

# **Report on the Celebration of The International Day for Biological Diversity: Biodiversity and Agriculture in Ethiopia, 22 May 2008**

The United Nations proclaimed 22 May the International Day for Biological Diversity (IBD) to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues. With respect to this proclamation the Institute of Biodiversity Conservation (IBC)/Ethiopia and its key stakeholders and collaborators have celebrated the International Day for Biological Diversity (IBD) at Wendo Genet where remnant natural forests are found and the oldest and highly productive Forestry and Natural Resources College is located.

On 21 May 2008, all the invited guests and IBC staffs visited the field genebank and Mr. Belachew Wassihun, Head of Medicinal Plants Genetic Resources (IBC), gave a brief explanation about the conservation activities carried out since the establishment of this field Genebank to conserve the genetic resources of Medicinal, Horticultural, Forage and Pasture plants.

On 22 May 2008 a symposium entitled: "Biodiversity and Agriculture" was held in Wendo Genet Forestry and Natural Resources College to mark the International Day for Biological Diversity. The symposium was organized in partnership with **gtz** and the East and Central Africa Plant Genetic Resource Network (EAPGREN) to commemorate the day and to emphasize the value of agricultural biodiversity for food security, human nutrition, improved rural

livelihoods, and the need for actions to halt the loss of agricultural biodiversity and to enhance the contributions that rural landscapes make to human well being.

In his welcoming speech Dr. Kassahun Embaye, Deputy Director General of Institute of Biodiversity Conservation noted that celebration of the IBD this year reflects the importance of biodiversity for sustainable agriculture, that the biological diversity conservation ensures food security, socio-economic growth and development and environmental improvement through perpetual provisions of ecosystem goods and services. He also emphasized the adverse effects of unsustainable agricultural practices on biological diversity.

The State Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (MOARD), Dr. Abera Deressa, indicated in his keynote address that biodiversity should further be enhanced in order to utilize the huge potential for sustainable agricultural development. The State Minister added that sustainable agriculture seeks to make use of nature's goods and ecosystem services while producing an optimal yield in an economically, environmentally, and socially rewarding way, and preserving resources for future generations. He also strongly stressed that the sector must increase food production while adopting sustainable and efficient agriculture, sustainable consumption, and landscape-level planning that ensure the preservation of biodiversity.

Three papers were presented on issues related to Biodiversity conservation and sustainable agricultural development by stressing the need to properly protect and manage the Ethiopian biodiversity. Taking the necessary measures to use our biological diversity properly will ensure food security. Thus, every citizen of this country would find ways and intensively work together to reverse and significantly reduce the loss of biodiversity within a short period of time.

About 200 participants, including high governmental officials, representatives from government sector, private sector, NGOs, academia and research institutions discussed the links between biodiversity conservation and agriculture to alleviate poverty and ensure food security. On top of this, Ethiopia's role and responsibilities in dealing with global climate change, food crises and biofuel issues was also discussed.

### The National Symposium Program

<b>08:00- 08:30</b>	Registration of participants	Organizing Committee
<b>08:30-08:45</b>	Introduction to the program	Dr. Genene Tefera, Chairman of organizing committee
<b>08:45-09:30</b>	<b>Opening Remarks</b>	
	Welcome speech	Dr. Kassahun Embaye, Deputy Director General of IBC
	Opening speech	H.E. Dr. Abera Deressa, State Minister of MOARD
<b>09:00-11:00</b>	<b>Presentations</b>	
	Chairman of the symposium	H.E. Dr. Abera Deressa
	Use of Biodiversity	Dr. Tesfaye Awas- IBC
	Biodiversity and agricultural research	Dr. Tessema Tanto- IBC
	Biodiversity and sustainable Agriculture	Mr. Sileshi Getahun- MOARD
<b>11:00-11:15</b>	Coffee break	
<b>11:15-13:00</b>	<b>General discussion</b>	Participants
<b>13:00-13:15</b>	<b>Closing remark</b>	H.E. Dr. Abera Deressa

The celebration event, as part of international occasion, has been released on National TV (ETV) and Walta Information Center web site to increase awareness, knowledge sharing and to inspire participation of the community in sustaining the country's biological diversity with shared responsibility for Biodiversity conservation and sustainable agricultural development (for more information see: <http://www.waltainfo.com>).

In general, IBD was colorfully celebrated in Ethiopia at a time when the country has been performing appreciable economic growth and celebrating its second Millennium. It also served as a reminder of the importance of the country's biodiversity, and as a wake-up call about the devastating loss we are experiencing as irreplaceable species become extinct at an unprecedented rate.

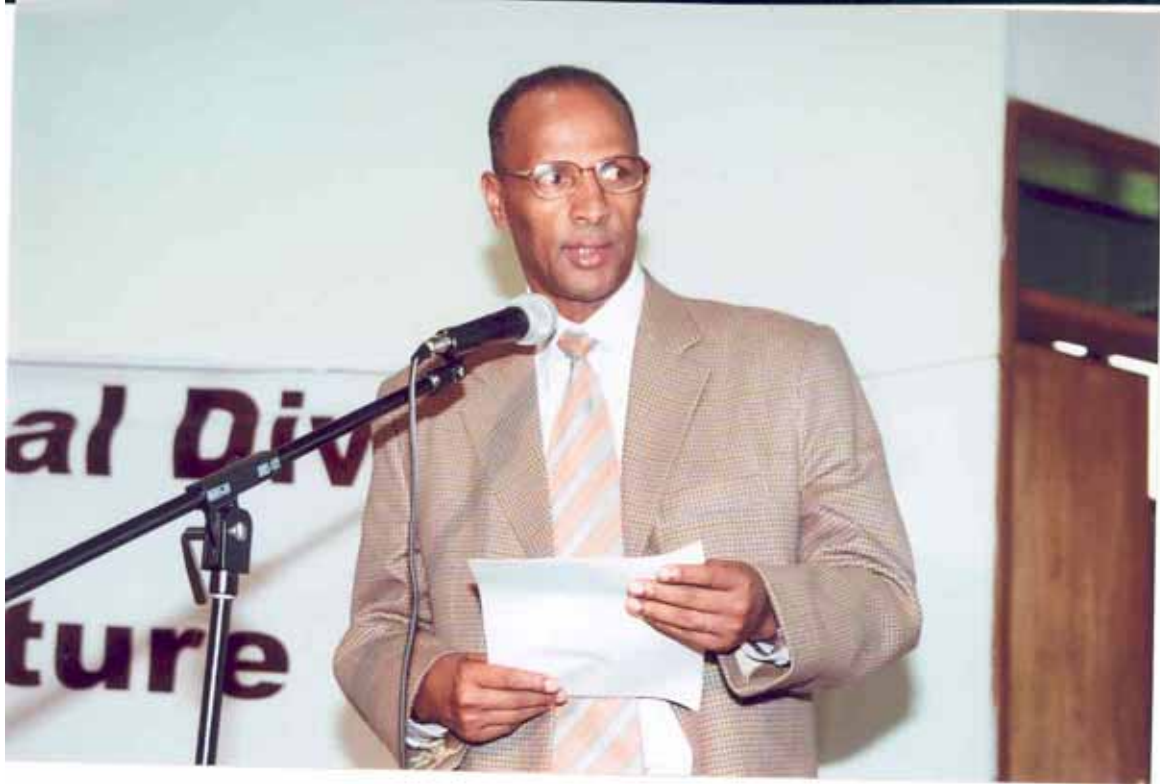
27 May 2008

IBC, Addis Ababa Ethiopia

**Event Photo show**



**Dr. Kassahun Embaye, Deputy Director General: Welcome Speech**



**H. E. Dr. Abera Deresa, State Minister of MOARD: Keynote Speech**

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**Dr. Tesfaye Awas, IBC: Presentation on the Use of Biodiversity for Socio-economic Growth and Development and Environmental Improvement**

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**Dr. Tesema Tanto, IBC: Presentation on Links and Interdependence of Biodiversity and Agricultural Research**

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*Mr. Seleshi Getahun, MOARD : Biodiversity and Sustainable Agriculture*



*Mr. Belachew Wassihun, IBC: Briefing on the field Genebank*

More photos of participants on the event ([Photos IBD 2008.ppt](#))

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