



**SECRETARIAT
OF THE CONVENTION
ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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**OPENING OF THE SEVENTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (COP-7)**

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia - On Monday February 9 2004, over 2,000 delegates from around the world, including cabinet ministers, world-renowned scientists and broad representation from NGOs and community organizations, will gather in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, for the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP-7).

Priority issues will include the biological diversity of mountain ecosystems, the role of protected areas in the conservation of biological diversity and providing benefits to people, the transfer of technology and technology cooperation, as well as implementation of the target set at the sixth meeting of the Parties to achieve, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss of biodiversity at the global, regional and national level. The COP is also expected to follow up on the call for action issued at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development to negotiate an international regime on access and benefit sharing, to help developing countries and indigenous peoples share in the wealth created by their native plants and organisms.

“The survival of the human species depends on biological diversity. Without biodiversity, there would be no trees to produce oxygen, no water catchments and no biodegradation, so that organic waste would just accumulate,” says Hamdallah Zedan, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. “The services provided by biodiversity are inestimable and yet, because they are free, they are often overlooked, to the point where biodiversity is still being lost at an alarming rate.”

COP-7 Opening Day Program

The Opening Plenary session will start at 10AM (local time) and will be presided, until the election of his successor, by Hans Hoogeveen, President of the COP-6 Bureau.

Mr. Zedan and Dr. Klaus Toepfer, Executive-Director of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), will make opening statements, following which the Parties will proceed with the election of the officers of the Conference, when it is widely expected that the Honourable Dato' Seri Law Hieng Ding, Malaysian Minister of Science, Technology and the Environment, will be elected President of COP-7.

Two world-renowned keynote speakers will address the participants on opening day . Award-winning Canadian scientist, environmentalist and broadcaster, Dr. David Suzuki, Chair of the David Suzuki Foundation, will present the keynote speech during the morning session of the Opening Plenary, on “The Challenge of the 21st Century - Setting the Real Bottom line”. In the afternoon session, Dr. Emile Frison, Director General of the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute, will recall the theme of International Biodiversity Day 2004 with his address “Biodiversity, nutrition and health: making a difference to hunger and conservation in the developing world”.

Journalists should note that a press conference will be held at 13:15 (local time) following the Opening Plenary Session in the press auditorium on the 4th floor of the Putra World Trade Centre. UNEP Executive-Director Toepfer and Executive Secretary Zedan will join with Malaysian Minister of Science, Technology and the Environment, Dato’ Seri Law Hieng Ding, to review the meeting’s key issues and objectives in the context of the work that has been accomplished over the two years since the sixth meeting of the COP.

About the Convention on Biological Diversity

The Convention on Biological Diversity is one of the key agreements adopted at the Earth Summit, in Rio de Janeiro, in 1992. It has been ratified by 187 countries and the European Community who, together, constitute the Conference of the Parties. The Convention is unique among the legal frameworks arrived at in Rio because it seeks a comprehensive approach to sustainable development through three main goals: the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources.

The Conference of the Parties is the governing body of the Convention. It is a comprehensive forum for debate and action on sustainable strategies designed to preserve our ecosystems and improve human quality of life.

Visit the COP-7 press room at <http://www.biodiv.org/meetings/cop-07/press>.

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