



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

PRESS RELEASE

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International Day for Biological Diversity



Biodiversity and Climate Change

SECRETARIAT OF THE CONVENTION LAUNCHES UNEP'S *GLOBAL OUTLOOK FOR ICE & SNOW*

Montreal – 5 June 2007

World Environment Day, commemorated each year on 5 June, is one of the principal vehicles through which the United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and enhances political attention and action.

The Day was established by the UN General Assembly in 1972 to mark the opening of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. This year's theme on climate change, *Melting Ice – a Hot Topic?* focuses on the effects that climate change is having on Polar ecosystems and communities, and the ensuing consequences on all forms of life around the world.

World Environment Day has at its heart the empowerment of the individual citizen. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has urged everyone to embrace this year's theme and put the question to their political leaders and democratically elected representatives: just how much hotter does this topic need to become before governments across the globe finally act?

To mark the Day, celebrations were held around the world, with the main celebrations taking place on 4 June, in Tromsø, Norway, on the edge of the Arctic Circle. An important part of the celebrations was the launch of the new UNEP publication, *Global Outlook for Ice & Snow*, which highlights the changes in the volumes and extents of ice and snow, impacting global and local climates, ecosystems and human well-being.

The book was launched in Tromsø, Nairobi and at events in several countries around the world including Canada where UNEP's Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) located in Montreal, marked the Day with events in Montreal, Ottawa and Vancouver.

Montreal, headquarters of the CBD Secretariat, launched the publication in the presence of the diplomatic corps including consular representatives of Argentina, Chile, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Italy, Morocco, Tunisia and the United Kingdom, along with representatives of the Montreal Botanical Gardens, the University of Quebec in Montreal and the Montreal Biodome.

Ottawa, in the morning the launch took place at the Offices of the International Joint Commission. Participants included representatives from: the International Development Research Centre; the Canadian Commission for UNESCO; the Defense Science Advisory Board; the Ministry of Public Safety; the Norwegian Embassy; the Department of Foreign Affairs; the Canadian Centre for Antarctic research; the Canadian Polar Commission and the United Nations Association of Canada. In the afternoon the publication was launched at a symposium at Carleton University. Presentations were also made on indigenous knowledge and ice formation and on permafrost research in the Arctic. Partners agreed to disseminate the publication and its messages to educators and policy networks.



Vancouver, the publication was launched at two events: the first took place in collaboration with the University of British Columbia (UBC) at the Aquatic Ecosystems Research Laboratory. The event was attended by some 50 participants including researchers, scientists, students and a representative of the Canadian CBD office. The second was held in evening at the Telus Whistler Conference Centre in conjunction with the Whistler Municipal Council and was attended by the Mayor of Whistler, council members and the general public.

Meanwhile, in Berlin, the Executive Secretary of the Convention, Ahmed Djoghlaif, delivered a statement on biodiversity and climate change on the occasion of the World Environment Day addressed to the G8 on behalf of UNEP, UNDP, Countdown 2010, and the Equator Initiative. The event organized by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, attended by over 200 participants also marked the inauguration of the 2010 photo exhibit prepared by GTZ and GEO magazine in collaboration with CBD. A Memorandum of Understanding was also signed between the CBD Secretariat and the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development on capacity building and public awareness.

In his message on World Environment Day, the Executive Director of UNEP, Achim Steiner, stated, “Finally, the science of climate change is now indisputable, and has been further underlined in the latest reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released in February this year. The findings put a full stop behind the scientific debate as to whether humankind is influencing the climate and now beg the question of what we are going to do about it.”

Climate change magnifies the existing disparities between rich and poor and aggravates tensions over fragile or increasingly scarce natural resources, such as productive land and freshwater, potentially leading to a new class of displaced people known collectively as environmental refugees.

Six months from now, on the Indonesian island of Bali, governments will resume the climate talks at the 13th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Mr. Steiner hopes the meetings will be the watershed where science, security issues and economics combine to produce wide-ranging political action.

In summation, Ahmed Djoghlaif, said, “A new global alliance for life on Earth is urgently needed. We can no longer afford to miss any opportunity to turn the objectives of the Rio Earth Summit 15 years ago into practical action that will safeguard the planet’s life support systems. We owe this to ourselves, to our children, to future generations, and to life on Earth.”

Information for journalists

World Environment Day

World Environment Day was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1972 to mark the opening of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. Another resolution, adopted by the General Assembly the same day, led to the creation of UNEP. For more information please visit: <http://www.unep.org/wed/2007/english/>

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

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 in 1992, it currently has 190 Parties—189 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.

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