

**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY****PRESS RELEASE**

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*Tunisia donates mosaic to the Museum of Nature and Culture of the Convention
on Biological Diversity*

Montreal, 10 November 2006 - In a gesture of support for a sustainable future, based on a respect for biological diversity and cultural diversity, the President of Tunisia, H.E. Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, has graciously donated a beautifully crafted mosaic reflecting the biological wealth of ancient Tunisia to the Museum of Nature and Culture of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Among the 20 contributions from the Parties in the Museum, this is the first donation by a Head of State. The mosaic depicts El Jem in the third century AD. The original can be found at the Bardo National Museum in Tunis. Famous for its well-preserved Roman amphitheatre, El Jem was once an important centre for the manufacture and export of olive oil

At an unveiling ceremony, held yesterday at the offices of the Convention Secretariat in Montreal, the Executive Secretary of the Convention, Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaoui, said that: "The mosaic offered by H.E. the President of Tunisia, is a demonstration of his commitment to the concept of the international solidarity for biodiversity as well as a clear testimony of the umbilical relationship between the biodiversity and cultural diversity of the Tunisian nation." He also stated that the mosaic, "stands as the mirror of Tunisia's rich heritage and, as the faithful image of its history, representing, on Canadian soil, the new Tunisia dedicated to lasting sustainable development while remaining profoundly anchored in its ancestral values and firmly rooted in the founding principles of the respect for man and nature which constitute the distinctive marks of great nations".

The Tunisian Ambassador, H.E. Ambassador Abdesslem Hetira, in his statement, underlined the importance President Ben Ali attaches to the protection of the environment and biodiversity. He also stated that although Tunisia has only 10 million inhabitants, it was ranked 30th in the world by the Davos Global Competitiveness Report 2006-2007. The yearly report, a hit parade of the most competitive countries, which establishes this ranking based on technology development indexes, public-service performance and quality of the national macro-economic environment, also ranked Tunisia number one in both Africa and in the Arab world. He added Tunisia has been able to achieve such remarkable performance based on its respect for nature and culture.

In an article to be published shortly by the SCBD, HE Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of Tunisia, wrote: “for humanity to stay in harmony with nature, I call for a concerted and solidarity-based world governance, and launch an urgent appeal to governments and citizens of the world for the preservation of biodiversity, for a better management and a better allocation of resources, as well as for more efficient actions. To preserve life on Earth: Together, let us act for life.”

The Museum of Nature and Culture, established in early 2006 at the Convention on Biological Diversity’s Secretariat in Montreal, provides a unique opportunity to display the cultural and biological heritage of the 189 Parties to the Convention to the many visitors to the Secretariat from around the world. In keeping with the spirit of the Convention, the collection showcases the splendour of nature and all its diversity reflected by the intertwining of culture and nature.

Information for Journalists:

The Convention on Biological Diversity is one of the most broadly subscribed international environmental treaties in the world. Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro Brazil in 1992, it currently has 189 Parties—188 States and the European Community— who have committed themselves to its three main goals: the conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of its components and the equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. The Secretariat of the Convention is located in Montreal.

For more information, please contact Marie Aminata Khan at +1 514 287 8701; email: marie.khan@biodiv.org