

PRESS RELEASE

Alliance for Zero Extinction and the Convention on Biological Diversity Join Forces

Washington, D.C., 11 June, 2010 – Two of the world’s premier institutions promoting biodiversity conservation—the Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE), a global alliance to prevent extinction of species, and the Convention on Biological Diversity and its 193 Parties—are entering into a partnership through a new cooperative agreement to prevent species extinctions and maintain ecosystems and habitats at key sites for endangered species.

The Convention on Biological Diversity is the international legal instrument adopted in 1992 to sustain the diversity of life on Earth. A recent review found that meeting its goals to halt species and habitat loss is proving very challenging.

“Seventeen years after the Convention was entered into force, the need to preserve biodiversity has only grown,” said Mike Parr, Chairman of AZE and Vice President of American Bird Conservancy. “Targeting protection efforts to sites identified by the Alliance for Zero Extinction is one way Parties to the Convention can effectively reach their conservation goals.”

A Memorandum of Cooperation between AZE and the Convention Secretariat was signed during a plenary session of the fourteenth meeting of the Convention’s scientific advisory body (SBSTTA), held last month at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, with the participation of delegates and scientists from the 193 Parties to the treaty, as well as from the United States which has yet to ratify the Convention.

“This Memorandum will help us better prevent species extinctions by establishing a collaborative framework between the Convention and AZE by specifically laying out areas of cooperation,” said Parr.

“While the biodiversity family is actively engaged in shaping a new biodiversity vision for 2050, the support of the Alliance for Zero Extinction is crucial,” said Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention. “The experience gained by this unique initiative will be essential for the successful implementation of this new vision.”

Areas of cooperation identified in the Memorandum include:

- (a) Use of AZE expertise to support implementation of the revised and updated CBD Strategic Plan, particularly regarding the target of zero extinction of species;
- (b) AZE assistance to Parties to the Convention in integrating the zero-extinction target into national

biodiversity strategies and action plans;

(c) AZE establishment of a forum on best practices and lessons learned;

(d) AZE assistance in the implementation of the CBD work program on communication, education and public awareness, in particular, the International Day for Biological Diversity, the International Year of Biodiversity (2010), and the International Decade on Biodiversity.

In 2001, biodiversity-conservation scientists came together over a common concern: that landscape-based conservation approaches alone could not conserve all species, and that many extinctions would occur imminently if key sites were not identified and protected. These concerns led to the formation of AZE, a global initiative of biodiversity conservation organizations that aims to prevent extinctions by identifying and safeguarding key sites where endangered or critically endangered species are in imminent danger of disappearing. To date, AZE has identified 595 sites that are the last refuges for 794 of the world's most highly threatened species.

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) serves as Chair of AZE and has been a leading member since its creation. ABC has been actively involved in conservation at AZE sites, and has helped partner groups in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru purchase more than 75,000 acres to create or expand seventeen reserves for AZE species. These include the Dusky Starfrontlet, Colorful Puffleg, Blue-billed Curassow, Long-whiskered Owllet, Jocotoco Antpitta, and Pale-headed Brush-Finch.

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

Alliance for Zero Extinction

The Alliance for Zero Extinction is a global initiative of biodiversity conservation organizations, aims to prevent extinctions by identifying and safeguarding key sites where species are in imminent danger of disappearing. The goal of the Alliance is to create a front line of defense against extinction by eliminating threats and restoring habitat to allow species populations to rebound. www.zeroextinction.org/index.htm

American Bird Conservancy

The American Bird Conservancy conserves native birds and their habitats throughout the Americas by safeguarding the rarest species, conserving and restoring habitats, and reducing threats while building capacity of the bird conservation movement. ABC is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit membership organization that is consistently awarded a top, four-star rating by the independent group, Charity Navigator. www.abcbirds.org/

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

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