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PRESS RELEASE

2010 - The Global Biodiversity Challenge

London 21 May 2003 – More than 150 biodiversity experts from around the world are gathered in London, UK for a three day global meeting on the internationally agreed target of significantly reducing the current rates of biodiversity loss by the year 2010. The meeting brings together Government experts, representatives of biodiversity-related conventions, UN agencies, academic and research institutions, industry/business sector, local and indigenous communities, international and other relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations.

The meeting is organised by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity with the support of the World Conservation Monitoring Centre of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP-WCMC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The meeting is a direct follow-up to the 6th meeting of the Meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in April 2002, which adopted the first Strategic Plan for the Convention, with the bold target of significantly reducing the rates of biodiversity loss by 2010. This target was endorsed at the highest possible political level by world leaders gathered in Johannesburg for the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Hamdallah Zedan, the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, said that the World Summit was a milestone for biodiversity in other respects. "With the United Nations Secretary-General's WEHAB initiative, biodiversity concerns were, for the first time, placed squarely at the top of the sustainable-development agenda. For the first time outside the context of the Convention, biodiversity was formally recognized, together with water, energy, health and agriculture, as a basic necessity of life", said Mr. Zedan.

He further remarked, "The task is now to translate this political recognition of the importance of biodiversity into tangible and quantifiable results. They need to be tangible because it is essential that efforts to reduce the loss of biodiversity are seen to have a positive impact on people's lives, especially the lives of the poor. They need to be measurable so that progress can be evaluated, constraints identified and gaps addressed".

Over the next three days, the meeting delegates will seek ways to improve our ability to measure and report on both the status of biodiversity and its rate of loss, in order to assess progress towards and achievement of the 2010 target. They will also seek to elaborate the relationships between 2010 target and other biodiversity-related targets with a view to maximizing synergies, reducing overlaps and duplication, and harmonizing reporting on activities in support of these at local, national, regional and global levels. This meeting will explore ways

in which both national and international initiatives can work together effectively and report on what they are doing in ways that are appropriate to reviewing progress in achieving internationally adopted targets

“The challenge now is to operationalize the commitment to the 2010 target and find internationally acceptable and scientifically credible ways of achieving it and measuring progress in doing so. This meeting has a very important role to play in this respect”, said Mr. Zedan.

The hosting of this meeting coincides with the celebration of the International Day for Biological Diversity on 22 May 2003. The theme for this year, “*Biodiversity and Poverty Alleviation – Challenges for Sustainable Development*” is particularly relevant to the meeting discussions. It underlines the critical role played by biodiversity in overall sustainable development and poverty alleviation – a role that is now widely recognised as an essential component of national and international efforts to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals.

Note to journalists:

The “2010 – The Global Biodiversity Challenge” meeting is being held at the Institute of Mechanical Engineers, 1 Birdcage Walk, Whitehall, London.

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