

Communiqué

THE GROUP OF 77 INITIATES THE PREPARATION OF A MULTI-YEAR PLAN OF ACTION FOR SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION ON BIODIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT

Montreal, 29 October 2009 – The Group of 77 and China have initiated, in partnership with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, a major initiative aimed at preparing a Multi-Year Plan of Action to promote South-South cooperation in support to the three objectives of the Convention. This initiative was welcomed by the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 at their annual meeting held in New York, in September 2009. The initiative is also a major contribution to the implementation of the United Nations-wide initiative aimed at fostering South-South cooperation.

A meeting of the former, current and incoming Chairs of the Group of 77 was held today in Montreal, at the headquarters of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and was convened in partnership with the Secretariat of the Group of 77 in New York and the UNDP's South-South Cooperation Unit.

Together with more traditional North-South cooperation models, triangular arrangements – where developed countries participate through financing and technical cooperation with two Southern partners – are also part of the strategy to use biodiversity as a core asset for development and poverty eradication.

These were the conclusions of the Steering Committee for South-South Cooperation on biodiversity for development under the Convention on Biological Diversity during its first meeting, held today at the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, in Montreal.

The Committee produced a draft Multi-Year Plan of Action, and defined the steps leading to its submission to the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 10) of the Convention on Biological Diversity to be held in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010. Deliberations from the South-South Forum, to be organized on 18 October 2010, prior to the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties will also be integrated into the Plan.

The Steering Committee also discussed the preparation of a consultative expert meeting to be held in Kampala, Uganda, from 31 May to 2 June 2010, at the invitation of Hon. Jesca Eriyo, Minister of State for the Environment, Uganda.

The Multi-Year Plan of Action for South-South Cooperation on Biodiversity for Development focuses on links between biodiversity, development, and human well-being. The purpose is to strengthen South-South cooperation and triangular arrangements in the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Furthermore, the Multi-Year Plan of Action will support the implementation of the 2011-2020 Strategic Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the 2020 Biodiversity Target to be adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its tenth meeting.

H.E. Mr. Abdalmahmood Abdalhaleem Mohamad, Chair of the Group of 77, stated from New York that “Biodiversity is an essential foundation for our national economies, and that enhancing regional South-South cooperation on biodiversity conservation and sustainable use will greatly assist efforts to reduce poverty and meet the Millennium Development Goals.”

H.E. Mr. Abdullah M. Alsaidi, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Yemen to the United Nations, and G-77 Chairman-elect for 2010 stated that “South-south cooperation is crucial to finding efficient solutions to common challenges in developing countries that have accumulated biodiversity knowledge and achievements to support other countries’ development efforts.” He further added “This significant process will assist mainstreaming biodiversity into relevant development sectors and into political, economic and social decision-making at national and regional levels.”

The Executive Secretary of the Group of 77, Mourad Ahmia, stated that the Group of 77 has long worked on fostering South-South cooperation in the areas of trade, economic development, food security, infrastructure, science and technology, and health. “This Multi-Year Plan of Action for South-South Cooperation on Biodiversity for Development will provide an opportunity for developing countries to support the mainstreaming of biodiversity concerns into regional integration processes, regional and subregional cooperation agreements, development programmes and inter-regional South-South initiatives.” He further added, “The plan of action will also provide a platform for exchange of scientific and technical knowledge as well as experiences, and best practices among developing countries in order to conserve crucial biodiversity.”

“We are looking to the G-77 for political leadership in linking the ministries of foreign Affairs and Environment to the process of the Convention on Biological Diversity, since developing countries are the custodians of biodiversity - South-South cooperation should be the catalyst to link the three objectives of the Convention to the political processes,” said Professor James Seyani, Malawi, also Bureau member of the Conference of the Parties.

Dr. Spencer Thomas from Grenada, also Chair of the Subsidiary Body on Technical, Technological and Scientific Advice (SBSTTA) stated that climate change cannot be discussed without taking biodiversity into account as in some countries biodiversity loss is at times the cause of climate change. He emphasized that “South-South cooperation must work harder to fix the divide between finance and transfer of technology, and must organize itself properly to fight these discrepancies and gaps. To accomplish this task, the G-77 must be more involved in all the different processes, including the development of the revised strategic plan of action.”

Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, congratulated the commitment of the Group of 77 and the Steering Committee on the development of this Plan of Action. He emphasized that the overwhelming majority of biodiversity is found in developing countries and that South-South cooperation to halt biodiversity loss is critical to the sustainability of the Planet.

“It is an honour for the Secretariat to enter into this important partnership with the Group of 77 to promote South-South cooperation on an issue which is so vital for the future of mankind and where the countries of the South have so much knowledge to exchange between themselves. We need the experience and know-how of developing country Parties as a complement to necessary North-South cooperation and to meet the unprecedented biodiversity challenges facing mankind.” said Mr. Djoghlaif.

More information can be found at www.cbd.int/cooperation/SouthSouthcooperation.shtml.