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PRESS RELEASE

International conference discusses the value of biodiversity for economic and cultural life

Montreal, 11 June 2010 – Representatives of business, government, civil society and indigenous and local communities gathered in Montreal this week to discuss the intrinsic value of biodiversity to our economies, our cultures and our social lives.

Specifically, participants in the 16th International Economic Forum of the Americas/Conference of Montreal and the International Conference on Biodiversity and Cultural Diversity: Diversity for Development – Development for Diversity, being held at the Hilton Bonaventure hotel in Montreal from 8 to 10 June, discussed ways to transform political commitments into concrete actions by developing recommendations towards effectively integrating biological and cultural diversity into development cooperation strategies and programmes.

“Human beings are an integral part of nature. However to address the unprecedented challenges of the continued loss of biodiversity compounded by climate change a new relation based on respect and value between man and nature is urgently required,” said Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. “This is the objective of the Montreal initiative on cultural diversity and biological diversity.”

The joint conference, organized by the Conference of Montreal in partnership with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the University of Montreal, aimed to introduce participants to the pivotal role biodiversity plays in sustainable development, and to help develop ideas on a global research programme for the relationship between biodiversity and cultural diversity and how lessons learned can be applied to the global problems currently facing humanity.

“The impact of the reduction of biological cultural diversity on the resilience of the planetary system is profound. The simultaneous loss of language, knowledge systems and specific ways of life, has brought to the fore new challenges for coupled social-ecological systems,” said Hans d’Orville, Assistant Director-General for Strategic Planning, UNESCO, adding that: “Globalization can promise or hinder dialogue among cultures and people and bring about better understanding and knowledge about different cultures and their practices or ignore their value.”

The Conference was not simply organized by environmental specialists for environmental specialists, but rather aspired to bring together civil society, interested citizens, youth, representatives of indigenous and local communities, politicians, development cooperation agencies and environmentalists to jointly pave the way forward and enhance the conservation of biological and cultural diversity as a key basis for sustainable development.



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The richer the diversity of life, the greater the opportunity for medical discoveries, economic development, and adaptive responses to such new challenges as climate change, and the richer our cultural traditions will be.

Among its outcomes, the Conference adopted elements for a programme of work to be jointly implemented by UNESCO, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and other partners, which will then be submitted for approval at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, to be held in Nagoya, Japan in October 2010.

The work programme's vision to work with the global community to sustain biological and cultural diversity for present and future generations and amongst its initial steps are plans to support and foster learning networks on bio-cultural approaches to sustainable development, linking grassroots and community initiatives with national, regional and global policy-making processes.

Noted Canadian scientists and environmentalists including David Suzuki, co-founder of the David Suzuki Foundation, and Jean Lemire, producer of the film *The Last Frontier* delivered plenary keynote addresses on the links between biological and cultural diversity for development on the final day.

Information on the Conference and on the programme can be found at: www.cbd.int/images/icbcd/programme_eng.pdf

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 and sustainable use of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits from utilization of genetic resources. With 193 Parties, the Convention has near universal participation among countries committed to preserving life on Earth. 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. www.cbd.int/

2010 International Year of Biodiversity The United Nations declared 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB) to raise awareness about the crucial importance of biodiversity, to communicate the human costs of biodiversity loss, and to engage people, particularly youth, throughout the world in the fight to protect all life on Earth. Initiatives will be organized throughout the year to disseminate information, promote the protection of biodiversity and encourage countries, organizations, and individuals to take direct action to reduce biodiversity loss. The focal point for the year is the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. www.cbd.int/2010/welcome/

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