



COMMUNIQUÉ

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH ASEAN CENTRE FOR BIODIVERSITY TO PROTECT 20 PER CENT OF THE BIODIVERSITY OF PLANET EARTH

Montreal 21 June 2008. Despite occupying only three per cent of the Earth's surface, the ten member States of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) host 20 per cent of the all known species. South-East Asia has one third of all coral reefs in the world. Forty-five per cent of the region is covered by forests. However, up to three fourths of the forest cover and up to 42 per cent of the biodiversity of the region may be lost by 2100.

“Conserving biodiversity, saving humanity” is the motto of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, established with the financial support of the European Union. On 24 January 2007, the Asian Centre for Biodiversity joined forces with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to act as collaborative centre of excellence for the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention in the ASEAN countries.

At the invitation of Mr. Rodrigo U. Fuentes, the Executive Director of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif paid a visit to Manila to finalize the work plan for 2008-2010 for the implementation in the region of the decisions adopted by the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity, held in Bonn in May 2008 and the preparation of the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit, to be held in October 2010.

The work plan will be submitted in early July to the Centre's governing body. It revolves around assisting members of ASEAN to prepare their fourth national biodiversity reports and to assess progress made to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target and in the years beyond. The Centre will also assist its members in celebrating the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010 and enhance their preparation for the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit. The Centre will play an active role in promoting the “Green Wave Campaign” and in encouraging the schools in the ASEAN region to plant trees on the occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity, which is celebrated every year on 22 May. The elements of the work plan were submitted to the ASEAN ambassadors accredited to Manila, with the participation of senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of the Philippines.

During his visit, the Executive Secretary had a meeting with more than 30 representatives of civil society, and held a press conference with over 50 foreign and Filipino journalists. The Executive Secretary also met the Los Baños science community, comprising over 20 partners, with the participation of the Honourable Caesar Perez, the Mayor of Los Baños. The contribution of the Secretariat to the programme on climate change and biodiversity being promoted by the Southeast Asian Regional Centre for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) was also discussed. Dr Djoghlaif also paid a visit to the International Rice Research Institute to learn more about the modalities of the Material Transfer Agreements promoted under the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

During his visit, Dr. Djoghlaif met with Honourable Joselito L. Atienza, Jr, the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of the Philippines, to discuss the contribution of Philippines to the celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010, as well as the preparation of the work programme on cities and biodiversity. He also met with Philippine Senator Juan Miguel Zubiri, principal author of the Wildlife Conservation Act and founder of the Philippine Deer Foundation, regarding the mobilization of the senators of the world for the success of the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit in 2010.



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“The first visit of the highest-ranking official of an international multilateral convention to Philippines is clear demonstration to the importance attached to the need to promote the biodiversity agenda in the ASEAN region through a strategic partnership with the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity. The finalization of the work programme for 2008-2010 between the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, less than three weeks after the Bonn Biodiversity Conference is a clear demonstration of our commitment to translate into reality the Memorandum of Understanding signed between our two institutions early this year,” said Mr. Rodrigo U. Fuentes, the Executive Director of the Centre.

Dr. Djoghlaif stated that, “Meeting the unprecedented challenges facing the biodiversity family calls for enhanced partnership with regional institutions. We have a moral and ethical responsibility to protect the biodiversity of our planet. The partnership with the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity is a model that needs to be emulated in other parts of the world.”
