



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity



PRESS RELEASE

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BIODIVERSITY: A MISSING LINK FOR MITIGATING CLIMATE CHANGE **World Environment Day celebrated in Montreal**

Montreal: 6 June 2008 –World Environment Day was celebrated in Montreal yesterday by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Montreal diplomatic community by the hoisting for the first time of the United Nations flag at the entrance to the Montreal World Trade Centre, which has been host to the Convention Secretariat since January 1996. Also participating in the event was the President of the Group of 77 and China at the United Nations in New York. The theme of this year's Day is "Climate change: kicking the CO₂ habit".

Speaking on behalf of the 132 members of the Group of 77, H.E. Ambassador John Ashe, the Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations, stated that, "the very existence of the Group of 77 established since 1964 that I have the honour to chair is closely associated to the multilateral cooperation for development and I am very pleased to attend this historic event to convey the strategic importance attached by developing countries to the United Nations ideal of achieving sustainable development, which includes the achievement of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity".

In his statement, Mr. Richard Deschamps, representing the Mayor of Montreal, said that the day was a historic one, as it was the first time the United Nations flag had been flown on a building representing the Convention on Biological Diversity, one of the three Rio conventions. He further added that in line with this year's theme for World Environment Day "*CO₂ kick the habit*", the city of Montreal along with 120 partners had decided to "significantly reduce the city's greenhouse-gas emissions by 20 per cent between now and 2012."

"Biodiversity is part and parcel of any viable long-term response to addressing the climate-change challenges facing mankind and the effective and coordinated implementation of the three Rio conventions is the response of the new multilateral response for achieving lasting peace, shared prosperity and sustainable future," said Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

"*One Nature, One World: Our Future* was the motto of the recently concluded Bonn Biodiversity Summit, the largest-ever gathering of the biodiversity family," said Mr. Djoghlaif. He added that this historic meeting had been opened by German Chancellor Ms Angela Merkel and closed by the German President Horst Köhler, who stated that: "the Bonn paradox of being so small and at the same time so big has been confirmed by the Bonn Biodiversity Summit by establishing a new era of universal global alliance for protecting life on Earth and promoting synergies among the three Rio conventions while elevating biodiversity issues to the same level of the climate-change agenda."

Biological diversity can make a significant contribution to reducing the build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Oceans are substantial reservoirs of carbon, with approximately 50 times more carbon than is presently in the atmosphere and preventing its pollution itself can play a major role in maintaining or even enhancing its capacity to absorb carbon.



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Each year about 60 gigatonnes (Gt) of carbon (C) are taken up and released by land-based ecosystems and about another 90 Gt are taken up and released by ocean systems. These natural fluxes are large compared to the approximately 6.3 Gt being emitted from fossil fuels and industrial processes, and about 1.6 Gt per year from deforestation.

The current focus in the media as well as the public and policy makers has remained on ways to reduce the greenhouse-gas emissions from energy generation, although biological processes can have a much higher impact on atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases.

Biological mitigation of greenhouse gases through land-use change and forestry activities can occur by avoiding deforestation, sequestering carbon through afforestation and reforestation and substitution of fossil fuel energy by the use of modern biomass.

The estimated upper limit of the global potential of biological mitigation options through afforestation, reforestation, avoided deforestation, and agriculture, grazing land, and forest management is in the order of 100 Gt of carbon (cumulative) by the year 2050, equivalent to about 10–20% of projected fossil-fuel emissions during that period.

A biologically diverse tropical forest typically holds 50 times more carbon per unit of area than a monoculture plantation replacing it. “The decision of the Convention on Biological Diversity to promote biodiversity in forest management has a large potential to mitigate climate change, if countries followed it with vigour,” stated Mr. Djoghlafl at the World Environment Day celebrations.

“We don’t just burn carbon in the form of fossil fuels. Throughout the tropics, valuable forests are being felled for timber and making paper, for pasture and arable land and, increasingly, for plantations to supply a growing demand for biofuels. This further manifestation of our carbon habit not only releases vast amounts of CO₂, it also destroys a valuable resource for absorbing atmospheric carbon, further contributing to climate change,” stated the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on the occasion of the Day.

Gradually the potential of carbon sequestration is being recognized. According to Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), “The decision at the last climate-change convention meeting, in Bali, to include Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) opens the door for forests to be more widely factored into efforts. He added that: “The Government of Norway has announced it will provide \$2.7 billion over the next five years as incentives for REDD.”

The celebration of the World Environmental Day in Montreal was spearheaded by the Triple Presidency of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, comprising Brazil, Germany and Japan. Mr. Djoghlafl concluded by saying that, “addressing biodiversity challenges is a long-term endeavour, which requires the engagement of all stakeholders, including the business community. I applaud the establishment of the innovative and unprecedented Triple COP Presidency mechanism for the preparation of the United Nations Summit as well as the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit to be held in Japan in October 2010 and will coincide with the celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity.”

The ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity was held in Bonn, Germany, from 19 to 30 May 2008 with the participation of more than 5,000 participants representing the 191 Parties. The high-level segment was held on 28-30 May with the participation of Heads of State and Government and more than 100 ministers. More than 869 journalists attended the meeting. The proceedings were for the first time in the history of a meeting under the Convention were webcast live, thanks to the support of the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on

Climate Change, located in Bonn. The proceedings can be accessed until 31 December 2008 at the website of the Convention Secretariat (www.cbd.int)

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 191 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.

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