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## **All invited to Biodiversity Day celebrations today**

21 May 2010

TODAY is International Biodiversity Day and everyone is invited to come down to the Cultural Village to learn about the importance of biodiversity through music, games and educational presentations.

This year's International Biodiversity Day, themed Biodiversity for development and poverty alleviation, is particularly important because 2010 is the United Nations International Year of Biodiversity.

Throughout the year we will be looking at how all living things are, including humans, depend on each other for survival.

Six organisations who believe strongly in the importance of protecting our biodiversity have worked together to make this celebration a success, including the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Pacific Island Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), WWF and FSPI.

Rence Sore, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology, says that Solomon Islands is well known around the world for its high level of biodiversity.

“Solomon Islands has a very rich biodiversity with many unique animals and plants living in our lagoons, oceans, rainforests and mangroves,” Mr Sore said.

“Many Solomon Islanders rely on their natural environment for their livelihood– they fish in the sea for food, grow crops to eat, use plants for medicine and harvest trees for building and fuel.

“Our biodiversity is under threat from things like logging, over-exploitation and pollution.

“Humans are the main cause of biodiversity loss on earth and many of these losses are irreversible.

“But humans also have the power to save our animals and plants from extinction.

“International Biodiversity Day will recognize that protecting, conserving and enhancing our biodiversity will assist us to develop in a way that will provide our children with bright futures.”

FFA Director General N.F. Tanielu Su'a said: "FFA is pleased to support celebrations for International Biodiversity Day.

"Our biodiversity, our life', the regional slogan for the Year of Biodiversity, is very relevant to our work at FFA's regional headquarters here in Honiara.

"Tuna is a very important species for our economies, biodiversity, food security and culture here in the Pacific Islands.

"FFA helps countries sustainably manage, control and develop their tuna fisheries. We must take care of our fish, which is also our future."

UNDP said: "Solomon Islands have a vast diversity of animals and plants, some of them not found anywhere else on the planet.

"We wish to underline the importance of protecting your land, forests and marine areas from over-exploitation, so that future generations can also benefit from this abundance.

"UNDP is working closely with the Government to promote sustainable livelihood and protection of vulnerable marine and terrestrial areas, to achieve the targets with the Millennium Development Goals, and we hope this fruitful co-operation can endure also in the years to come."

William Atu, Program Manager for TNC in Solomon Islands said: "Biodiversity is our life. It is our investment bank. It is nature's greatest gift."

Joanne Pita from FSPI said: "Biodiversity safeguards food security and enhances rural livelihoods".

The celebration will start this morning at 8:45am when Clement Kengava, Caretaker Minister for the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology, will address the audience on the importance of biodiversity.

This will be followed by Burns Creek School presenting their International Biodiversity Day song.

On display will be works of art by primary school children on the theme of Our Biodiversity, OurLife and prizes will be awarded for competition winners.

The formal proceedings will be followed by quizzes, games and interactive information sessions.

The organisers, the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology, the United Nations Development Programme, FFA, TNC, WWF and FSPI would like to thank SPREP and Solbrew for sponsoring this event.