

**Message from Mr. Jose Antonio Ocampo, Under-Secretary-General
Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations
on the Observance of World Food Day**

Biodiversity plays a key role in achieving food security, which is crucial for sustainable development. We project that the world population will increase by over 2.5 billion people between now and 2050. That population growth, together with economic growth, will put increasing strain on natural resources and the environment. Agricultural production will need to grow steadily to provide the food, fiber and other crops that people need, and most of that growth will have to come from increased yields.

A major challenge facing the world is to increase agricultural production without degrading soils, forests, water resources, wetlands or marine resources and the essential economic, social and environmental services they provide. Biodiversity is critical to agricultural productivity, as it supports essential natural processes such as pollination and soil regeneration, and to food security, as it enhances crop resilience to adverse growing conditions and the nutritional value of diets. It is absolutely essential that we protect the world's biodiversity. Central to that effort must be a firm international commitment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which form the basis for a sustainable improvement in living standards, especially of poor people, consistent with bequeathing the world's natural wealth and its rich biodiversity to succeeding generations.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs is strongly committed to working with the FAO and other partners in the United Nations system and the international community towards realizing the MDGs, and not least the goal first enunciated at the FAO World Food Summit of halving the number of hungry people in the world by 2015. Our mission is to support countries in the pursuit of sustainable development, development that integrates long-term economic growth, social development and environmental protection, through increased and improved international cooperation addressing the needs of all countries, particularly those in the developing world.