



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity



PRESS RELEASE

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ACHIEVING THE JOHANNESBURG BIODIVERSITY TARGET ON PROTECTED AREAS

Rome – 11 February 2008. The second meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Protected Areas (WGPA 2) under the Convention on Biological Diversity opened today at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome. The meeting will run from 11 to 15 February 2008.

Cornerstones of all national and regional biodiversity conservation strategies and natural wealth, protected areas provide a range of goods and services essential for life on Earth. Numbering more than 100,000 and occupying 11.6% of Earth's terrestrial surface, protected areas represent one of the largest land allocations in history.

The meeting was preceded over the weekend by a training workshop for participants organized by the Friends of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas, which comprises a coalition of Governments, NGOs and international organizations. Fifty-nine participants attended workshop. Similar training workshops have been organized in the form of eight subregional workshops, involving a total of 600 participants.

In his opening remarks, the Executive Secretary, Ahmed Djoghlaif, paid tribute to the many partner organizations that have helped to make the programme of work on protected areas an effective instrument. He thanked them for their time, financial contribution, and commitment, and above all, for their passion for active cooperation and partnerships to support implementation. He also thanked all the Parties that contributed financial resources and hosted the regional workshops. Together with the Convention Secretariat, they have established a vibrant partnership through an informal and effective consortium of partners called the "POWPA Friends".

At the opening session of the meeting, the Working Group heard a keynote presentation by His Excellency Emanuel Mori, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, who highlighted the achievements of Micronesia in protected area conservation. The President said, "I come to Rome, not as a matter of option, but by the dictates of conscience – to demonstrate the absolute priority to which my country attaches to the subject matter of this meeting, and to salute your work. That conscience flows from the conviction that we are all the stewards of God's creation here on Earth – that the bounties of Mother Nature are a priceless inheritance not only for those of us who are present here today, but also for the many who will be coming after us. In short, we have a moral obligation to sustainably manage the resources of the Earth for the benefit of the present generation as well as for the enjoyment of future generations."

In another keynote presentation, Mr. Juan Rafael Elvira Quesada, Secretary for the Environment and Natural Resources of Mexico, highlighted Mexico's achievements in the implementation of the programme of work, saying that Mexico has established public policies on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity based on ecological sustainability criteria, which have enabled the country to benefit from the conservation of natural resources, and assist in promoting social well-being. He further stated that, "protected areas are a fundamental element in our environmental policy strategy, perhaps the best consolidated in Mexico for the conservation of biodiversity and environmental services".



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Further presentations were made on the implementation of the programme of work on protected areas in Madagascar and in Brazil by, respectively, Mr. Guy Suzon Ramangason on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Harison Edmond Randriarimanana, Minister Environment, Water and Forests of Madagascar and by Ms. Maria Cecília Wey de Brito, Secretary for Biodiversity and Forests of the Ministry of Environment of Brazil.

The Minister of Environment of Ecuador, Marcela Aguiñaga will tomorrow make a presentation on sustainable financial resources for implementation of the programme of work in Ecuador.

The Executive Secretary of the Convention, Ahmed Djoghlaif, in addressing the opening session of the meeting, stated, "As the linkages between sustainable development, climate change, environmental services, poverty reduction, the Millennium Development Goals and protected areas becomes clearer and indisputable, effective implementation of the CBD programme of work on protected areas constitutes a central element for achieving the three objectives of the Convention and the 2010 biodiversity target."

Over the course of the week, the Working Group will conduct a review of implementation of the programme of work and explore options for mobilizing, through different mechanisms, adequate and timely financial resources for implementation. Specific topics that will be discussed include: (i) assessment of progress made in implementation; (ii) obstacles encountered during the implementation of the programme of work on protected areas and ways and means to overcome them; (iii) progress report on refinement and consolidation of scientific criteria for the identification of marine areas in need of protection and on compilation of biogeographical and other ecological classification systems; (iv) consideration of financial needs assessments; (v) options on innovative financing mechanisms; (vi) options on innovative mechanisms to develop public/private partnerships; and (vii) coordination of technical and financial support to improve efficiency and effectiveness of implementation of the programme of work.

BACKGROUND

The 2010 biodiversity target was endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 and the United Nations General Assembly at the 2005 World Summit. Its first goal is to promote the conservation of the biological diversity of ecosystems, habitats and biomes with its targets being: (i) at least 10% of each of the world's ecological regions effectively conserved and (ii) areas of particular importance to biodiversity protected.

At its seventh meeting, in 2004, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted a programme of work on protected areas (POWPA) to support the establishment and maintenance of a comprehensive, ecologically representative and effectively managed national and regional systems of protected areas with ambitious goals and clearly defined time-bound targets. In the four years since its adoption, some 2,300 new terrestrial protected areas and 50 new marine protected areas, covering approximately 50 million hectares, have been established. Currently, numbering in excess of 100,000, protected areas represent 11.6 per cent of the Earth's terrestrial surface - nearly 19 million square kilometres, an area of the size of India and China combined.

Protected areas constitute an important stock of natural, cultural and social capital, yielding flows of economically valuable goods and services that benefit human populations. Protected watersheds for example, cater to the drinking and irrigation needs of millions of people. A 2003 survey found that 33 of the world's largest cities obtain a significant proportion of their drinking water directly from protected areas. Evidence shows that the wealth protected in these areas translates into cumulative advantages across a national economy, with positive contributions to the livelihoods of the poorest and most vulnerable sectors of society. They also provide key support to the maintenance of cultural traditions and building social capital. Without these important components, sustainable development is impossible. Moreover, as unprecedented climate change becomes a reality, protected areas are key to buffering the unpredictable, yet inevitable impacts.

For more information on the programme of work on protected areas please visit:

<http://www.cbd.int/protected/>

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Convention on Biological Diversity is the international framework for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of its benefits. With 190 Parties, the CBD has near-universal participation among countries who have committed to preserving life on Earth. The CBD seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community. The headquarters of the Secretariat of the Convention is located in Montreal. For additional information, please contact Marie Aminata Khan at +1 514 287 8701; email: marie.khan@cbd.int