



## PRESS RELEASE

### **CURITIBA, ONE OF THE GREENEST CITIES IN THE WORLD, CELEBRATES THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF BIODIVERSITY**

*Montreal, 8 January 2010.* At the initiative of the United Nations General Assembly and with a view of engaging all stakeholders for protecting life on Earth, 2010 has been declared as the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB). In his message to the world on the occasion of the IYB, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, said: “For this International Year of Biodiversity, I call on every country and each citizen of our planet to join together in a global alliance to protect life on Earth. Biodiversity is Life, Biodiversity is OUR Life.”

To mark this important event, Brazil, one of the world’s 17 megadiverse countries, convened in Curitiba an international event to celebrate the richness of life on Earth. The celebration, which took place on the margins of the Second Curitiba Meeting on Cities and Biodiversity, on 6-7 January 2010, was attended by 95 participants, including representatives of 18 cities from around the world and the national focal points for the Convention on Biological Diversity from Canada, the United Kingdom, South Africa and Brazil. Other participants included specialists in urban biodiversity and green infrastructure, NGOs and ICLEI, a global network of 1,100 cities from around the world and a partner in the CBD Global Partnership on Cities and Biodiversity. Aside from Mayor Beto Richa of Curitiba, attending authorities included Acting Minister of Environment Izabella Teixeira of Brazil, Minister Mah Bow Tan of Singapore and Ms. Kobie Brant, ICLEI Director for the African region. Mayor Juergen Nimptsch of Bonn sent a video message in which he committed to support the CBD’s Global Partnership on Cities and Biodiversity. National media coverage was extensive and launched the first national campaign on the IYB.

Mr. Mah Bow Tan, Minister of National Development of Singapore, who, at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in Bonn, Germany, announced his country’s commitment to develop a specific index on cities’ biodiversity, which now carries the city-state’s name, said: “My warmest congratulations to the CBD, and to our host Mayor Beto Richa, for this celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity. It marks an important milestone in CBD’s mission to reduce the global biodiversity loss. It is appropriate that we are launching the International Year of Biodiversity in Curitiba, a city renowned for pursuing sustainable urban planning and development. Singapore is honoured to be invited to participate in this launch event with other like-minded cities which believe in the contribution of biodiversity to the quality of the urban environment. I applaud the efforts made by the Secretariat of the CBD to bring cities together in a global partnership to share knowledge, adopt best practices and find solutions to conserve the diversity of species in our living environment.”

The well known Canadian film-maker and scientist Jean Lemire, invited to announce his upcoming world tour to highlight the strong links between climate change and the loss of biodiversity, impressed the audience with an emotional report on the recent reduction and late arrival in the ice cover of the Antarctic, and with the images showing the impact of these radical change on biodiversity. “If we do not change our



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way of life, the Adele penguin and many other Antarctic species will disappear in less than 20 years,” he said. “Every one of us has to do our part – it is unacceptable not to take immediate and effective action.”

Mr. Eric Blencowe, National Focal Point of the Convention for the United Kingdom, said, “I welcome the progress made in this meeting towards the development of a constructive plan to realize the potential for cities fully to implement the three objectives of the Convention, and I am really encouraged by the commitment shown by Brazil, in its first celebration of 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity, to effectively communicate to its citizens the vital importance of the fight to preserve life on Earth”.

Ms. Izabella Teixeira, Acting Minister of the Environment of Brazil, added that “it is a pleasure to launch the International Year on Biodiversity in Curitiba, a leader in leveraging biodiversity towards a better quality of life for its citizens. Today, as our country is faced with the double challenge of climate change and loss of biodiversity while addressing the Millennium Development Goals, Brazil’s 5,600 municipalities play a key role. This is why Brazil commits to submitting the Plan of Action on Cities and Biodiversity, developed in this meeting, to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention at its tenth meeting.”

Mayor Beto Richa, host of the event and a member of the Steering Committee of the CBD Global Partnership on Cities and Biodiversity, said: “Curitiba is honoured to host Brazil’s first official event of the International Year of Biodiversity, as we have also been to receive the 4,000 participants in the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 2006 and two successive meetings of the CBD Cities and Biodiversity Initiative. With our partner ICLEI and its pioneering Local Action for Biodiversity programme, Curitiba walks the talk: today, we inaugurated the Santo Inacio urban park of 11,000 square metres, an island of biodiversity specifically dedicated to the Convention, and paid tribute to my friend Dr. Ahmed Djoghlafl naming a lookout in his honour. Over the next two years, we plan to create another 20 such parks, with the goal of covering two million square metres of the endangered Araucaria forest before the decade is over. In these and other endeavours, I feel encouraged by the valuable support of the Secretariat of the CBD”.

The Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Ahmed Djoghlafl, noted that: “I feel humbled by the decision of the Mayor to name a lookout of the Santo Inacio urban park in my honour. Indeed, since the Rio Earth Summit, Brazil has been a champion in promoting the biodiversity agenda. The CBD was opened for signature in Rio de Janeiro and Curitiba hosted the historic Biodiversity Summit that ushered a new phase of enhanced implementation of the three objectives of the Convention. It is therefore fitting that Brazil, under the leadership of Mayor Beto Richa, should be the first country in the world to celebrate the IYB.” He added that “this important international year signals a once in a lifetime opportunity for us to raise global awareness of the crucial importance of biodiversity for our health, our wealth, our food, indeed for our life.

“Biodiversity is the basis for human development, this is particularly true for the least privileged, as they will suffer the most from the loss of biodiversity,” he said.

This ceremony marks the start of a global campaign which will culminate next October at the Biodiversity Summit in Nagoya, Japan, with the adoption by the Parties to the Convention of a new Strategic Plan for the period 2011-2020 as well as a longer-term vision for managing biodiversity.

## BACKGROUND

Proclaimed by the United Nations, the goals of the International Year of Biodiversity are to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity, highlighting the fact that it continues to be lost, and to celebrate novel solutions being carried out around the world for its conservation and sustainable use, and the equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources.

The Year 2010 was chosen to coincide with the biodiversity target agreed by world leaders in 2002. During the Year scientists will report on a global trend on biodiversity. The third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook, to be published in May, is expected to report that most trends are negative.

On the basis of this scientific information, countries will over the year evaluate what actions will be needed in the next decade and will set the vision for the next 30 years.

As the world prepares to celebrate the International Year, events will be held in every region of the world. India held its launch on 4 January and many others are planned in the weeks to come.

The official global launch will be held in Berlin on 11 January, organized by German Chancellor, Angela Merkel.

This opening will be followed by a high-level event and scientific conference organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris from 21 to 29 January.

Countries are already mobilizing to hold activities throughout the year. To date, one third of the Parties to the Convention have already announced plans for activities.

These celebrations and events will lead up to some important policy meetings including a special high-level meeting on biodiversity during the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly, culminating with the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit in October 2010.

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***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 193 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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