas in other countries, regions and continents, thus influencing the ways in which people lived and society was governed. The globalization of today is different due to its velocity and intensity supported by technological advancements in communications, transport, trade and various other dimensions of our age. Ensuring that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's people is the central challenge we face today. Globalization must be made fully inclusive and equitable. To achieve this, broad and sustained efforts are essential to create a shared future based upon our common humanity in all its diversity, as emphasized in the Millennium Declaration.

The problems we face today range from polluting poverty that drives a third of humanity to ravage environmental resources in a desperate search for livelihood to the pollution of the atmosphere that destroys forests and lakes - floods the world's coastlands, drastically alters agriculture, generates loss of biodiversity and adversely affects cultural diversity. Collapsing systems for the commodity exports of developing countries, protectionism in trade, unequal access to technology are all part of the existing desperate problems. Some of the social and economic repercussions of environmental deterioration affecting the poor include unsafe water and poor sanitation causing diseases and death of millions of people and children in developing countries, health-threatening levels of pollution in urban environment and damage from natural disasters. The loss of healthy environmental systems and biological diversity is the ultimate cause.

It is estimated that 40 per cent of the global economy is based on biological products and processes. Some of the least developed countries and areas hold the majority of the world's biodiversity with rich and diversified cultures, which are essential for the sustenance of humankind. The poor and the most vulnerable in such societies are often the immediate beneficiaries of biological diversity. Endeavours to eradicate poverty should have a focus on protecting biological bases to support life of the poor and provide them with opportunities for improving their welfare, while preserving their cultural identity and diversity as an integral aspect.

There are 350 million indigenous people in the world, living in over 70 countries. Of the 6,000 estimated cultures in the world, 4,500 are indigenous. Many of them live in areas of high biological diversity. Over the course of their history, indigenous peoples have developed lifestyles and cultures which are intricately tied to nature. Their value and belief systems have evolved to enable them to respect and live in harmony with nature, conserving the diversity of life upon which they depend. The species-diverse environments in which indigenous peoples live have shaped their productive activities and spiritual values. Indigenous peoples have utilized and conserved the vast diversity of genes, species and ecosystems since the dawn of time.

The way of life of most indigenous peoples depends on biological diversity. Cultural and religious beliefs and traditional spiritual values often serve to prevent overexploitation of resources and sustain the systems in which indigenous societies live for their own benefit and that of future generations. The concept of the sustainable use of biological diversity, one of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, is inherent in the value systems of indigenous and traditional societies.

To change the current unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, it is important that all the values and services contributing to the sustainability and welfare of peoples and the planet are accounted for, including aspects of cultural and biological diversity.

As a first step, there should be the recognition that most of the problems of loss of biological diversity, weakening of cultural diversity and the poverty phenomenon, which have been dealt with separately, are in fact closely connected and relevant to sustainable development and therefore require a holistic and more comprehensive approach for action at all levels. Specific strategies should therefore be identified and concrete actions agreed upon. Consideration might

be given to a process of policy dialogue, followed by the development and eventual implementation of policy frameworks, action plans and legal instruments.

We also need to identify, and put into practice, ways and means to promote a new ethic of conservation and environmental stewardship, as emphasized in the UN Millennium Declaration. Promotion of the relevant existing instruments, such as the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and the Earth Charter, might be useful to initiate the process of a new ethic.



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DIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

by Arjun Appadurai

PREAMBLE

Sustainable development requires that the moral vision of human beings be harnessed in as much harmony with local cultural aspirations as possible. Cultural diversity guarantees sustainability because it binds universal developmental goals to plausible and specific moral visions. Biodiversity, in the long run, also relies on the maximum diversity of such moral visions, since, by definition, biodiversity requires the proliferation and protection of many ecological regimes and environmental balances. Human beings are the key movers in such balances, and if their diversity is gradually reduced, so is the archive of moral visions linking moral and material well-being. Thus cultural diversity is a powerful guarantee of biodiversity. Together, these two kinds of diversity are the best counterpoint to the ideological and technological uniformity that might result if market-driven globalization is allowed to run its own course.

DIVERSITY AND DEVELOPMENT

Cultural diversity is more than the fact of cultural difference. It is a value which recognizes that differences in human societies are parts of systems and relationships. Cultural diversity is the value through which differences are mutually related and reciprocally supportive. Furthermore, cultural diversity is a value which expresses and implies other, even more fundamental values. These fundamental values are those of creativity, dignity and community. UNESCO places a non-negotiable value upon cultural diversity because of its intimate link to this entire constellation of values. And without these values, no vision of development can be sustainable, since it will not rest on the moral commitment of the actors and subjects of development, who belong to particular cultural communities.

ELEMENTS OF A NEW FRAMEWORK

There is a broad recognition today of the mutuality between biodiversity and cultural diversity. But this intuitive understanding has not been spelled out as a systematic framework for relating these two forms of diversity in a broader vision of sustainable development. To build such a framework requires that we address the following fundamental issues, each of which leads to some key questions:

I. **POVERTY AND DIVERSITY:** Since human beings belong to the biological universe but are often in a position to determine its future, they have a special obligation to assure that a proper balance is maintained between environmental health (especially biodiversity) and equitable development. In the era where markets and their logic seem to dominate global relationships, environmental concerns, market concerns and development concerns seem to be in constant tension with each other. In many parts of the world, there is a growing gap between environmental values, which are seen as middle-class or even elite values, and the needs of the world's poor for shelter, food and employment. For example, the efforts in India's West Coast to preserve a carefully regulated environmental zone along the coast is being contested by groups of urban poor who are desperate for spaces in which to construct secure housing.

- Can the globalization of markets be respected while insisting on other equities, such as those of poverty-reduction and environmental safety?

II. **DIVERSE VISIONS OF DEVELOPMENT:** Cultural diversity is the critical link between the intangible and the tangible dimensions of development. Tangible development can be measured in terms of human health, economic capabilities, commodity flows and physical guarantees of security and productivity. Intangible development consists of the spirit of participation, the enthusiasm of empowerment, the joys of recognition and the pleasures of aspiration. Although these intangible measures of development may seem obvious, overlooking them has often created massive failures in the worldwide effort to develop poorer economies and transfer life-sustaining technologies.

Cultural diversity provides the key link between these two crucial dimensions of development, themselves fundamentally indivisible, by guaranteeing the survival of multiple visions of the good life, and of a large range of concrete ties between material and moral visions of well-being. Many development projects have failed because they have failed to make a persuasive link between these dimensions, or have tried to impose a single vision of human betterment and material well-being. Being an open archive of visions of the good life, and also a natural source of motivation and commitment, cultural diversity is more than ornamental. It is a renewable resource for linking cultural values and material well-being.

- What national and global policies can assure the renewability of cultural diversity as a resource for sustainable development?

III. **MARKETS VERSUS COSMOLOGIES?** The main arguments for the importance of bio-diversity are grounded in the reality that the earth does not have an infinite capacity for being abused and that the global commons depend on the preservation and nurture of biodiversity, at all environmental scales. Though many long-term factors have contributed to the environmental degradation of the planet and the atmosphere, the historical trend towards more powerful extractive technologies, more effective world-wide market integration, and more profit-oriented forms of market organization has generally sacrificed long-term productivity and equity for short-term gains for specific populations.

There is also a tendency for some cultures and societies to emerge as winners in the long-term history of technological change, and for others to become weak or marginal. The indigenous populations of many parts of the world have been shown to be brilliant trustees of the biodiversity of their own environments. Indigenous populations have also developed complex cosmologies in which the interdependence of man and nature have been fundamental values and balance and harmony have been stressed over growth and innovation.

- Can indigenous populations be encouraged to enter the global market place on terms which do not require them to sacrifice their inherently eco-friendly cosmologies?

IV. **DIVERSITY FOR THE LONG RUN:** The era of globalization poses common challenges to biodiversity and to cultural diversity, as well as to the special relationship between them. The growing autonomy of market processes (in combination with high-impact technologies) produces unforeseen risks to biodiversity and environmental safety. At the same time, globalization in its culturally most marketized forms threatens to erode and diminish more localized and historically vulnerable cultural forms, both within and across societies.

In the period since the birth of UNESCO, and especially since the rapid growth of global markets, cross-border economic flows and deep technological interdependence (which we sometimes call globalization), we have also come to see that cultural diversity is fundamentally connected to questions of law, ethics and freedom. The forces of global consumerism make it difficult for many societies to maintain their cultural dignity, as products, slogans and images of glamour, wealth and modernity flood in from outside sources. Global financial markets place heavy pressure on national governments to sacrifice national cultural priorities in favour of global competitive trends. And as tourism becomes a vital source of income for many poorer countries, many living cultures are being forced

to redesign themselves as Disneyland for the entertainment of visitors instead of exploring their own forms of cultural creativity. Finally, as migrants, refugees and other strangers come to be viewed as threats to economic stability, there is a growing tendency to demonize cultural minorities and to substitute ethnic purity for cultural diversity, often violently.

This shrinkage of the space for cultural creativity, dignity and innovation has dangerous implications for biodiversity as well. In both cases, a blind and monotheistic attachment to market principles tends to marginalize long-term values. Cultural diversity and biodiversity are both values of and for the long run. And cultural diversity guarantees the maximum range of visions of the good life within which relationships to nature can also be varied, specific, local and self-sustaining.

- What are the basic principles of a world-wide protocol for sustainable development in which long-run values (which inherently support diversity, both cultural and biological) are likely to determine short-term developmental goals rather than vice versa?



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KEY ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

As distributed in advance to the participants in preparation for the panel discussions.

1. Aggravation of poverty and loss of biodiversity and cultural impoverishment are interrelated.

- How can we alleviate poverty while promoting both biological diversity and cultural diversity?
- How can cultural diversity become an active resource in the struggle against poverty?

2. Is globalization a threat to or an opportunity for promoting cultural and biological diversity for sustainable development?

- Does globalization enhance or diminish the chances for a flourishing cultural diversity and its corollary, the dialogue among cultures and civilizations?
- What political and legal measures need to be taken at the national and international levels so as to improve efforts to promote cultural diversity and to protect biodiversity?

3. Unsustainable consumption and production patterns are causing loss of biodiversity and cultural diversity.

- How can we make consumption and production patterns consistent with the promotion of cultural and biological diversity?
- How can we promote cultural diversity and biodiversity without having recourse to unsustainable production and consumption patterns?

4. There is a growing awareness of the need to pay attention to threats, which may be posed by globalization to cultural diversity and traditional knowledge, in particular those of indigenous and local communities.

- Which measures should be taken to protect traditional knowledge of indigenous and local communities in the face of globalization?
- How can indigenous populations be encouraged to enter the global market without sacrificing their traditional eco-friendly sustainable lifestyles and value systems?

5. There is sometimes a perception that cultural intolerance and the violations of human rights is a result of promoting cultural diversity.

- Which measures should be taken to promote cultural diversity so as to reinforce peace and secure the respect of human rights?
- Which measures should be taken to encourage genuine cultural diversity while discouraging all forms of cultural intolerance, repression or homogenization?

6. Is there a need for an internationally agreed framework, such as a code of ethics or conduct, a declaration, a plan of action or legal instruments, for promoting cultural and biological diversity for sustainable development?

II. ROUNDTABLE PRESENTATIONS

1. Opening remarks by Koïchiro MATSUURA

Director-General of UNESCO

Mr. President of the French Republic,
Mr. President of the Republic of Mozambique,
Mr. Executive Director of UNEP and Dear Colleague,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Johannesburg Summit constitutes a major challenge for humanity because it acknowledges the interdependence of many critical factors in the evolution of our planet. And this is a great step forward. The interconnections between the economic, ecological and social spheres are in this way recognized and give us grounds for believing that a sustainable, viable and equitable development is possible.



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“Cultural diversity is based on the conviction that each people has a unique message to deliver to the world and that each people can enrich humanity by contributing its share of beauty and truth”. Those were your own words, Mr President Chirac, one year ago at UNESCO. This Roundtable – which you have agreed to chair, Mr President Chirac – highlights, in its way, the same issue. UNESCO’s intention is thereby to stress that biodiversity and cultural diversity are two prerequisites for sustainable development. Failure to recognize this reality would entail a deadly risk for humanity and the planet.

The goal is to make people understand that culture should not be regarded as a mere appendage, as distinct from the supposedly necessary biological aspect. Biological diversity and cultural diversity mutually reinforce one another and are profoundly interdependent. Human action upon the environment, including its management, is a social act and a cultural expression.

How then can we understand and preserve the natural environment without taking into account the human cultures that have shaped it since the dawn of time? How, conversely, can we understand cultural diversity without considering the natural environment within which it develops?

Cultural diversity and biodiversity together hold the key to the sustainability of our ecosystem – a precondition for all sustainable development. This is the message contained in the Seville Strategy for biosphere reserves, which seeks to preserve biological and cultural diversity through sites serving as testing grounds and models for sustainable development.

“It is in our interest as human beings not only to value our diversity, but also to use it to face the challenges we have today.” These words, Mr President Chissano, were spoken by you in your brilliant speech on the eve of the Millennium Summit in New York. And you are right. Cultural diversity, because it is a source of innovation, creativity and exchanges, is the guarantee not just of mutual enrichment but also of a viable future for humanity.

In the age of globalization, we cannot leave it to economic logic alone to take account of the human and social challenges of diversity, whether biological or cultural. States have an essential responsibility in this regard. It is for them in particular to take steps to foster or create the conditions favourable to the full expression of this diversity.

In adopting the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity by acclamation on 2 November 2001, the Member States of UNESCO made a highly symbolic gesture. They expressed not just their concern about the dangers of impoverishment inherent in globalization but also their commitment to address the situation by underwriting the very principle of diversity. They also recognized that cultural diversity is a living process that calls for the active involvement of individuals and the energetic support of institutions. In other words, cultural diversity – in the sense in which it is understood by UNESCO – is far from being a showcase of curiosities, consisting of objects that simply need placing behind glass.

For UNESCO, protecting the tangible and intangible cultural heritage means much more than ensuring the survival of cultural diversity: it means ensuring its very capacity for renewal. It is therefore especially fitting that 2002 should have been designated by the United Nations as the Year for Cultural Heritage, thereby making a very real link with the Declaration.

However, we still too often associate the heritage with ancient ruins, whereas it assumes very varied forms, many of them intangible in character. This is especially true in many developing countries. Because the intangible heritage is still far too often neglected in preservation policies, even though it constitutes a key component of cultural diversity, UNESCO is actively working for its preservation. It will organize in a few days' time in Istanbul, Turkey, a Roundtable of ministers of culture on this theme. Some 60 ministers have – to my great pleasure – already confirmed their participation, further demonstrating that the momentum imparted last year by the Declaration has not slackened.

Far from being a source of division, cultural diversity unites individuals, society and peoples, offering them a shared fund of expressions of the immemorial heritage, living experiences and promises for the future. The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity counters the apocalyptic vision of a “clash of civilizations” and inward-looking fundamentalist creeds with the prospect of a world that is more open, more creative and more democratic. For, Lévi-Strauss has written, “diversity is less a function of the isolation of groups than of the relationships that bind them together”.

UNESCO, it will be clear, is resolutely committed to the “culture of sustainability”, since cultural diversity and biodiversity are both values relevant to the very long term. Thank you.

2. Speeches and statements

H.E. Mr. Jacques CHIRAC

President of the Republic of France

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you to this Roundtable on cultural diversity and biodiversity organized with UNESCO at the initiative of the United Nations Environment Programme and France.

Sustainable development is not just a technical and economic issue. It is a response to the worldwide ecological and social crisis. It is an ethical vision, confronting us with the question of the rights and duties of humankind towards nature and creation.

The time has come to supplement our political and economic decisions with a dialogue among cultures and an in-depth discussion about the nature of the challenge we face. I, for my part, am sustained by four convictions.

First, that in order to thrive, every human group must have confidence in its cultural identity.

Second, that there will never be humanized and controlled globalization without respect for the diversity of cultures and languages. There is nothing more foreign to the human spirit than evolution towards a uniform civilization, just as there is nothing more hostile to the movement of life than a reduction in biodiversity.

Third, that in parallel with globalization there must be a drive for dialogue among cultures. This dialogue is needed for the sake of peace, because it forestalls identity polarization and fosters the respect which the world's cultures owe to each other.

Fourth, that none of us alone has the solution to the complex problems that we face. We must exchange and share experience and ways of thinking as we move forward.

How, for example, can environmental ethics be built without taking into account not just the progress made in science but also that made in ideas on all

continents; without taking advantage of the philosophies and values bequeathed to us by, for example, the world's great religions?

How can the gap between modern man and nature be narrowed without respecting indigenous peoples and respecting their place in the world, so that the culture, the knowledge and the skills they have acquired over the millennia can enlighten us?

How can a global ethics be built without rehabilitating the oral traditions of Africa, Asia and Oceania?

Despite the enormous promise it holds out, globalization threatens diversity. As it is developing today, globalization is driven primarily by the headlong progress in virtual technologies which is altering our relationship with tangible reality. It is based on mass consumption and its underlying thrust is towards standardization of products, norms and languages. It is grounded in trade and tends to reduce everything to marketable goods. We must take care that it does not get out of control and become a force without values, with its own momentum its only goal.

If we neglect to regulate globalization with laws, it will end up impoverishing mankind.

One response which France proposes is for the international community to adopt a world convention on cultural diversity. This would be the counterpart to the Convention on Biological Diversity. It would lend the weight of international law to the principles couched in the declaration just adopted by UNESCO.

A convention of this sort would reflect the universal values which form our common heritage. These values are well-known - those of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the covenants and treaties derived from it; those recognizing the sacred nature of humankind and of life, which all human activity has a categorical imperative to respect.

A convention of this sort would affirm that cultural diversity is part of the common human heritage, that it is a right that every state may exercise. It would affirm the equal dignity of all human cultures.

A convention of this sort would naturally have to spell out the rights and duties of states in this field:

- Respect for linguistic pluralism and mobilization to halt the extinction of languages in the world
- it is estimated that at the current pace, half of them will disappear within fifty years. This is an incalculable loss.
- Affirmation of the right of states to support creative activity through appropriate pro-active policies and actions.
- Affirmation of the exceptional nature of cultural goods, which are not goods like others and whose specificity must be respected.
- Recognition of the need for a dialogue of cultures to enable us to move toward a more peaceful world and work together to find solutions to the problems of our time.
- Development of procedures for international cooperation to help countries preserve their tangible and intangible heritage and defend their creative cultural works.

UNESCO should be given responsibility for this convention. This will enable the organization to play its part in establishing the laws that must govern globalization. Together with her partners concerned, first and foremost with her French-speaking partners, France will be presenting a proposal in the coming months.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Roundtable that we form illustrates the importance of our debate. I am happy that Heads of State and Government and Ministers from all continents have come. Their presence here bears witness to the fact that our concern is widely shared.

I am happy that distinguished figures who are emblematic of the most promising aspects of today's world have joined us. I would also mention in particular my friend Rigoberta Menchú, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate, to whom the renaissance of Amerindian peoples and civilizations owes so much. I would also like to mention the great African writer and winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, Wole Soyinka.

Thanks to you, ethics and the quest for values will play a crucial role in our discussions. Thanks to you, warmth and openness will not be absent from our summit. Thanks to you, culture will gradually take its place as the fourth pillar of sustainable development alongside economics, the environment and social concerns.

H.E. Mr. Joaquim CHISSANO

President of the Republic of Mozambique

The inclusion of the issues of biodiversity, cultural diversity and ethics is a clear indication of their importance and their link to the sustainable continuation of Humanity through the global fight against poverty. A positive and creative interaction between biodiversity, cultural diversity and ethics is an imperative for all societies. Peoples have always existed in a cultural diversity and have known how to use natural resources available in their environment in a sustainable manner. Valuable knowledge has been acquired and practical rules institutionalized and practised throughout history. Man is an integral part of nature and must therefore always consider the destruction of nature as an act of self-destruction.

In the preservation of the environment, there are two main schools of thought on society's ethical values. The first is based on written rules, while the second is based on the spoken word. The second school of thought prevails in the majority of less developed countries, such as Mozambique, and hinges on administrative and management systems whose principles are perpetuated and developed through oral transmission, from one generation to another. This form of education is based on myths, rituals, taboos and other forms of beliefs. Nevertheless, it has power to create cohesion among individuals, develop a culture of protection of ecosystems and in turn, perpetuation of cultures, moral and ethical values. Hence, for instance, the respect given to a large number of sacred forests whose importance lies largely in the need to preserve water resources, rare fauna and flora, as well as species of great environmental and medicinal value.

In the recent past, national governments and international agencies have excessively favoured modern systems for managing natural resources to the detriment of indigenous knowledge, which is a guarantor of the survival of a large part of the rural population.

In the case of Mozambique, about 80 per cent of the population lives and operates by customary rules. Aimed at reaching all social segments, the policy of the Government of Mozambique tends to promote the respect of traditions, while encouraging public and private institutions to carry out socio-cultural studies of local histories including traditional political systems and cultural traditions linked to the preservation of the environment, the production and distribution of wealth. Simultaneously the Government encourages the communities themselves to give prominence to positive traditions.

In this regard, international agencies should continue and step up the mobilization of financial support for Governments to achieve this objective without disregarding the socio-cultural dimension in policy definition and implementation of development projects.

Development must be seen as an attainment of both the material and spiritual well-being of man. Cultural diversity is not compatible with the existence of a rigid or unique model of development. It has to take into consideration the cultural specificity of each people or community. Thus, besides material aspects, ethical and spiritual values must be taken into account for development programmes to be successful. The achievement of this goal presupposes the involvement of communities as active agents since the community is the main focus of development.

In Mozambique, there are ongoing efforts aimed at bringing together researchers, legislators and decision makers with the involvement of communities in order to harmonize the modern judicial system with the traditional systems for the sustainable use of resources. The information programmes and public forums organized on legal issues such as land law, environment law and law of cultural heritage are some of the major indicators in this exercise. The use, promotion and preservation of national languages are fundamental instruments for highlighting our culture that is both multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic. The Government of Mozambique, in partnership with private institutions, non-governmental organizations and religious organizations encourages the use of national languages in teaching and disseminating information on civic and environmental education as well as in fighting HIV/AIDS.

The national and community radio stations allocate special slots in their programmes to the use of national languages. Conditions are being created to ensure that educational initiation is conducted in local languages as an effort to fight illiteracy.

Globalization is a process that has been in place since human societies encountered each other. In the interaction of societies, it has to be assumed that there are no inferior or superior cultures and that all civilizations together make up humanity.

In this process, the dynamics of globalization should stimulate the promotion of cultural and ethical systems while highlighting and stimulating the preservation of indigenous knowledge systems. For example, modern communication

technologies for registration and conservation must be used to improve the collection, preservation and dissemination techniques of the communities' cultural values.

Many initiatives and policies have been proposed in various parts of the world with the objective of enhancing the value of nature. Although, on one hand, we encourage initiatives aimed at enhancing the value of nature, we also encourage on the other, practices contrary to these initiatives. There are various examples of acts of voluntary violation of these initiatives motivated by a desire for immediate economic gains, such as the reckless search for profits, coupled on the other hand with damaging actions motivated by poverty. Among the latter group are such examples as uncontrolled bush fires resulting from subsistence agricultural practices.

In order to further enhance the values of nature, we must strengthen environmental legislation and its monitoring. It is important to strengthen our environmental education programmes and to create technological alternatives such as effective agricultural inputs.

In order to achieve the desired objectives, institutions such as the Special Environment Commissions on Ethics and Cultural Diversity should play a more relevant role. Their mission should be strengthened, integrating such aspects as:

- Coordination, monitoring and assessment of the recommendations from the Convention on Biological Diversity;
- Mobilization of financial resources, definition of working methods in an environmental framework and setting up general rules of conduct; and
- The creation of a database on cultural aspects of the environment.

Thank you very much for your attention.



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H.E. Ms. Helen CLARK
Prime Minister of New Zealand

Thank you Dr. Töpfer, Mr. Matsuura, President Chirac, distinguished panellists, ladies and gentlemen.

In my five minutes, I would like to touch briefly on three subjects: firstly restating the importance of biodiversity in principle; secondly, linking it to cultural diversity; and thirdly, looking at the impact of globalization on cultural diversity. I would like to pick up and support the concept which President Chirac has floated here on a Global Convention on Culture. I believe that he has invented for us a new concept: that of taking the triple bottom line into the quadruple bottom line by adding culture to the environmental, economic, and social aspects of sustainability.

Firstly, in briefly restating the importance of biodiversity, I note that it has intrinsic value. Ecosystems, as we know, are most stable and most successful when they are highly diverse. They are uniquely adapted to the place in which they exist. By illustration, if we compare the indigenous forest with monocultural reproduction forest, the latter is so much more vulnerable to disease. The natural forest has its own value. Alter one of the components and you begin to alter and endanger the ecosystem.

So I am stating strongly the principle of biodiversity having intrinsic value. But for those who are not persuaded of that, there is also the issue of the utilitarian value of maintaining wide biological diversity. Ten of the twenty-five most important drugs that we use world-wide today derive from natural resources. Who knows what other answers there are in the diverse natural environment to the problems humankind has? Preserving a range of species keeps open options for humanity to draw knowledge from that.

Secondly, I comment on the link of biodiversity to cultural diversity. I understand that the inspiration for this panel on this topic comes from Dr Töpfer, with whom I had a very stimulating conversation in New Zealand in July last year about the link between cultural diversity and biodiversity. So many cultural practices evolve from the association with the natural environment within which people live. If the natural environment is changed or lost, first, the cultural knowledge based on it is lost, and then the cultural practices disappear as well. Indigenous peoples' cultures obviously come under enormous pressure from

biodiversity loss. As the forest recedes, the small indigenous cultures whose ways of life derive from the forest, whether in the Amazon, Bolivia or Papua, are lost with the forest. Their language and all aspects of their culture are lost.

Thirdly, I want to comment on the impact of globalization on cultural and biodiversity. Indigenous cultures are affected by both the loss of biodiversity and the impact of globalization. We know that as powerful a nation as France often expresses its concern that its language and its cultural identity comes under pressure from globalization. How much greater then are the pressures on small indigenous cultures or the cultures of small nations as the impact of the dominant media and the dominant languages in business and culture serve to crowd out other languages and culture.

In my own country, there are serious attempts to revive the use of the indigenous language of Maori. It began with the response from the people themselves in 1979, recognising that generations were growing up not speaking the language of their forefathers as their first language. The revival began with small children's language nests. Today, we have more than 600 of these nests supported by the state, to ensure the revival of the language from the earliest age. Promotion of the language has also spread to the school system, based on teaching in the medium of Maori.

Globalization makes it difficult also for small nations like New Zealand to maintain their identity. We are not just a suburb of London or of Los Angeles. We have had a distinctive New Zealand way of life and culture. But again, I stress that when dominant media are expressing the values and the life styles of the dominant cultures and countries, the small countries like our own feel their culture under threat.

So we have to take particular steps to promote our own culture to our own people. One of those steps is to establish a charter for public television. In New Zealand, public television does not just compete with commercial television but rather has a responsibility to reflect New Zealand values, New Zealand heritage, New Zealand art forms, and New Zealand perspectives. Similarly, we have supported a quota on radio for New Zealand music. Even that is made difficult by the fact that earlier, a government of New Zealand signed up to the GATT without entering a reservation for culture. So now to enforce such a quota by law would be likely to infringe our WTO obligations.

We aim to support our creative people in the arts who express the uniqueness of our nation. Among the most exciting developments in our culture are transformational art forms deriving from both indigenous culture and from settler culture which make up our country today. We see specific composition, for example for a classical music orchestra playing alongside traditional Maori performing arts. We see the New Zealand classical ballet combining its programme with a Maori performing art form. We see drama written to tell Maori perspectives and stories. There is contemporary dance expressing the specific perspectives of Maori and Pacific peoples in New Zealand.

So I come back to the point Mr. Chirac made about the importance of culture. I think we do need to turn our attention as a global community to adding that fourth pillar, the cultural, alongside the environmental, the economic, and the social in our definition of sustainability. Because what makes our planet interesting, what makes us diverse, is not only the biological or social. It is also the distinctively cultural, and once lost, it is very difficult to recreate.

Thank you for your attention.



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H.E. Dr. Massoumeh EBTEKAR
Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and
Head of the Department of the Environment

In the Name of Allah
Mr. President, Excellencies,

I would first like to thank UNEP and UNESCO for organizing this joint initiative. Allow me to also express the profound hope that this effort would bear fruit for the betterment of all life.

Diversity is an invaluable character of our world that we must cherish. God's creation is profound in diversity, with colorful shades and varieties. This has given every genus, every species, and every creature its unique identity. The complex structure and formulation of genetic code has been devised so as to accommodate a vast variety of living forms and to enrich the diversity of life.

This same principle applies to the spirit and human nature, human societies and to cultures and civilizations. Human beings have been created with a large range of differences even though they harbor common traits, common aspirations and values. They are unique and variegated in their personality though they are one in the spirit of God which has been bestowed upon them.

This variance characterizes the sophistication of life and the complexity that has developed through the ages resulting in a breathtaking biodiversity in ecosystems and a marvelous social and cultural variety among human societies. While academia has recognized and appreciated these fundamental social and cultural differences, in the social and political spheres this phenomenon has usually been considered a potential threat to the status quo or at least an enormous inconvenience to the same.

Generally, diversity has been an obstacle for autocratic control, for colonial domination and for cultural hegemony. In cultural terms, it provides an opportunity for choice from among a genuine range of alternatives. It creates social space for identity and dignity to emerge. In political terms, diversity offers an authentic democratic approach, a chance for civil society and minorities to take part in decision making.

At the global level, diversity supports a multilateral approach and provides the occasion for every stakeholder to be involved in a democratic process. In

religious terms, diversity is a God given blessing. The Holy Qur'an defines it as a means of cognition and interaction thus that differences in race, sex and ethnicity do not imply superiority or inferiority. The Qur'an stipulates that the appellations, righteous and pious, apply to those who are dignified in God's sight and this has nothing to do with group identity.

Globalization has created unevenly distributed challenges and opportunities in today's world. Yet, this phenomenon seems an opportunity if it creates a forum for constructive discourse, for broad visioned learning and appreciation of differences, as the Qur'an implies. In this context, it would foster and create knowledge in its most genuine form. Unfortunately, this positive aspect of diversity is often threatened, weakened and undermined as an obstacle to unilateral domination.

Diversity is imperiled when a ubiquitous world media only reflects different colors of one dominant culture characterized by unadulterated commodification. Even though the media are quite numerous, they in fact seem totally mesmerized by one certain style and perception.

The tendency to summarize news and information into sound bytes, to oversimplify and generalize and to make facile extrapolations of complex events invariably sacrifices the diversity of viewpoints and weakens the weight of the message. Can we support globalization when it entails a monopoly of trade, hegemony in culture and a unilateral and authoritarian approach in world politics?

In order to appreciate and recognize the inherent value of diversity, we need to uphold the value of life in all forms, as a divine gift embodied in the birth that every life form knows. In practice we have devalued life in policies like hunting and poaching in the realm of biodiversity. We have undermined the worth of human life by tolerating crimes and atrocities against humanity that the global community has failed to step. A flagrant case in point continues on a daily basis against the oppressed Palestinian nation.

Can we really restore the sanctity and sublime value of life and establish a just system of global governance to protect life systems and restore responsible practices among societies and members of the global community without changing our basic perceptions and worldviews? One should remember that the destruction of nature and our biodiversity will not only ecologically affect the quality of human life on earth but the cultural and educational implications of environmentally unfriendly policies are also immense and literally breath-taking.

We also need to understand that in valuing cultural diversity, upholding and recognizing the importance of human dignity is essential. How is it possible that humans are consistently subjected to degrading circumstances? Women and men are regularly commodified and lowered to the status of freely traded commercial items. All moral and ethical norms are transgressed in the name of entertainment, culture and media.

Can the value neutral approach that claimed to emancipate humans from the chains of ethical and religious norms provide any shelter from the scourges of the modern mafia? They rule the minds of the youth through the decadent messages disseminated through the global satellite media. In the process our youth are not only robbed of their souls and dignity but also market the goods and commodities that destroy them free of charge—while they strengthen this insidious economic cycle in the bargain.

The free market approach in the film and cinema industry and now the internet has given the upper hand to the business sector to shape and channel the culture, spirit, and lifestyle of individuals and societies to the benefit of their market share and profits. How long will it take for the corporate sector to learn responsible behaviour and to disseminate proper messages?

Religions constitute an integral part of cultures and civilizations. Until recent times, international instruments took a value neutral approach, overlooked religious convictions and invoked a non-judgmental orientation that deleted ethics and moral responsibility from any global agenda. The role of religion in promoting responsible behaviour, in maintaining an ethical milieu, in encouraging a self-discipline that overcomes the urge of immediate enjoyment and self-interest for the sake of some long term and comprehensive benefit for humanity cannot and should not be underestimated.

Divine religions promote the concept of accountability and responsibility vis-a-vis one's actions and achievements: life is a contest in which all will be judged against their intentions and actions. Belief in ultimate justice and the Hereafter ensures the ethical approach that would take into account the long-term consequences of action and practice.

Unsustainable trends are the result of a multitude of factors, including short term decisions which undermine long term interests such as natural resource management practices, or encourages unsustainable consumption patterns and lifestyles that are exerting a heavy burden on the earth's resources. The ethical

approach that is lacking in today's world is a necessary element to consider when dealing with global matters.

Is there any doubt that a new consciousness is emerging based on the awareness of the human race but also inspired by the painful losses and shortcomings that have wounded the heart of humanity? This consciousness needs a strong spiritual and moral basis.

The challenges we face in dealing with conflicts can be managed only through dialogue and reconciliation. The challenges between the East and West, between religion and secularism, between violence and tolerance, between modernity and tradition are genuine challenges that may constitute or lead to conflict if not properly addressed. Developing nations are not content with the current economic order and the trend of unfulfilled promises. Developed societies may not be able to meet the future needs and expectations of their peoples and youth.

Excellencies,

President Seyyed Mohammad Khatami made a turning point by submitting the idea of Dialogue Among Civilizations and marking the year 2001, as the year for such dialogue, thereby striking a warmly welcomed note in a world torn by conflicts between modernity and tradition, between heart and mind. Ironically, terrorism and militarism shook the world in that same year—a clear indicator of how essential the concept truly is.

President Khatami has also recently called for a Coalition for Peace. Dialogue and peace are prerequisites for sustainability and development. If any framework on sustainable diversity is to be achieved, it should be based on dialogue, understanding and promotion of a coalition for peace. Dialogue is in a sense an appreciation of diversity in an international atmosphere being increasingly defined by monopolization.

The concept of Dialogue Among Civilizations is very relevant in the current global atmosphere which has led many to believe in the need for a revision of the existing global order and the basic thinking which has led us to where we are today. To cherish diversity and tolerance and promote peace and understanding at the global level we also need an inner peace that is noticeably lacking. Don't we recognize the restlessness and loss of direction that we see characterizing world affairs today as a mirror reflection of our inner-self distress?

Dialogue will prepare the way for a conceptual reconciliation with nature, reconciliation between mind and heart and a reconciliation of ethics and governance.

In response to these global dilemmas we need to take action to promote understanding, tolerance, ethics, a spirit of dialogue and peace to revive hope in the tormented and bewildered societies of this world.

We have lost our sense of direction and purpose. We need to shed light, wherever the darkness of pollution and degradation has taken life from the earth. We need to shed light on the lives of those who remain in despair and poverty. We need to shed light on our own hearts so that we could lead and inspire those who have vested their hopes on our decisions.



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Mr. Yashwant SINHA
External Affairs Minister of India

Mr. President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I am absolutely delighted and honoured to be here this afternoon participating in this very important deliberation.

In India, since time immemorial, since the beginning of history, we have worshipped the earth, the mountains, the trees, the soil, the sun, the moon and the stars. We had invented a God for every natural phenomena who guided all these actions of Nature. This cuts across ethnic, religious and language barriers. In fact it also transcends continents because, in all ancient civilisations, we will find the same features. What do they reflect? They reflect an innate respect for nature and a mutually reinforcing arrangement under which man lived in peace with Nature.

All this was there until the West came to us and laughed at us, ridiculed us and made fun of us. The West said that we were pagan and primitive and did not know how to lead our own lives. Under the garb of modernism, we were compelled to give up all these practices to a large extent. Then came an unbridled exploitation of natural resources. Need, which was a guiding principle of exploitation of nature, was replaced by rapacious and uncontrolled greed, which has created all these problems that we are faced with today and we have assembled in Johannesburg to discuss.

What needs to be done? I think, the most important thing is to recognise in the older civilizations, this mutually reinforcing coexistence between cultural diversity and biodiversity. If we cannot help them, at least, let us leave them alone. But it appears to me that we are determined to help them. We will not leave them alone and will interfere and impose our own solutions to the problems that we perceive they are suffering from.

In India, we have discovered answers to many of these questions. We have found our own solutions. Keeping cows for milk is as old as history. Today, this is good business and India is the largest producer of milk in the world. Many of the village societies which are maintaining cows and selling milk now have taken recourse to information technology. This old business is now managed by computers. You have, therefore, a situation where you have the cow and the

computer existing side by side together. This is how indigenous people will find their solutions. They do not need solutions to be imposed on them from outside. We are rediscovering what we have already known and we have enshrined it in Principle 22 of the Rio Declaration.

Let me plead that we accept cultural diversity and biodiversity as two very important principles which were already in existence in ancient societies. Once we have accepted it, there is a lot that those, who have destroyed not only biodiversity but also cultural diversity can learn from these civilizations. If such a chance is given, I am sure that the world will turn out to be a better place to live.

I entirely endorse, Mr. President, the suggestion you made that cultural diversity should be the fourth pillar of our Agenda and should be studied, especially in relation to biodiversity. It should have a prominent place in our deliberations.

As far as globalization is concerned, everyone realises that it is inevitable. The important challenge before us is how to manage globalization. I suggest that all of us put our heads together and make globalization softer. It should not be the hard approach to globalization as it is now. Let's settle for a softer form of globalization where we pick up its benefits and not its ills. If we have a clear understanding of these ills, then it will be possible for us to create a better world.

I, therefore, strongly plead that we, in this conference, ought to reach an understanding that the traditions, the conventions and the practices of people who have lived through centuries of history and accumulated wisdom should be preserved, reinforced and protected. And that it should form a very important part of sustainable development. There cannot be sustainable development until there is a sustainable consumption. Greed should, therefore, be replaced by need and this should be the important guiding principle for us.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Ms. Rigoberta MENCHÚ TUM
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (1992)

Your Excellency Mr. Jacques Chirac, Chairman and my friend,
Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am attending this much-anticipated event, not with optimism, but with hope. I am happy to have the opportunity to share with you the spiritual energy that may enable us to have the necessary political will to call a halt to the unreasonable greed that threatens to put an end to life on our planet.

The United Nations Secretary-General has invited us to focus the attention of this Summit on five key issues: water, energy, agriculture, health and biodiversity, and President Mbeki has called upon us to do so thinking of the prosperity of people and the planet.

As I begin, I should like to stress the importance of having organized the Roundtable on a topic that, for me, summarizes and pinpoints the objectives of this Summit: "Natural Diversity and Cultural Diversity"; in my opinion, these are not inter-related things, but one and the same thing. In our Mayan view of the world, every people, every culture, is a reflection of the natural world in which we live. Nobody can imagine a polar bear in the Amazon, just as it would be difficult to imagine the Masai tribe living in Greenland. Cultural diversity is a reflection of natural diversity. The work of creation is unity in diversity, in which all lives coexist in harmonious balance. Every time a forest is destroyed, a life form suffers violence, a language is lost, a form of civilization is cut down, a genocide is committed.

For millennia, we indigenous peoples have learned from nature to live in harmony with its constitutive elements. The earth does not belong to us, we are part of it and of the balances that make life on earth possible. For centuries, we indigenous peoples have lived maintaining those balances and others which keep us in touch with the whole universe, and which make us answerable for what happens in the world below us and the world above us, as in the tree of life we inherited from our forefathers, where the foliage cannot be understood without knowledge of the roots, the trunk and the branches.

For us, these vast and complex relationships contain the deepest wisdom and spirituality and for that reason they are sacrosanct. That has been the understanding of our peoples down through the centuries, and that seemed to

be the understanding of the community of nations in Rio ten years ago, in recognizing the interconnection and mutual dependence of all the elements that make possible the sustainability of development and of life.

The theoretical and normative arsenal that emerged from Rio constitutes the most significant intellectual and political advance that the fluctuating debate on development has produced in contemporary history. Rio marked a definitive point of change in ideas, giving development a global focus, establishing the interconnection between the economic, social, environmental and cultural dimensions of the binding instruments and of Agenda 21. Its greatest shortcomings were perhaps its institutional and financial dimensions, which left the process at the mercy of the political will of governments, business and related bodies.

Nevertheless, Rio was different because of the impressive outburst of social movements, civil organizations, humanist intelligentsia and committed academics. In Rio, hope was globalized. The participation of these actors gave them the seal of legitimacy and opened a new era, so that “we, the peoples...” are really protagonists in defining the global policies that affect us.

The Rio Summit was an ethical and political pact to redistribute power, resources and opportunities among countries and inside of them; however, facing up to reality, it is difficult not to lose patience. Ten years ago, a pact was made for development and equity. Today, the concept of security seems to have replaced these and the other values that inspired the Rio pacts, and diversity has been denominated its principal threat.

Free trade and the ever more visible hand of a market that is free for some and closed for others cannot continue destroying economies. The scandalous accounting frauds of some of the largest corporations in the world have shown that the invisible hand of the market has suddenly destroyed the faith of the general public, not only in those large corporations, but also in the State mechanisms established to monitor them. Security cannot continue to be the pretext for aggression, nor can war continue to be the driving force for the economy and knowledge. The world order of the twenty-first century cannot be hunger and despair for four-fifths of the world’s population, putting up with the opulence and waste that characterize the model of life, production and consumption of the remaining one-fifth.

The Rio pact has to be converted into a “Code of Ethics” that guarantees peaceful coexistence and the salvation of the planet. We cannot begin all over

again at each Summit. We cannot continue to adopt paper agreements without timetables, without verifiable targets, without reliable accountability mechanisms. Social actors cannot continue to be confined to “side events”. We have obligations and we also wish to exercise our rights. A few minutes ago, I had the honour to make public – on behalf of six Nobel Peace Prize recipients – a call to world leaders, to political, social and business leaders, to make common cause with this appeal. I take this opportunity, Mr. President, to present you with a copy of this manifesto, so that you may share it with all your colleagues here.

In the framework of this Summit, we also have subscribed to and promoted a demand that brooks no delay, for a profound reform of the structures of the international system. The post-Cold War world cannot be ruled by the same order that emerged from the Second World War. We need a new sense of shared responsibility to which we are all committed. Massive social participation, which in Rio opened the way for the leading role of civil society in the decisions of the United Nations system, must complete the institutionalization of mechanisms of action and shared responsibility, making room for the diversity of fresh actors that has been built up in these past years of struggle for life, and must be the keynote that ensures the reorientation of the struggle for justice and peace.

States cannot continue to assume exclusive responsibility for decisions. They do not in fact have it. Nor can they continue to be conveyor belts and legitimizers for the interests of the powerful. Globalization does not mean the end of the sovereignties and the particular responsibilities of States. They are being modified, complemented and strengthened by the emerging leading roles of global and local social and institutional actors.

We the indigenous peoples demand the recognition of our diverse cultures and our right to free determination, on the same terms as the international human rights pacts recognize all the peoples of the world. We demand that our contribution to the preservation of the life of the planet, as well as our forms of sustainable development, be recognized and esteemed in this Summit. This implies recognizing our right to enjoy our inalienable lands, the resources that we have conserved and used ancestrally and the collective rights that we have over knowledge of their properties, as established by Article 8 (j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

We do not accept any restriction of the international standards currently in force, in particular the obligatory nature of the principle of “prior informed consent” applied to any action that may affect our resources and interests, as well as the “common but differentiated responsibility” at a global level.

We do not accept the privatization of nature, the Earth and life. We do not accept that the resources and knowledge concerning their benign exploitation that we have developed over centuries should be patented in the name of States, or, even worse, in the name of individuals. We demand that we be granted legal security over our collective intellectual heritage. We demand access to the profits that may derive from the use of those resources and that knowledge, as well as their recognition in their entirety and recognition of the timeless moral principles characterizing our relationship with them. We do not accept that unfettered commercial exploitation of our genetic resources should continue to dispossess and impoverish us.

The values on which we the indigenous peoples have built our complex systems are based on cooperation and reciprocity in community life; on the authority of elders and our relationship with our ancestors; on communication and responsibility between generations; on the collective right to the earth, the land and its resources; on the authority and self-sufficiency of our forms of production and consumption; on the local scale of and the priority accorded to local natural resources in our development; in the ethical, spiritual and sacred nature of the bond between our peoples and the whole work of creation.

This Summit must abolish food production subsidies in the developed countries, which stifle our economies, leave us without work and make us dependent; it must guarantee the defense of our traditional productive systems against contamination by genetically modified products, and against the abuses that threaten them in global trade agreements.

These words cannot be interpreted as a plaintive protest. What we are putting forward is an invitation to live with eyes fixed on the common future of our humanity. We seek to defend the rights of our children and our children's children, so that they may continue to have a world in the future. The commitments to today's development will define the life of tomorrow, and today's deafness will be a path to self-destruction, to which we refuse to be resigned. In this pursuit of dignity and commitment to life and the future, nobody will be unaffected. We demand of all of you, governments, international bodies, social movements and civil organizations, less rhetoric, fewer euphemisms, fewer papers and more action, more tangible results, more shared responsibility, more multilateralism in taking decisions and enforcing them, and more respect for the poor so that their voices may be heard. Thank you.

Professor Wole SOYINKA

Nobel Literature Prize Laureate (1986)

I would like to begin with the following remark: it seems that Nature herself has decided to take a hand in this Summit by some very harsh and rather cruel reminders of the necessity of some careful observances in our relationship with Nature, in order to focus our minds on the purpose of this conference.

I am referring to the most unusual flooding that has engulfed parts of Europe, the distressing spectacle of ancient towns, cities, monuments and galleries being swept away, and the loss of human lives. Not only in Europe but in China and Latin America, it has been one scene of despair after another. In my view, it is a kind of wake-up call and it serves to confirm and stress the comments made by my colleague over there – Rigoberta Menchú – that the world has now passed the time for rhetoric. When the imponderables of Nature decide to make a statement about the abuse of Nature, this heavy hand can be felt in every corner of the globe, sweeping away the work, the gains and the harvest of civilizations that go back centuries.

It would of course be most unkind to comment that it is the chickens coming home to roost - that would be rubbing salt in the wound. So I shall limit myself to stating that these disasters should be seen as a reminder of the depredations which such societies have wreaked on the environment, on global ecology, the result of a missing sense of proportion in the exploitation of nature, one that has marked the relationship between modern society and physical environment.

I recall my astonishment, when I first arrived as a student decades ago in a European country, at the amount of soot which clung to buildings and to the very air, so that when you blew your nose and glanced at your handkerchief, all you saw was a template of dirt. Some years later, Europe woke up to the fact that her environment was being ruined by an over-reliance on coal and attempts were made to substitute coal with smokeless coke, for a start. A number of coal-mines were shut down. There was a concerted, methodical search for alternative means of heating and energy. So what we are witnessing today is nothing new, the emphasis has merely shifted outwards where the lessons that were learnt at the time, and solutions be applied by such societies, have simply been ignored when the same people moved to exploit the resources of other parts of the world.

It is true that there are no medieval or baroque cathedrals or other ancient monuments in many parts of oil producing areas within Africa for instance. But if we fly over some parts of the Delta region of my own country, Nigeria, you can look down on hundreds and hundreds of gas flares which have been operating for the past four or five decades. Need one wonder what is happening to such an environment, to the trees and fauna, to the ancient fishing ponds and farmland, to birds, which fly through those poisoned zones covering hectares and hectares of land?

The pattern of contempt towards the ecology of the Third World makes one ask the question: what kind of government is best suited to the preservation of biodiversity and respect for environment? For instance, the kind of scenario I have just painted for you was made possible mostly through a pattern of collaboration that took place over the heads of the indigenous peoples, between exploiting petroleum companies and dictatorial regimes that existed at the critical time. It was a simple collaboration over the heads of the indigenes, the environment was poisoned through an act of exclusion of the peoples who were most affected, but a mutually profitable one for the companies and the dictators. And it reminds us of the politics within which such conduct is made possible, and enjoins a search for the kind of governance that prevents the marginalization of the very peoples whose land actually produces the wealth of the country.

Next, I was glad to note that emphasis has been placed on the issue of cultural diversity even to the extent of a proposal for a kind of meeting on the cultures of the world. I would like to ask President Chirac how this would tune in with the *Dialogue of Civilizations*, the inauguration of which took place a year or so ago. I was present at that conference and was quite inspired by the address of President Khatami with its wide-ranging theme of humanism. I think it came as a surprise to many of the delegates that the leader of a theocratic state should take such a global, humanistic approach to the histories and future of the world. I would be interested in knowing whether this is to be a totally new initiative, or would be linked with that existing move towards a mutual respect between the world cultures and the need of a dialogue of equals among them.

Let me conclude by stating that, in my view, the major problem of the world is the entire issue of cultural dominance, the sense of dominance that exists within certain cultures and religions of the world. This is why the necessity of this dialogue of cultures and civilizations has become crucial. What is happening in the Sudan for instance is an act of cultural genocide, one that stems from the disdain that forms the basis of relationship between the government and the

minorities. African leaders pretend that this conflict does not exist, or else treat it in a most desultory manner. They pretend not to understand the reason for this conflict. But at the base of it all is the attitude of disdain that is manifested towards what I sometimes refer to as the 'invisible cultures' of the world. If there was a basis of mutual respect, we would not have this hemorrhage that has lasted for nearly four decades on this very continent where this conference is being held.

I cite this example to re-emphasize the need to move beyond rhetoric, to move beyond the mere articulation of an acceptance of the equality of cultures and embark on the political process that puts into practice the obvious correctness of this attitude. And it leads back yet again to the question that I raised earlier: just what kind of governance actually sustains the lofty principles of preserving cultural diversity and a respect for the world's biodiversity?



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Mr. Juan MAYR

former Minister of the Environment, Colombia

President Chirac, Excellencies, Executive Director of UNEP, Director of UNESCO, distinguished members of the Bureau, ladies and gentlemen:

I should first like to thank you for the kind invitation to participate in this significant roundtable on one of the themes of such major importance and future vision, as is cultural diversity and its inseparable interaction with biodiversity. It is also a great pleasure for me to be able to make my contribution in my native language, Spanish, since language and its various manifestations are an integral part of the cultural development and identity of our peoples. I congratulate the organizers on this wonderful initiative.

It is clear that cultural diversity and biological diversity go hand in hand, and that is why, in considering the topic of cultural diversity, we must recognize its territoriality, that is, those geographical areas where cultural processes have developed, based on the special features and condition of the environment and of the resources available in each area. It is in those territories that each culture has shaped a code of values and behaviour, out of a deep knowledge of the natural phenomena and the resources in the surroundings, of the quality and fertility of the soil, of the lifecycles of the flora and fauna, of the abundance or scarcity of water, of the movement of heavenly bodies, of relationships with neighbors, etc.

Depending on their characteristics, territories have provided each culture with options for development, but at the same time imposed restrictions, again depending on their particular circumstances. It is there that diverse forms of thought and of adjustment to reality have developed. These are cultures with great knowledge, cultures shaped by collective interest, cultures whose world vision has been built up from thousands of years of symbolic and magical references, cultures self-sustaining in their own territory and obviously having a great sense of equilibrium between man and nature.

Historically, many of these cultural spaces have been threatened, and today more than ever. They have been formed in places quite susceptible to injustice and unfairness. Globalization has increased that threat. For that very reason, this present event seems to me to be of the highest importance.

But what are we going to do to change this perverse dynamic? That is the great question, and therefore I fully share and applaud the proposal of President Chirac to move forward towards a Convention on Cultural Diversity. I have no doubt that this initiative would become the most important one of the new millennium. And I have not the slightest doubt that it would be one of the main forums for debating the ethical dimension of sustainable development, a theme that we have brought to the Johannesburg Summit as a Latin American contribution.

To be able to proceed, it is necessary for the dominating culture to recognize difference and diversity. This is the first thing required to rebuild trust, that trust that has been lost for historical reasons that we all know. It is obvious that a great effort will be needed to arrive at mutual understanding, and this underlines the need to have a multilateral scenario for the debate, to establish a fresh paradigm of sustainable development, protected by respect between cultures, equity and the quest for peace and prosperity for all the peoples with whom we share this planet.

Based on this minimum recognition and on the political will to ensure action, innumerable tasks remain to be done in the immediate future. Without doubt, one imperative is the immediate protection of cultural diversity, starting from the recognition of its associated territories in the legislation of countries. That measure, together with a moratorium on those development processes that have not been subject to consultation and which are having an enormous cultural and territorial impact, would enable a brake to be applied to these activities, until such time as the necessary agreements are in place, thus avoiding that those processes should continue to constitute sources of permanent conflict.

Lastly, I should like to propose the establishment at the international level of a universal category or status under the concept of "Philosophic Reserves", for those minority cultures and their territories that have maintained their traditional thought and cultural adaptation to the environment in a harmonious manner.

I am sure that if a Convention on Cultural Diversity can be brought about and the proposals I have mentioned observed, we will not only have moved forward towards respect for and the protection of cultural diversity, but at the same time we will have taken a sure step in the protection, management and appropriate use of our biodiversity, essential prerequisites for attaining sustainable development. Thank you.

Professor Arjun APPADURAI

Yale University

I would like to begin by thanking the Head of the two distinguished agencies and of course, President Chirac for making this conference possible. It is very good that a few civilians are allowed to speak even if briefly, in a world where civil societies are considered important.

It is a great pleasure to address this gathering. I want to make some very brief points since so much has been said already that is forceful, inspiring, and compelling. These short comments are footnotes, academics are good at those.

First, globalization based on market logic of the last two decades has deepened the gap between the rich and the poor. These are the sheer realities. Second, the human species has achieved an unexpected ability to manage this planet and also to make it unliveable. Third, for more than half of the world's population, biodiversity and environmental sustainability seem to be cruel jokes, circuses for the elite while the poor have no bread and live, as Wally Serote recently said, on "the margins of life itself".

These realities with which we are all struggling through new partnerships, vision and technologies leave me to ask following three questions:

One. Given all the debates about renewable resources, can there be any other renewable resources more vital than our children, our dreams and aspirations, our talents and imagination, in short, other than our humanity itself?

Two. Can human beings possibly manage planetary diversity and long term eco-sustainability when we have shown a profound inability to manage ourselves, our rural resources, our poverty, our disease and our very will to live with one another, to quote my colleague and friend Achilles Mbembe? Are we fit to govern all species, when we have failed to govern ourselves?

Three. Given the tragic failures of all the partnerships between states, multilaterals, private corporations and public social movements to shift the tide of financial apartheid and delete social exclusion after 50 years at least of highly capitalized efforts, can we fail to recognize that our biggest weapons against poverty, war and environmental degradation are the three to four billion poor of the world themselves?

If we ponder these questions carefully, we will recognize that there is no way to implement, (“implementation” being the key word of Johannesburg Summit), even our most brilliant ideas about water, fuel, energies, forests and clean air without attention to cultural diversity.

Why? This is my last comment.

In and through cultural diversity, poor people can combat poverty with dignity, find voices for their dreams; build what I can call their capacity to aspire and add to the bank of the visions of human welfare and development. This bank of visions is the road to making the world’s poor real partners in the battles for the sustainable development.

Without paying attention to this huge, untapped asset, we face two unacceptable choices. The world of clean air and water without any human beings to enjoy it. Or a world where poverty and ecological degradation create a downward spiral that we could call “Ecogeddon”.

There is a third way and this is to regard dignity as a renewable resource that, I believe, should be the basis for cultural diversity and for the agreements and commitments that have been spoken about today which I endorse, congratulate and hope to join.



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Ms. Aminata TRAORÉ

former Minister of Culture, Mali

As we sit at the bedside of our ailing Planet, it is encouraging to see that we are starting to take more notice of the link between cultural and biological diversity – if, after Johannesburg, we can manage to move from words to action, the benefits will come to us all and will come from many different perspectives.

We will release the individual creativity of the people - their many talents that today are dormant because of their obscurity and neglect by the world's dominant language. Democracy itself will take back its true meaning, because hundreds of millions of men and women will be able to take charge of their own lives, as active participants in debate, in decision-making, in the conduct of public affairs, and in their own empowerment.

The real difficulty, however, lies in finding the practical means to implement a social project that can effectively integrate the reality and values of the South – when development is essentially a process of dispossession. The renewal of the link between cultural and biological diversity, which is a fine and noble idea, falters when faced with the unyielding logic of economics and finance taking precedence in the hard light of day.

For a country such as mine, this fine idea assumes a complete change of perspective, for example in terms of the cotton produced by Mali. As the main producer of this raw material in Sub-Saharan Africa, Mali could have taken advantage of the age-old skills of its artisanal weavers, but instead exports almost all its production.

Unemployment, loss of cultural knowledge and identity, migration to Europe – these are just some of the disastrous consequences of the macroeconomic choices that are imposed on Mali.

The debate on cultural and biological diversity thus applies also to inappropriate macroeconomic decisions. The revitalization and the consolidation of the link between these two essential dimensions of our existence on this earth, therefore requires that we also redefine the meaning of bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

Ms. Esther CAMAC

Asociación IXACAVAA, Costa Rica;
International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples
of the Tropical Forests

To use the plural when referring to indigenous peoples is the first step towards the acknowledgement of the fact that there is not just one indigenous people, but many peoples with their own identities, languages, lands, customs, laws, norms and knowledge built up, renewed and developed over time. Similarly, when we hear things about biodiversity, our thoughts turn to the diversity of life on earth. Cultural diversity and the biodiversity of ecosystems are intimately connected to our view of the land, to the use and management of that biodiversity.

We then have to ask ourselves what is sustainable development or what does it mean? Or should we speak of models of sustainable developments? I think it is a mistake to define a model of sustainable development using the parameters of western society, which measures the people which that society develops, because those people live in a lifestyle pattern of consumption, with a uniform identity, culture, thought and life itself. The use of resources depends on that life model and the sustainable use of resources through exploitation is disguised.

This lone development model has shown us that it is not sustainable: it is a failure and has placed our Mother Earth and her children, human beings, in grave crisis and in danger of extinction. We, the indigenous peoples, have said that we are different and diverse, and every people, based on the teachings and footprints of our ancestors, has built development models based on knowledge of its habitat that we call the land.

THE DITSÖ KE¹ CONCEPT OF THE CABECAR AND BRIBRI PEOPLES OF COSTA RICA. (THE TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES AND LAND)

We, the indigenous peoples, have a way of living with the vegetable and animal species of the forests. The forest is our natural habitat, the place where we obtain all the necessary basic elements to ensure our subsistence and cultural development. That way of life enabled us to develop an ancestral self-sufficient system of knowledge about our habitat: land, its management, the management and use of natural resources, based on an ancestral knowledge to meet the needs of our peoples, which in the Bribri and Cabecar languages is called Ditsö ke.

Regrettably, these ancestral systems are being broken down by a series of socio-economic changes and the introduction of new relationship values in regard to nature. Phenomena such as industrialization and the growth of large banana-growing companies have finally affected indigenous areas, with a view to a development model.

Ditsö ke, visualized as an ancestral land management and development plan, has enabled us to protect our forests and to ensure the survival of the Bribri and Cabecar peoples, safeguarding our cultural space, sacred areas, crop-planting and dwelling-place areas, in harmony with other species. Land is conceived as the union between the past, present and future. There is a temporal dimension in every region, in every place, that is expressed in our history, in our mythical past. Rivers, mountains and lakes are often sacred places, places to which our history and tradition have ascribed a content of a spiritual nature. Ditsö ke enables us to manage land in a way that can only be understood in terms of our mythical history and cultural space. It enables us to understand that that management is not only for the benefit of human beings but also for the other species, which have the same right to life as mankind. Just as human beings need a place to live, so also other natural creatures need their own space to live in. Plants and animals are at the same level as human beings. It is a principle of coexistence, of respect for natural creatures. The protection of the forest also signifies the protection of life as a whole.

Ditsö ke enables us to recognize that we can meet all our needs, for food, for dwelling-places, for medicines, for art, for relaxation and for spirituality, without damaging the forest. It is a principle of equality and of respect. The land does not belong to us; it is not a personal possession, for we belong to the land and to the places that are also inhabited by other creatures. Ditsö ke is to be envisaged as a land management and protection plan for resources in general. It is not a plan to benefit human beings exclusively but for the protection of all species, which have the same right to life as man. From this derives the concept of equilibrium, of harmony with nature. Land is not managed in a merely utilitarian sense, but based on the needs born of the culture and history of our conception of the world. The forests themselves have their own order which we must learn to know and respect.² Ditsö ke enables us to manage under the guidance of the natural laws of life. That way, we can meet our immediate needs without doing violence to the life on which we depend as a people, as a culture. In this way, the forests and resources are maintained as a patrimony for future generations.

CULTURAL AND BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, CHALLENGES FOR THE PROTECTION OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

According to a study carried out by the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), there are 6,500 linguistic groups in the 200 ecoregions of the world, and, according to the data presented in this roundtable, there are said to be over 350 million indigenous inhabitants in the world, in over 70 countries; of the 6,000 cultures existing in the world, 4,500 are indigenous.³ “In the last century, the world lost 4,000 of its 10,000 languages. It is estimated that 50 per cent of these languages, mainly in America and Australia, are in danger of extinction.”⁴ According to Simon Brascoupe, Director of Aboriginal Affairs, Environment Canada, “The loss of biolinguistic diversity and traditional knowledge is equivalent to the fire in the Alexandrian Library” and he also points out that consumerism, the soul of current neoliberal regimes, contrasts with the spiritual connection with the earth, which is at the heart of the philosophies and traditional practices of indigenous peoples.⁵

The knowledge of indigenous peoples about values in relation to mother earth and the sustainable use of resources must be the pillars of education for life and environmental sustainability. We do not agree with the new biocolonialism that covertly, under the pretext of an equitable sharing of profits, seeks to appropriate our knowledge. We consider it essential to recognize and protect this knowledge and these development patterns that focus on the view that the earth is our mother, that resources are an integral part of life, and we must care for the resources of mother earth so that our children and our children’s children may have a good life and do not suffer need.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- (a) The recognition of indigenous lands as a category for the conservation of biodiversity is key to the poverty alleviation of peoples, the revitalization of culture and the protection of traditional knowledge, accompanied by the restoration of ecosystems and their resources.
- (b) The recuperation of the ancestral values of collective work, the sustainable use of resources, the protection of resources for the future and the vision of the welfare of the whole community, will constitute a resource for combating poverty.
- (c) The concept of wealth is community life in all its aspects. The concept of wealth in the West is the accumulation of goods and capital.

- (d) If we recognize the contribution indigenous peoples have made to humanity, States should recognize the lands and territories of indigenous peoples and grant them their lands and territories, besides promoting the revitalization of traditional knowledge, languages, and educational systems, as well as giving financial support to ways of life and land and development plans based on ancestral values.
- (e) Globalization as currently promoted is a threat, and reduces the possibilities of cultural diversity, since it gives priority to the values of individualism, competition and consumerism, and the obtaining of money for its own sake.
- (f) Indigenous peoples must be free to determine and decide how and with what they wish to participate in this world market, and markets should open their doors so that indigenous peoples may have equal opportunities to participate, and this should not be obligatory.
- (g) We have to recover the awareness that the land does not belong to us, and that resources must be taken care of, for our children and their children's children; this is an ethical value in relation to consumption and the protection of biodiversity.
- (h) The knowledge of indigenous peoples about values in relation to mother earth and the sustainable use of resources must be the pillars of education for life and environmental sustainability.
- (i) Research should be undertaken among indigenous peoples on the status of traditional knowledge. All development plans should be based on traditional knowledge. "Knowledge that is not used will be lost", which means it is necessary to revitalize it, in agriculture, in recuperating traditional systems and activities for food security, health care and knowledge about our habitats. Encounters should be encouraged between different generations and different peoples.
- (j) Legal and constitutional recognition of diversity is the first step towards recognizing differences. I shall quote a sentence of an Argentinean theologian: "My right ends when I recognize the right of another".
- (k) Making room for participation and decision making should be encouraged at all levels, both political and economic, and dialogue in conflict resolution should be encouraged for the sake of human coexistence, in an ethical framework that includes accountability (administrative and political), sanctions and restoration.

YOUR DUTY IS MY RIGHT, AND MY DUTY IS YOUR RIGHT:

It is there that we begin to build a relationship of brotherhood and mutual respect.

Thank you.

¹ Ditsö ke:

Ancestral system of land management and resources of indigenous communities. Ditsö ke enables us to determine sacred places for ceremonies, sacred places such as rivers or lakes, places where hunting can take place and where it is prohibited, places for planting, places for building houses, cemeteries, places to collect stones with healing powers, places to sow crops and to gather materials for building or crafts.

Etymologically, Ditsö ke is composed of two words: Ditsö, clan or seed and ke, place of; it therefore means the place of the seed or the place of the clan.

Seed is synonymous with the human being in the Bribri language. The place of the seed is synonymous with the place of the human beings. In a wider sense, Ditsö ke used to enable the lands to be managed in accordance with the division into clans, as each clan had its own particular lands.

² A reflection formulated with the Bribri and Cabecar elders and the working team of the Ixacavaa Association arising out of the working experience of the Land Management Plan in Bajo Chirripo, Pueblo Cabecar.

³ Oviedo, Gonzales and others. Indigenous and Traditional Peoples of the World and Ecoregion Conservation. WWF International, November 2000, page 9.

⁴ Brascoupe, Simon, "Fin de la sustentabilidad", Biodiversity - Review of Life on Earth, August 2002, page 29.

⁵ Ibid.



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3. Summary by Klaus TOEPFER Executive Director of UNEP

*"Today's humankind became more dangerous to nature,
than nature ever was to humankind"*

Hans Jonas, German Philosopher

How do we define cultural diversity and biodiversity? By culture we mean the complexity of solutions which the human community inherits, adopts or invents in order to meet the challenges of its natural and social environment. Cultural diversity encompasses all communities in the world, each of them with their own identity determined by ethnicity, history, language, religion and art. Biodiversity is the biological wealth of a certain area or ecosystem. For humankind biodiversity holds multiple values for direct use, as for nutrition, but also for indirect uses such as watershed protection or the maintenance of the nutrient cycle. Our knowledge about biodiversity has been built up over the centuries by observing and analyzing species and ecosystem processes. Furthermore, biodiversity provides us with non-materialistic elements, which refer to the intrinsic importance of biodiversity and acknowledge the cultural, religious, philosophical and aesthetic dimensions that biodiversity has for humankind. Like biodiversity needs an ecosystem to survive and evolve, cultural diversity needs nurturing by a cultural system and dialogue. Neither cultural diversity nor biodiversity are rigid in their existence since they are in a continuous evolutionary process and adapt themselves to internal and external changes. The conservation of the Earth's vitality and diversity must include the capacity to adapt to its changes in ecosystems and its dependent relationship with humankind.

Cultural diversity and biodiversity are not only related, but often inseparable.¹ Of the estimated 6,000 cultures in the world, between 4,000 and 5,000 are indigenous, which means that indigenous peoples make up between 70 and 80 per cent of the world's cultural diversity.

Looking at the global distribution of indigenous peoples, there is a clear correlation between areas of biological mega-diversity and areas of cultural diversity, which is particularly relevant for the rainforest areas in Latin America, Africa and South East Asia. Indigenous peoples' every-day experiences, including production and consumption patterns, are directly related to their natural environment. Production methods are very often linked to spirituality and reflect a holistic way of understanding nature. The value of ecosystems, landscapes, animals and plants cannot adequately be measured statistically or in merely

financial terms as the values of biological, cultural and linguistic diversity are intimate to life in its entirety.

The interaction between biodiversity, human languages and cultures may be best observed at the local level. Here, landscapes are not only shaped and modified by human activity but also symbolically brought into the sphere of human communication, by words, stories, songs, proverbs and legends that encode and carry human relationships with the environment. People who do not speak in their mother tongue have no access to traditional knowledge and are bound to be excluded from vital information about subsistence, health and sustainable use of natural resources.

Not only biological species, but also many ethnic groups around the world are now faced with extinction. The causes and consequences of this loss lie in the increasingly unsustainable exploitation of the Earth's natural resources and the growing marginalization and dispossession of indigenous and minority groups. Most indigenous peoples see land and language as equally important for their identity as sovereign peoples. Through the maintenance of biological and cultural diversity we could ensure equitable and peaceful existence for all people on Earth.

It is estimated that 40 per cent of the global economy is based on biological products. Some of the financially poorest regions harbour the majority of the world's biodiversity essential for the survival of humankind in general and not only for the ethnic groups living there. It is difficult to measure the economic value of biodiversity due to its multi-dimensional importance for all life on Earth. But it is undeniable that biodiversity plays an important economic role because of the extensive genetic resources it holds that benefit humankind, especially through biotechnology and its medicinal potential.

As a response to the alarming rate of the extinction of species caused by human activities, 168 countries have signed the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The CBD recognizes that states have sovereignty over their genetic resources and that they are entitled to fair and equitable sharing of the benefits. Some countries, especially in Latin America, have since adopted laws controlling access to genetic resources as well as compensation. The Conference of the Parties at its sixth meeting in April 2002 invited parties, governments and institutions to provide technical and financial assistance and capacity building to least developed countries and their indigenous and local communities for the

establishment and maintenance of mechanisms to protect traditional knowledge and the equitable sharing of benefits arising from its utilization.

The enormous driving force of globalization may give the impression that everything is connected and that, as a result, the world is merging. But another tendency has become evident: megacities all over the world are experimenting with cultural syncretism - mixing global and local elements, generating new cultural forms primarily expressed through music and art. Globalization shows two faces, which seem to contradict each other. On the one hand, globalization appears to become a homogenization process touching many aspects of life. On the other, it demands the preservation and protection of cultural diversity. But is cultural diversity really disappearing? Diversity continues to exist in some parts of the world with a long tradition of intercultural activities and contacts, for example in Europe.

Cultural goods and services are no exception to the new patterns of production, consumption and trade in today's world. Cultural globalization is becoming a marketing instrument since multimedia conglomerates control an increasingly large number of the global consumer markets. Although national measures to support cultural industries are necessary for their development, they might not be adequate for their consolidation and distribution beyond national borders. What are the cultural impacts of globalization?

The dynamics of globalization inevitably go hand in hand with more intensive exchanges between different cultures. While these contacts are often sought after, fruitful and mutually beneficial, they are just as frequently the source of conflict. In order to achieve our most important objective, namely to live in peaceful coexistence and dignity, we will have to learn to respect religious differences and avoid intercultural tensions. We need to learn and understand the unknown, which implies tolerance based on mutual respect as an essential prerequisite. Conflicts can only be prevented through dialogue and by trying to find the underlying reasons for tensions. This dialogue has to be given more prominence and popularity and should be placed at the top of the global agenda, not as a mere cultural theory but rather as a strategic necessity.

Tolerance and reciprocal respect for cultural distinctiveness is a condition that is indispensable for a better understanding between the world's peoples and recognition of our common humanity.

Cultural diversity comprises all expressions of human creativity and ways of life in the material, intellectual and spiritual sense. It is strongly connected with the immense developmental challenges of our time, the protection of the environment, poverty alleviation, health and the promotion of democracy and peace.

The more we lose diversity, both culturally and in the natural world, the more we run the risk of instability. We will become incapable of dealing with natural disasters such as crop failures and droughts. Local, traditional and indigenous knowledge and their custodians have therefore to be protected. It is time to give an economic value to this knowledge and to the genetic resources so carefully nurtured by indigenous peoples, just as we protect intellectual property rights. A sustainable society can only be achieved through the participation and empowerment of all peoples.

¹ This was clearly demonstrated in the UNEP publication 'Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity' (1999), a compilation of a wide array of interdisciplinary and inspiring contributions that bring out the multi-dimensional challenges that biodiversity conservation poses to us all.



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