

COMMUNIQUÉ

ENGAGING NORTH AMERICA PEOPLE IN PROTECTING LIFE ON EARTH

12 February 2010. At the initiative of the United Nations Development Programme and in partnership with the American Museum of Natural History, the official launch of the International year on Biodiversity for North America region was held on 10 February 2010 in New York at the prestigious hall of Ocean Life of the Museum with the participation of many representatives of the permanent missions accredited to the United Nations.

Addressing the 400 participants attending this unique event the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Ban Ki-moon stated that: “Last year’s financial crisis was a wake-up call to Governments on the perils of failing to oversee and regulate complex relationships that affect us all. The biodiversity crisis is no different. We are bankrupting our natural economy. We need to fashion a rescue package before it is too late.”

The Secretary-General added, “We must use the International year of Biodiversity to reinforce the links between natural capital and development. He also reminded participants that, “In fact, the global de Later this year, the United Nations General Assembly will hold a high-level meeting on biodiversity. We will also hold a Summit on the Millennium Development Goals”. He concluded by urging the international community to “send a clear message to the Biodiversity Summit in Nagoya, Japan, this October that we need a renewed global commitment for conserving Earth’s biological diversity for the benefit of all”.

Addressing participants, the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Mr. Ahmed Djoghla, recalled the statement of President Theodore Roosevelt enshrined in the wall of the Museum, which reads, “The nation behaves well if its treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased and not impaired in value. Conservation means development as much as it does protection.” He stated that this is what the International Year of Biodiversity is about and why the Convention on Biological Diversity needs the leadership of the United States. He concluded inviting the United States to celebrate the International Year by joining the great biodiversity family.

Promoting the universality of the Convention on Biological Diversity on the occasion of the International Year was discussed at the meeting between the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and the Executive Secretary of the Convention. Other subjects of discussion were the preparation of the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit and the high-level meeting on biodiversity during the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly to be held in September 2010.

During the ceremony, the film *Life* produced by the Discovery Channel was presented. The Executive Secretary paid tribute to UNDP for organizing this event after the UNESCO and UNCTAD events and invited all the United Nations sister agencies to do the same
