



**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY**

PRESS RELEASE

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**Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals requires the
conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity**

Montreal 12 September 2005 – World leaders and representatives of civil society attending the Millennium Summit in New York this week must take action to conserve and use biological diversity sustainably, and distribute its benefits equitably if the world is to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), say the heads of five international conventions addressing biological diversity.

“All of us rely on biodiversity, directly or indirectly for our health and welfare. We must ensure that biodiversity will be available for us and for all future generations,” they reminded. “We call upon leaders to recognize that to make the MDGs a reality in a highly populated planet, biological diversity needs to be used sustainably and its benefits more equitably shared.”

The statement was issued by the heads of five international conventions dealing with Biological Diversity. The conventions include: the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran 1971) and the World Heritage Centre (WHC).

The statement outlines the importance of biodiversity in providing important ecosystem services used by humans including: clean water, food, fuel and fiber, medicines and climate control. “As advances in reducing poverty and improving well-being for our growing population are made, we will more clearly understand the need for effectively functioning ecosystems” they said.

The world has already begun to recognize the role biodiversity plays to human wellbeing they reminded. “The importance of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity to achieving the MDGs has already been recognized by world leaders in their support for achieving a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010 – the so-called 2010 target.”

“Biodiversity can indeed help alleviate hunger and poverty, can promote good human health, and be the basis for ensuring freedom and equity for all” they stress. “We urge thus governments and civil society to act in helping to conserve and use biological diversity sustainably, thus ensuring all a share in the benefits of a diverse world.”

The full text of the statement follows. It is also available on the websites of the Conventions, including at www.biodiv.org/doc/statements/mdg-2005-en.pdf

Text of the Statement: Biodiversity: Life insurance for our Changing World

This week, in New York, leaders of the world will review progress made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These goals embody the international community's aspirations for a better world, where hunger and poverty are eradicated, all people enjoy basic rights, and equity and health prevail in all countries. We call upon the leaders to recognize that to make the MDGs a reality in a highly populated planet, biological diversity needs to be used sustainably and its benefits more equitably shared.

Biodiversity is the variety of life on earth: genes, species, ecosystems. The services we use from ecosystems, such as clean water, food, fuel and fiber, medicines, and climate control, cannot be provided without biodiversity. Failure to conserve and use biological diversity sustainably will perpetuate inequitable and unsustainable growth, deeper poverty, new and more rampant illnesses, continued loss of species, and a world with ever-more degraded environments which are less healthy for people. Unless we change the way we use natural resources and distribute the wealth generated, the MDGs will be remembered only as a utopian ideal.

The importance of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity to achieving the MDGs has already been recognized by world leaders in their support for achieving a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010 – the so-called 2010 target. They set this target because biodiversity is disappearing at an unacceptable rate as a result of human activities. Habitat conversion, overexploitation, pollution and climate change, are driven by an ever increasing demand for natural resources. This requires urgent and concerted action. We must sustainably manage and protect biodiversity, guarantee the continued provision of ecosystem goods and services and ensure that the world has the capacity to adapt to future changes.

As advances in reducing poverty and improving well-being for our growing human population are made, we will more clearly understand the need for effectively functioning ecosystems. A wide range of crop and livestock genetic diversity is essential to ensure that our agro-systems can adapt to new challenges from climate, pests and diseases. The biological wealth in marine environments will be needed to feed growing populations and provide livelihoods for coastal communities around the world. Wetlands are needed as water regulators to protect us from floods and storm surges, to help in moderating climatic change with other ecosystems such as forests, and to act as living filters for pollutants and excess fertilizers. We must not forget that biodiversity is central to many of the world's cultures, the source of legend and myth, the inspiration for art and music. It is the basis for medicinal knowledge, drawing on the property of a variety of plants and animals for healing. Provision of these services across all these ecosystems depends on maintaining biological diversity.

We, the heads of the secretariats of the international Conventions dealing with biological diversity, emphasize the important role that biodiversity plays in the achievement of all the MDGs. Biodiversity can indeed help alleviate hunger and poverty, can promote good human health, and be the basis for ensuring freedom and equity for all. All of us rely on biodiversity, directly or indirectly for our health and welfare. The 2010 biodiversity target is thus the foundation for our wellbeing, and continued sustainable existence. We must ensure that biodiversity will be available for us, and for all future generations. We thus urge governments and civil society to act in helping to conserve and use biological diversity sustainably, thus ensuring all a share in the benefits of a diverse world.

Hamdallah Zedan, *Executive Secretary,* Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
Willem Wijnstekers, *Secretary-General,* the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
Robert Hepworth, *Executive Secretary,* the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)
Peter Bridgewater, *Secretary-General,* Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
Francesco Bandarin, *Director,* the World Heritage Centre (WHC)

About the Biodiversity Conventions

There are five global biodiversity-related Conventions: the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar), and the World Heritage Convention (WHC). The work in the field of sustainable development and biodiversity undertaken by these conventions is complementary and mutually reinforcing.

<http://www.biodiv.org/convention/partners-websites.asp>

The **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** is an agreement among the vast majority of the world's governments to conserve biological diversity, use its components sustainably and ensure the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources. Biological diversity is the variability among living things and the ecosystems they inhabit. The combination of life forms and their interactions with each other and with the rest of the environment provides us with the goods and services required for human well-being. Unfortunately human activities are contributing to the loss of biological diversity, requiring changes in the way resources are used and the benefits distributed. Parties to the CBD have taken steps to translate the Convention into practical action including the initiation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans in over 100 countries, the raising of awareness about biodiversity, and the adoption of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, an international regulatory framework for the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. The CBD has been ratified by 187 countries and the European Community.

www.biodiv.org

The **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)** is an international agreement with the aim of ensuring that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. Annually, international wildlife trade is estimated to be worth billions of dollars and to include hundreds of millions of plant and animal specimens. Levels of exploitation of some animal and plant species are high and the trade in them, together with other factors, such as habitat loss, is capable of heavily depleting their populations and even bringing some species close to extinction. Because the trade in wild animals and plants crosses borders between countries, the effort to regulate it requires international cooperation to safeguard certain species from over-exploitation. CITES provides a framework to be respected by each Party, which has to adopt its own domestic legislation to ensure that CITES is implemented at the national level. For many years CITES has been among the conservation agreements with the largest membership, with now 169 Parties.

www.cites.org

The **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS)** aims to conserve avian, marine and terrestrial migratory species as well as their habitats throughout their range. CMS considers migratory animals to be an irreplaceable and valuable part of natural ecosystem that must be preserved for the future thus contributing to the 2010 target of reducing the loss of biodiversity. The Convention organizes transboundary cooperation for species migrating across national borders and provides the legal framework for global action. CMS strives for maintaining or restoring a favorable conservation status of animals and their habitats. The Convention works through its contracting Parties, other States and partner organizations. Its membership has grown to 92 Parties in Europe, Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Central and South America, Oceania and Antarctica. CMS has concluded Agreements on seals, bats, cetaceans, waterbirds as well as albatrosses and petrels.

www.cms.int

The **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands** is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. It was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and it is the oldest of the international environmental treaties. The Convention's member countries cover all geographic regions of the planet, and there are presently 146 Contracting Parties, with 1459 wetland sites, totaling 125.4 million hectares, designated as special places for conservation and wise use, under the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance. The main pillar of the Ramsar Convention's philosophy is the "wise use principle", pioneering the concepts of sustainable development and integrated approaches later used by other treaties and agreements. www.ramsar.org

Our cultural and natural heritage are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration. Places as unique and diverse as the wilds of East Africa's Serengeti, the Pyramids of Egypt, the Great Barrier Reef in Australia and the Baroque cathedrals of Latin America make up our world's heritage. **The World Heritage Convention (WHC)** links together in a single document the concepts of nature conservation and the preservation of cultural properties. The Convention recognizes the way in which people interact with nature, and the fundamental need to preserve the balance between the two. The States Parties to the Convention are encouraged to integrate the protection of the cultural and natural heritage into regional planning programmes, set up staff and services at their sites, undertake scientific and technical conservation research and adopt measures which give this heritage a function in the day-to-day life of the community. The Convention stipulates the obligation of States Parties to report regularly to the World Heritage Committee on the state of conservation of their World Heritage properties. It also encourages States Parties to strengthen the appreciation of the public for World Heritage properties and to enhance their protection through educational and information programmes. <http://whc.unesco.org/>

What is the 2010 Biodiversity Target?

In the Sixth Conference of the Convention on Biological Diversity in The Hague in Netherlands in April 17, 2002, its Parties acknowledged that biodiversity is declining at an alarming rate and resolved "to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on earth." This target was subsequently endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development held from 26 August to 4 September 2002 in the South African Johannesburg. <http://www.biodiv.org/2010-target/default.asp>

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