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PRESS RELEASE

World celebrates biodiversity as a major tool for achieving development and alleviating poverty

Montreal, 24 May 2010. Stakeholders in over 70 countries in all regions of the world celebrated last Saturday's International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) under the theme of biodiversity for development and poverty alleviation. Celebrations coincided with activities in over 50 countries for the Biodiversity Action Day organized by the German Government serving as President of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Given the theme of the Day, it was fitting that the main celebration of the International Day for Biological Diversity took place in Africa, in Nairobi, at the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme, the host of the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The occasion in Nairobi was marked with the ringing of the Mass Extinction Memorial Observatory (MEMO) bell, simultaneously with another in the United Kingdom.

The celebrations of both the International Day and the Biodiversity Action Day were also linked in Nairobi, where delegates travelled to the Huruma community on the edge of Karura Forest, to witness first-hand the way that forest ecosystems provide goods and services to people.

Around the world, students and communities participated in *The Green Wave* educational programme of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which was launched in Germany in 2008. Almost 1,000 groups in 59 countries have so far posted details of tree-planting ceremonies carried out to mark the Day. This year, *The Green Wave* received a boost with the appointment of Mr. Jean Lemire, a Canadian film maker and explorer, as ambassador for the campaign. The campaign also benefited from the publication of a survey on children and nature undertaken in 10 countries involving 10,000 children aged between 5 and 12 years.

The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity announced that forests will be the theme of the International Day in 2011. "Forests are the most important terrestrial reservoir of biodiversity. The health and vitality of our forests, and thus the full range of services they can provide, are directly linked to biodiversity – the diversity of species, genes and ecosystems. And this in turn is linked to the well-being of our planet and all life on it, including ours," said Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention.

Forests are home to two thirds of all known terrestrial animals and plant species, and they produce globally important ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration, rainfall generation and over 5,000 commercial forest products. More than 1.6 billion people depend directly on forests and forest products for their livelihoods, materials for shelter, food, medicines, and water filtration. The choice of the theme for 2011 is a contribution of the Convention to the forthcoming 2011 International Year of Forests. "The two International Years—that of biodiversity and that of forests—will provide excellent opportunities to further intensify the collaboration between the forest and biodiversity families for the benefit of the forests, biodiversity, climate and soil agendas," said Mr. Djoghlaif.



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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, 157 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

The United Nations proclaimed May 22 the International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues. When first created by the United Nations General Assembly in late 1993, 29 December (the date of entry into force of the Convention of Biological Diversity), was designated the International Day for Biological Diversity. In December 2000, the General Assembly changed the date to 22 May to commemorate the adoption of the agreed text of the Convention on 22 May 1992 through the Nairobi Final Act of the Conference for the Adoption of the Agreed Text of the Convention on Biological Diversity. This was partly done because it was difficult for many countries to plan and carry out suitable celebrations for the date of 29 December, given the number of holidays celebrated around that time of year. Past themes include:

2011 - Biodiversity and Forests

2007 - Biodiversity and Climate Change

2010 - Biodiversity, Development and Poverty Alleviation

2006 - Protect Biodiversity in Drylands

2009 - Invasive Alien Species

2005 - Biodiversity: Life Insurance for our Changing World

2008 - Biodiversity and Agriculture

2004 - Biodiversity: Food, Water and Health for All

Visit www.cbd.int/idb/2010 and see messages, statements and celebrations for this year's International Day for Biological Diversity.

The 2010 International Year of Biodiversity

The United Nations proclaimed 2010 to be the International Year of Biodiversity, and people all over the world are working to safeguard this irreplaceable natural wealth and reduce biodiversity loss. This is vital for current and future human wellbeing. The International Year of Biodiversity is a unique opportunity to increase understanding of the vital role that biodiversity plays in sustaining life on Earth. Visit www.cbd.int/2010 to find out:

- What people are doing around the world to combat biodiversity loss
- Some of the resources available to you in your celebrations

Also visit the facebook page: www.facebook.com/iyb2010

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