



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity



PRESS RELEASE

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GOVERNMENTS OPEN MEETING IN BONN TO TAKE ACTION ON DECLINING BIODIVERSITY RESOURCES.

Bonn, 19 May 2008 –Nearly 7,000 participants from 191 countries opened the United Nations Conference on Biodiversity in Bonn, Germany, today to take takes steps to conserve and sustainably manage the world’s biodiversity in light of the alarming rate of loss of species, compounded by the pressures from climate change.

The Conference, the largest gathering to date of the Convention on Biological Diversity, takes place less than two years before the date set by governments to meet the globally-agreed upon target of reducing the rate of biodiversity loss. Key issues on the agenda are directly linked to the current food price crisis, the loss of forests, climate change, and efforts to eradicate poverty.

The meeting is also taking place less than two years before the deadline, agreed by governments at their previous meeting two years ago in Brazil, to devise a system that provides access to, and shares the benefits from, the genetic resources of the world fairly between developing and developed countries.

“The Bonn Biodiversity meeting is taking place at a defining moment in the history of mankind,” said Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary to the Convention on Biological Diversity. “The challenge is daunting and I call upon all states to adopt exceptional efforts.”

“Half measures and business-as-usual are no longer options when it comes to the unprecedented loss of biodiversity, which, in the future will be compounded by climate change.”

Mr. Djoghlaif pointed to a new report by the development economist Pavan Sukhdev which puts the economic cost of the loss of the benefits that biodiversity provides at \$3.1 trillion a year, or 6 per cent of the global gross national product.

Sigmar Gabriel, German Environment Minister, and President of the Conference, said the Bonn meeting needed to produce a clear roadmap, similar to the one reached in Bali last December, toward a plan on an international set of rules that would govern the providing of access and equitable sharing of the benefits of biodiversity.

Such a set of rules would set the terms under which users of biodiversity resources, such as pharmaceutical companies, would have access to resources,. These terms would be balanced with provisions to guarantee that the providers of these resources, such as local communities or



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national governments, many of which are in developing countries, receive an equitable share of any of the benefits that are produced.

The issue of biodiversity has assumed greater prominence as the world is attempting to address the linked issues of climate change and the global food crisis. Mr. Gabriel urged governments to take stronger action as the world was not on the right path to protect biodiversity and said the world would not reach the 2010 target for reversing biodiversity loss.

Countries will also tackle a variety of issues concerning the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity including how to address the problem of invasive alien species, the loss of rainforest biodiversity, the degradation of marine ecosystems, and methods to value biodiversity in economic terms.

The conference will also look at how to expand one of the most successful programmes to conserve biodiversity—the establishment, maintenance, expansion and financing of a global network of protected areas including in marine ecosystems. Currently over 10 percent of the terrestrial area is covered by parks and conservation areas, but the level of protection in the oceans and seas of the world is considerably lower.

The gathering will submit their results to the Bonn Biodiversity Summit, which will be chaired by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, next week, which will count on the attendance of 120 heads of states and ministers.

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 an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits from utilization of genetic resources. With 191 Parties, the CBD has near-universal participation among countries 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 are located in Montreal.

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Information for journalists

To access the live webcast, please visit the home page of the CBD website, www.cbd.int, and follow the links indicated.

For information on the ninth meeting of the conference of the Parties go to:
<http://www.cbd.int/cop9/>

