



PRESS RELEASE

Strategy to Save Earth's Life Support Systems Unveiled by UN Body

End to Overfishing up to More Efficient Agriculture Key to 2010 Biodiversity Target

Curitiba/Montreal, 20 March 2006 – A 2010 target aimed at saving the globe's biodiversity from continued decline is doable but will require greater effort world-wide.

The conclusions come from a report, *Global Biodiversity Outlook 2*, launched today in the Brazilian city of Curitiba at the eighth biannual meeting of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

The study, which details current impacts on forests and coral reefs up to birds and other species, also underlines the economic importance of biodiversity for fighting poverty and for achieving internationally agreed development goals.

Exports of medicinal plants are worth over \$ 8.5 million a year to a country like Nepal and a Kenya is generating revenues of some \$200 million annually from wildlife tourism.

The Galapagos in Ecuador tell a similar tale with the islands earning as much as \$60 million a year from visitors providing income for 80 per cent of the inhabitants.

Meanwhile Iceland, a model of responsible management of marine fisheries, earns 60 per cent of its foreign exports, fish and other marine life.

The report also outlines a five point strategy, which will be put before 100 ministers next week, to put the planet on track.

This includes improvements in agricultural efficiency; the protection of areas of high biodiversity and a focus of existing and future agriculture on lands already under the plough and restoration of degraded lands.

Other elements of the strategy include a dramatic reduction in the wasteful use of natural resources including energy, timber and food.

Investments in the protection and rehabilitation of ecosystems that deliver essential services such as nitrogen neutralizing services of wetlands up to coastal protection provided by coral reefs and mangroves.

One of the most urgent parts of the strategy is a call for the end of the over-exploitation of wild resources in particular marine fisheries.

Experts with the CBD are calling on all sectors of government, from environment and agriculture up to finance and planning ministries to join in the fight to realize the 2010 target.

The effort will also require other sectors of society from nongovernmental organizations and business up to the industry and the private citizen.

Ahmed Djoghlaif, the CBD's Executive Secretary, said: "It is clear that biodiversity is in the centre of the fight for sustainable development. The wealth of goods and services provided by the natural world are worth trillions. They are at the basis of livelihoods everywhere."

"Global Biodiversity Outlook 2 confirms however that much of the world's biodiversity, from trees and plants to animals and fungi, are in serious trouble and serious decline," he said.

"It however points to a range of concrete measures, some of which are already being taken, to avert a final crisis and set us on course for achieving 2010. I am convinced that governments and delegates here in Curitiba are determined to grasp the opportunities and rise to the challenge--convinced that 2010 will be a celebration, not a wake, for our collective commitment to achieve our stated goals," said Mr. Djoghlaif.

Some Key Findings from GBO 2

The global demand for resources now exceeds the biological capacity of the Earth to renew these resources by 20 per cent.

The loss of primary forests, the best for supporting biodiversity, since 2000 has been six million hectares a year.

Corals are also declining. For example hard coral cover in the Caribbean fell from 50 per cent to 10 per cent over the past three decades.

Over a third of mangroves, important nurseries for fish and natural coastal defense features, have been cleared in the past 20 years.

Over 90 per cent of the basins of the world's large river systems are affected by dams.

In the North Atlantic, the number of large fish has fallen by two-thirds over the past 50 years.

There has been a 40 per cent decline in the abundance of plant and animal species since the late 1970s, according to monitoring of 3,000 wild species.

The report, which builds on the work of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment whose findings were published last year, also underlines that conserving biodiversity has significant economic benefits.

For example it highlights the phenomenon of 'dead zones' in the world's oceans. The number and size of oxygen deficient marine areas is on the rise.

The increase is being linked with fertilizer run off, emissions of nitrogen from the burning of fossil fuels and sewage and animal waste discharges.

If fertilizer was used more efficiently, say by 20 per cent, in the globe's cereal fields there would be a six per cent fall in the kind of nitrogen linked with 'dead zones'. In addition farmers are likely to save about \$ 5 billion annually in lower input costs.

Can It Be Done?

The report assesses the likelihood of meeting the 2010 target, agreed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South Africa, based on 11 Goals.

It concludes that the many of the underlining targets are possible although some will be tougher to meet.

For example, it looks at the threats from the spread of alien invasive species introduced across continents by factors such as international trade and in the ballast water of ships.

Developing managements plans for at least 100 major alien species is 'achievable", the experts conclude.

Similarly, protecting the rights of indigenous peoples over their traditional biodiversity-related knowledge could also be achieved given sufficient political will and 'capacity building' of local communities.

More challenging are, for example, conserving wetlands, the upper catchments of rivers and other 'ecosystems' that underpin freshwater supplies.

Notes to Editors

The Global Biodiversity Outlook 2 is available online at www.biodiv.org/GB02

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