



Appendix A

Welcome Remarks

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Your Excellency, Ambassador Robert G. Brinks of the Netherlands Embassy in Manila;

Our major partners in this conference:

- the ASEAN Center for Biodiversity represented by its Director, Dr. Rod Fuentes
- the World Agroforestry Center, represented by its Philippine Coordinator, Dr. Rodel Lasco
- Bioversity International, represented by Dr. Percy E. Sajise, Regional Director for Asia, Pacific and Oceania
- and Silliman University, represented by its President, Dr. Ben Malayang

Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary, UN Convention on Biodiversity, represented by Dr. Delfin J. Ganapin, Jr., Global Manager, GEF Small Grants Programme;

Distinguished resource persons and participants;

Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen:

Good morning!

On behalf of SEARCA and our partners in this conference, I warmly welcome you all to Manila and to this meeting. We are pleased to see all of you, and are excited of what we expect will be an exciting and productive discussion of two contemporary concerns affecting Southeast Asia and all other parts of the world – climate change and biodiversity. The tropics, which holds most of the world's biodiversity, has been tagged as being the most vulnerable to climate change.

We are pleased that the UN Convention on Biodiversity is also a part of this meeting, through the keynote message of Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of this UN body.

In the past couple of years, we have seen climate change hogging the headlines of major news media – thanks to Mr. Al Gore and his "Inconvenient Truth." On the other hand, recent disasters like the tsunami, forest fires, floods, severe droughts, and other calamities have made an even greater impact on the public's mind of the reality and threats of climate change.

The less attention grabbing yet potentially more widespread consequences of climate change include lower agricultural yields, increased water stress, spread of infectious diseases, as well as changes in the natural ecosystems, thereby threatening biological species.

Realizing Challenges, Exploring Opportunities

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The projected impacts of climate change on biodiversity are well articulated, however, the contributions of biological resources to reduce the impacts of climate change on people and agricultural production have not been fully appreciated.

This conference hopes to establish the link between these two concerns. More importantly, we hope to have a good grasp of what is on the ground in the different countries by way of how they have adopted and mitigated the effects of climate change and how parallel efforts in biodiversity conservation play an important role in this whole effort. At the end of the day, we would want to identify elements of a regional program that could be developed and implemented as a regional response or strategy to these environmental concerns. The specific interest of SEARCA as a regional center for agricultural and rural development is how countries in the region, particularly their rural communities, will cope or are in fact coping with the effects of climate change.

The roots of this conference are anchored on our experience in implementing a five-year Biodiversity Research Programme in Mount Malindang in Mindanao. This was funded by the Dutch government through its Ministry of Development Cooperation (DGIS). The programme showcased the "research for development" theme. Dutch scientists worked with their Filipino counterparts in conducting research aimed at contributing to biodiversity conservation in Mt. Malindang. This programme has shown us that the problem of biodiversity conservation must not be taken in isolation of the other emerging threats such as climate change as well as the overarching problems of poverty, lack of technical and financial capacity, government policies and regulations etc. While the programme ended in December 2006, SEARCA is pleased that our gracious donor, the Dutch government, allowed us to follow through with one more significant activity – this Conference – using leftover funds from the original programme grant. For this, we would like to once again express our sincere thanks to the Dutch government, represented here today by His Excellency, Robert G. Brinks, Ambassador of the Netherlands.

On that note, let me end my welcome message with a wish for a lively exchange of ideas regarding coping and mitigating strategies that would address the interlinked concerns of climate change and biodiversity.

Our plan is that the knowledge shared and generated from this conference will become the basis of a publication that will serve as a useful and handy reference material for policymakers and students of development seeking to understand better the interrelated topic of biodiversity and climate change.

I wish us a stimulating and productive conference.

Mabuhay!