



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

PRESS RELEASE

Not an official document



INTERNATIONAL
DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY

22 May 2008

BIODIVERSITY
AND AGRICULTURE

Media Advisory

3 Heads of State, 87 Ministers to Open Biodiversity High Level Conference

Bonn, 27 May—The leaders of Germany, Canada and Palau, together with 87 ministers, will open high-level talks aimed at promoting the protection of the world's biodiversity at the World Conference Center in Bonn tomorrow morning, 28 May, and continue at the Maritim Hotel through Friday, 30 May.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel will open the high-level dialogue and will be joined by Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Palau President Tommy Esang Remengesau, Jr.

The high-level discussions will be pivotal in reaching agreement on measures needed to achieve the 2010 target of reducing the rate of the loss of biodiversity. Plant and animal species are becoming extinct at a rate 100 times the natural rate of extinction due to human activities that include pollution, habitat loss, increased consumption and climate change.

“The participation of Heads of State at a Biodiversity Conference is unprecedented,” said Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. “Their participation highlights the fact that world leaders are recognizing the importance, seriousness and urgency of conserving our biodiversity and reducing the rate that we are presently losing animal and plants species to extinction.”

The High-Level meeting comes on the final three days of the two-week Conference, where countries are seeking agreement on a range of issues that include expanding and maintaining a network of protected areas, the use of biofuels in a manner that is commensurate with protecting biodiversity, a regime to manage the access and benefits of biological resources, measures to protect forest and marine biodiversity, and the use of genetically modified trees.

Jochen Flasbarth, Director General for Nature Conservation and Sustainable Use of Nature in the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, said negotiations continued through the weekend and that the atmosphere surrounding the talks remained positive. Nevertheless, he said, there were many contentious issues outstanding and time was limited.

The High-Level meeting will also highlight a preliminary look at a new report by the development economist Pavan Sukhdev, in which he 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.



ONE NATURE · ONE WORLD · OUR FUTURE
COP 9 MOP 4 Bonn Germany 2008



The High-Level Meeting follows a meeting of G-8 Environment Ministers in Kobe, Japan, where the ministers issued a joint statement recognizing the fundamental importance of biodiversity for human livelihoods, the eradication of poverty and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The ministers said that biological diversity constitutes the indispensable foundation of lives and of global economic development.

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