



**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY**

PRESS RELEASE

For use of the media only;
Not an official document.

**In dry and sub-humid lands, stronger institutions needed
to protect biodiversity**

Scientific body of biodiversity convention meets in Montreal

Montreal 25 November 2005 – The Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) of the Convention on Biological Diversity will hold its eleventh meeting from 28 November to 2 December 2005 in Montreal. Representatives of 187 governments and the European Community will discuss a number of issues, including in-depth reviews of the programmes of work of the Convention for dry and sub-humid lands biodiversity, and the Global Taxonomy Initiative.

Dry and sub-humid lands biodiversity

“Dry and sub-humid lands such as arid landscapes, savannah and Mediterranean ecosystems represent almost half of the world’s terrestrial area” said Hamdallah Zedan, Executive Secretary to the Convention on Biological Diversity. “If we are going to ensure that animal and plant biodiversity in these areas is used sustainably, for the benefit of the people living there we need to redouble efforts to implement the programme of work on biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands of the Convention on Biological Diversity.”

According to an analysis of national reports from country Parties with substantial dry and sub-humid lands ecosystems in their territories, the continued weakness of institutions and lack of effective partnerships, along with limited political support and on-going conflicts related to resource access and use rights, has limited the implementation of the programme of work.

Delegates to the meeting in Montreal will consider ways to promote the implementation of decentralized management and other tools to deal with land tenure and conflict resolution, the deployment of additional financial and technical resources and a willingness to develop regional partnerships and collaborations. Ways to improve collaboration between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) will also be explored.

The Global Taxonomy Initiative: improving understanding of biodiversity

“It’s difficult to conserve what you don’t know exists”, says Hamdallah Zedan. “Taxonomy, the classification of living organisms according to an organizing principle, is the foundation of our understanding of the components of biological diversity. Consequently, taxonomic knowledge and capacity are key to effective conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity” the Global Taxonomy initiative of the CBD aims to overcome the taxonomic impediment - the gaps in knowledge of

taxonomy, the shortage of trained taxonomists and curators. While many countries have made assessments of their needs and priorities to overcome this impediment, many others have not yet done so.

Capacity-building efforts to support access to and generation of taxonomic information, particularly for developing countries, are underway by a number of actors. For example, BioNET International, through its Locally Organized and Operated Partnerships (LOOP) has made advances in training and capacity building, while building networks and contributing to information-sharing in developing countries. Information technology projects, such as the Electronic Catalogue of Names of Known Organisms (ECAT) of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, also represent important contributions. There remains a need for further efforts in this regard.

At the level of the work of the Convention there remains a critical need to integrate taxonomic elements into the implementation of the thematic work programmes. Taxonomic work has been quite well-integrated into the implementation of the programme of work on Marine and Coastal ecosystems, and national forest inventories contain significant taxonomic components. At the same time, more remains to be done for dry and sub-humid lands ecosystems and inland water ecosystems. Work on taxonomy for mountain ecosystems remains to be developed.

Other Issues to be discussed at SBSTTA

Delegates to the eleventh meeting of SBSTTA will also discuss a variety of other issues in their week-long meeting, including:

- a review of the findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and the significance of the report for the work of the Convention
- peer review of the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook, the Convention's flagship publication on the state of implementation of the Convention.
- exploration of proposals on the valuation of biological diversity, including a review of the ways to value the resources and functions humans derive from biodiversity
- issues in the further implementation of programmes of work on forest, mountain, inland water and marine and coastal biological diversity.

What: Eleventh meeting of the Subsidiary body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) of the Convention on Biological Diversity

Where: ICAO Headquarters, 999 University Avenue, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

When: Monday, 28 November until Friday, 2 December 2005

Contacts: David Ainsworth, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity: Tel: +1-514-287-7025; Mobile +1 514 833-0196; david.ainsworth@biodiv.org

The **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** (www.biodiv.org) is an agreement among the vast majority of the world's governments to conserve biological diversity, use its components sustainably and ensure the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources. Parties to the CBD have taken steps to translate the Convention into practical action including the initiation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans in over 100 countries, the raising of awareness about biodiversity, and the adoption of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, a an international regulatory framework for the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. The CBD has been ratified by 187 countries and the European Community.