

PRESS RELEASE

Biodiversity: the foundation of human well-being and global prosperity Celebrating the International Day for Biological Diversity

Montreal 22 May 2010. Since 1994, the world has celebrated the International Day for Biological Diversity. The celebration on 22 May this year is, however, special. This is not only because 2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity, but also because the theme, “Biodiversity for Development and Poverty Alleviation”, reminds us of the unique contribution of biodiversity to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, including poverty alleviation.

Despite the importance of biodiversity, the news is not good. The recently released third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook, based on 120 national reports received from Governments, demonstrates that biodiversity continues to be lost at an unprecedented rate, with trends projected to become worse, undermining efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Reversing this negative trend is not only possible, but essential to human well-being.

On 22 May, communities will reflect on the important role of the variety of life on our planet in providing for the wealth, health and well-being of all, but particularly the poorest. Celebrations are planned around the world, including a major and unprecedented celebration at the African headquarters of the United Nations, in Nairobi.

Biodiversity is important for development and poverty alleviation for the following reasons:

- Nearly a sixth of the world’s population depends on protected areas for significant percentage of their livelihoods;
- Over a billion people in developing countries rely on fish as a major source of food, but 80% of the world fisheries are fully or over- exploited;
- The wetlands of Okavango Delta, for example, generate \$32 million per year for local households in Botswana, mainly through tourism. The total economic output amounts to \$145 million—2.6% of Botswana’s GNP;
- 1.6 billion people in the world rely on timber and non-timber forest products, but the annual rate of deforestation is 13 million hectares, or roughly the area of Bangladesh.

In recognition of the importance of biodiversity, the Johannesburg target of substantially reducing the rate of loss of biodiversity by the year 2010 was integrated into goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), on environmental sustainability.

However, reversing biodiversity loss is a key dimension of the MDG agenda as a whole and contributes not only to a healthy environment, but also to all other MDG goals, including ending

extreme poverty and hunger, ensuring health and education for all, and achieving international cooperation.

Echoing the theme of the International Day for Biological Diversity, the Outlook also noted that it is not possible to see the continued loss of biodiversity as an issue separate from the core concerns of society. Realizing the MDGs and improving the health, wealth and security of present and future generations will be more likely if biodiversity is given the priority it deserves in development plans and programmes.

The celebration of this theme is a contribution to the 10-year review of the Millennium Development Goals, to be held in New York on 20-22 September 2010 with the participation of heads of state and government. This theme is also being suggested for the first-ever summit of Heads of State and Government on biodiversity, to take place also in New York on 22 September 2010 during the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The New York Biodiversity Summit offers a unique opportunity to the leaders of the world to provide leadership and shape the new biodiversity vision. This vision will be translated into a strategic plan of action for the next decade at the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit to be held in Japan in October.

Angela Cropper, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, stated: “It is an honour for UNEP to host this celebration of this major event, as the theme selected is central to its mission and at the core of all our activities. It is a major contribution to this year’s celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity.”

Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, stated: “The message of the Global Biodiversity Outlook 3 is crystal clear. A new biodiversity vision is urgently required. To accept business as usual is to accept a future with reduced biodiversity and increased poverty and hunger.”

He added that, “Biodiversity is not only of an aesthetic value, it sustains our life and our economy. It is a fundamental component of sustainable development and to the future Green Economy. Acting to reverse the current trends is acting for a green and prosperous future for humanity.”

“Africa has so much to lose, if business as usual continues, and has so much to gain if decisive action is taken. This is why the global celebrations are being held in Africa with the help of the United Nations Environment Programme at the United Nations Office at Nairobi,” said Mr. Djoghlaif.

Notes to Editors:

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and entering into force in December 1993, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. With 193 Parties, the Convention has near universal participation among countries. The Convention 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 Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, a supplementary treaty to the Convention, seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. To date, 156 countries and the European Union are party to the Protocol. The Secretariat of the Convention and its Cartagena Protocol is located in Montreal.

For more information visit www.cbd.int

The International Day for Biological Diversity

For further information, visit www.cbd.int/idb

Resources on the Webpage for the International Day for Biological Diversity

Statement by the United Nations Secretary-General:

<http://www.cbd.int/idb/2010/messages/>

Booklet on Biodiversity for Development and Poverty Alleviation:

<http://www.cbd.int/doc/bioday/2010/idb-2010-booklet-en.pdf>

<http://www.cbd.int/doc/bioday/2010/idb-2010-booklet-fr.pdf>

<http://www.cbd.int/doc/bioday/2010/idb-2010-booklet-es.pdf>

Global Celebrations:

<http://www.cbd.int/idb/2010/celebrations/>

The 2010 International Year of Biodiversity

For further information, visit www.cbd.int/2010 or www.facebook.com/iyb2010

For additional information, please contact:

David Ainsworth on +1 514 833 0196 or at david.ainsworth@cbd.int. Or Johan Hedlund on +1 514 2787 7760 or at johan.hedlund@cbd.int
