



## CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **First ever scientific assessment of the impact of avian flu on wildlife and biodiversity launched**

**Montreal, 27 February 2006.**

The first ever scientific assessment of the impact of avian flu on wildlife and biodiversity will be carried out by international experts from around the world in conjunction with the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in Curitiba, Brazil, in March 2006.

International experts in animal health, public policy, conservation biology and law from around the world including those that experienced avian-flu outbreaks, will gather in Curitiba next month to assess for the first time the potential impacts of the avian flu on wildlife and to share their experience. This first scientific assessment is being prepared through an electronic forum to gather knowledge and share information among the scientific community including in affected countries. The results of the assessment will be submitted to the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which more than 100 ministers of the environment are expected to attend.

According to Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, "The threat to wildlife of the avian flu may be significant and could have devastating effects on our ecosystems and livelihoods." He noted that "There is evidence that the H5N1 virus can infect, in addition to poultry and migratory birds, a number of other animals in nature or in captivity, some of which are endangered."

Many reports point to migratory and waterbird species as vectors of the virus. However, wildlife could become an important reservoir and vector or serve as secondary "amplifier" for transmission to humans.

Dr. Djoghlaif cautioned that, "There is also a need to consider the potential impact of measures taken to prevent avian flu on biodiversity and the goods and services it provides. Such information is required for the development of adequate strategies to prevent or control further spread of the virus. The African continent is particularly vulnerable as containment measures and bird vaccination are less readily available. As poultry are killed on large scales, an important source of protein becomes unavailable to local populations. This may lead to increasing pressure on bushmeat and fisheries and increase poverty in affected poor countries."

The e-forum will be held over the period from 21 February to 10 March 2006 and is accessible to all at <http://www.biodiv.org/other/avian-flu.shtml>.

The brainstorming meeting will take place 19 March 2006, at 9 a.m, at the Expo Trade Convention and Exhibition Centre, Curitiba, Brazil. Governments and organizations that wish to send experts to the meeting should communicate the contact details of their experts to the Secretariat ([secretariat@biodiv.org](mailto:secretariat@biodiv.org)) no later than 9 March 2006.

**Information for Journalists:**

The Avian Influenza E-forum is accessible online at: <http://www.biodiv.org/other/avian-flu.shtml>

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