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CNN International's *Earth's Frontiers*' Debate Asks: Is the loss of planet's biodiversity a greater threat than climate change?

Over the next fortnight, CNN International focuses on biodiversity and brings viewers a special edition of *Earth's Frontiers* airing from Wednesday 25th August. CNN anchor Becky Anderson presents the latest debate in the series direct from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew - an international centre of biodiversity research - in London. On the panel are champions of the environment Ahmed Djoghlaif, UN Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, environmentalist Phillipe Cousteau, Paul Smith, Director of the Millennium Seed Bank at Kew Gardens and Jon Williams, Head of Biodiversity for PriceWaterhouseCoopers to discuss why we can no longer afford to ignore the greatest threat to our planet, the loss of our biodiversity.

"Biodiversity is life," comments Dr. Djoghlaif, "and we are losing our biodiversity 1000 times faster than nature intended... with each raised degree of the earth's temperature we lose 10 per cent of our biodiversity. It is a greater threat to our planet than climate change."

"We are ignoring our natural assets and we do not value economically our natural resources," says Jon Williams. "Governments should release that the loss of their biodiversity equates to a loss in the GDP of that country."

The debate on CNN International's *Earth's Frontiers* offers viewers the opportunity to find out the critical importance of maintaining our eco systems and why individuals, big businesses and governments can no longer ignore this grave challenge that threatens the future of our planet and our very existence.

For two weeks, CNN International's weekday primetime show *Connect The World* also features an *Earth's Frontiers* segment each day which promises to bring viewers reports from across the planet, delving deep in to the Amazon, exploring fragile eco systems, oil eating

enzymes, biomimicry and more to highlight the pressing problems that face our planet and possible solutions to preserve our precious natural resources.

About the programme

Earth's Frontiers is CNN International's monthly environmental programme which bridges the gap between science fiction and the reality of managing the planet's finite resources.

Cutting edge, investigative and futuristic, *Earth's Frontiers* promises to expose the challenges the planet faces from changing global resources; tests technologies being developed which will change ordinary people's everyday existence; confronts businesses consuming irreplaceable resources and debates the best way forward for the future of the planet.

The monthly programmes are punctuated by quarterly studio debates from major cities around the world.

CNN International's audience play a direct part in shaping the content of these debates, posting their reaction and opinion to the issues raised in the monthly programmes via a dedicated website www.cnn.com/earthsfrontiers, which also features video footage, reports and contributions. These are also accompanied by a wealth of iReporter comments and video via CNN's citizen journalism site www.iReport.com.

Transmission Times :

***Earth's Frontiers* ' biodiversity debate airs Wednesday 25th August at 0930 and 1730 BST; Saturday 28th August 0930, 1530 and 2130 BST; Sunday 29th August at 0630 and 1830 BST; Monday 30th August at 0430 BST on CNN International.**

- Ends -

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Notes to editors:

Connect The World

Hosted by Becky Anderson *Connect The World* joins together seemingly unrelated global stories, exploring how an event or circumstance in one part of the world can have a significant impact elsewhere.

The programme is an innovative mix of CNN reports, guest interviews, regular *Connect the World* contributors, in-show viewer interaction and feature segments, with Becky presiding as its dynamic but rigorous ringmaster. It runs the gamut of analysis and reportage on the day's global news stories, as well as local stories, culture, entertainment and sports, harnessing the show's website www.cnn.com/connect, i-Report site and other social networking sites to create a vibrant international show community.

Connect The World www.cnn.com/connecttheworld with Becky Anderson airs each weeknight at 2100 BST and will feature the following *Earth's Frontiers* packages and reports over the next fortnight:

Protecting the Amazon Rainforest

Where the Andes meets the Amazon lies one of the most biodiverse places in the world - Yasuni National Park. But for all its wonder, Yasuni finds itself locked in a battle between progress and preservation. As one of the last remaining tracks of virgin rainforest, Yasuni also sits atop nearly a billion barrels of untapped crude oil, worth an estimated \$9.2 billion. But Ecuador's president has come up with a unique solution that could see the international community pay Ecuador **not** to extract its oil. Could this be because a road map for future climate negotiations, or is it simply a case of environmental extortion? *Earth's Frontiers* goes deep into the Amazon to investigate.

Nature under threat in Turkey

The Kaçkar Mountains in north eastern Turkey are a biodiversity hotspot within a hotspot, teeming with birds, butterflies and bears. Local people have lived and worked the land for years using traditional techniques which mean their very presence is vital to maintaining the delicate environment around them. But this idyll is under threat from an unlikely source: hydro-electricity. There are already two hydro-electric dams in operation along the Çoruh River in the Kaçkar Mountains. A third dam, one of 1,500 more which are planned nationwide, would flood Yusufeli and the surrounding area, say residents.

The Science of Flight

Researchers are in the final stages of designing a micro-drone which follows the flying patterns of a dragonfly. It's just one example of how aviation engineers are looking to reproduce nature in their latest designs. *Earth's Frontiers* takes you to France, where scientists are increasingly following nature's lead.

Creating a 'Barcode' of Life

Imagine cataloguing the DNA of every form of life in the ocean. That's the task that a group of global researchers in Madagascar has set themselves. The Census of Marine Life is a 10-year scientific mission to assess and explain the diversity, distribution and abundance of life in

the oceans. The world's first comprehensive Census of Marine Life – past, present and future – will be published later this year. It mirrors a similar project in the UK to secure healthy and sustainable marine life and safeguard biodiversity. From the shores of Madagascar to the North Sea, we explore the cutting edge of marine biology and find out how it influences a wide spectrum of issues including climate change, biodiversity and health.

Undersea Gliders

The Leibniz Institute of Marine Sciences in Kiel, Germany boasts the biggest fleet of gliders in Europe. These instruments can explore the oceans up to a depth of 1000 metres while consuming only as much energy as a bike light. A glider can carry out autonomous missions for weeks or even months. Every glider is equipped with instruments to measure temperature, salinity, oxygen and chlorophyll content as well as the turbidity of the sea water. The aim is to better understand many processes in the oceans in a much more cost-effective way. Right now, scientists and technicians are preparing the devices for their first mission as a 'swarm' in the tropical Atlantic.

Amazing Eels

Replicating an eel's nerve circuitry may enable paralysed people to walk, according to scientists. In a collaboration that blends biology and robotics, researchers at Johns Hopkins and the University of Maryland are unraveling the circuitry in an eel's spinal cord to help develop a microchip implant that may someday help paralyzed people walk again. Experts in the field show us the project in progress – from the lamprey eels to the development of a microchip. They will use robotics to demonstrate the chip in action. We also hear from a quadriplegic about how they hope the research could help him.

Biomimicry

What would nature do? It's a question that scientists and engineers are increasingly asking when faced with difficult challenges. It's known as biomimicry, or biologically-inspired engineering. How can a Fibonacci numerical code inspire engineering to take you above the trees on an 18m high treetop walkway? This is nature transforming the world of structural design. Accompanied by a leading architect, we discover the far-reaching impact of nature's wisdom on human creativity. We follow the design process from its inspiration.

Oil-Eating Enzymes

Our oceans contain some of the oldest life on the planet and support some of the world's most diverse ecosystems. Oceans play a major role in maintaining the cycle of life on land by determining rainfall, temperature, climate and wind patterns. But what happens when that delicate balance is destroyed? The answer may lie in bioremediation. Bioremediation can be defined as any process that uses micro-organisms or their enzymes to return the environment altered by contaminants to its original condition. Could bioremediation be used to break down

crude oil after an oil spill? We travel to the marshlands of Louisiana with conservationist Philippe Cousteau to find out.

The Shrinking Aral Sea

Biodiversity is the variety of life on earth at all levels: from genes, to species, to entire ecosystems. But what happens when those ecosystems are jeopardised by humankind's desire for economic growth? Should biodiversity be sacrificed in the name of progress? And, once gone, can biodiversity ever be restored? The Aral Sea is home to one of the biggest man-made disasters in history. For decades its rivers were diverted to grow cotton on arid land, causing the Aral Sea, once the fourth-largest lake in the world, to lose more than half of its surface area in 40 years. What once was water is now desert, the landscape dotted with husks of rotting fishing vessels. But there is hope: thanks to a grant from the World Bank, an eight-mile dyke has raised water levels and increased the surface area to the point where fish could survive again. But is it too late to undo decades of mismanagement?