



PRESS RELEASE

Ministerial forum calls for leadership for a new biodiversity vision for the twenty-first century

Montreal, 3 September 2010 – Eleven ministers responsible for the environment, representing the former and upcoming presidencies of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), called upon world leaders to provide leadership in shaping and implementing a new biodiversity vision for the twenty-first century.

Meeting for the first time as a group, the ministers adopted the Geneva Ministerial Biodiversity Call for Immediate Action, in which they affirmed the key role that biodiversity plays in assuring human well-being and guaranteeing the provision of ecosystem services and noted with extreme concern that the 2010 biodiversity target, established at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, would not be met.

The group indicated that the continued loss of biodiversity could have the consequence of creating tipping points, beyond which ecosystems could lose their ability to provide goods and services vital for human well-being.

The ministers noted that actions taken in the next decade will determine the fate of biodiversity for the next millennia.

The declaration called upon leaders at the upcoming high-level event on biodiversity during the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly to be held in New York on 22 September to lead the way in making the required national commitments to implementing the Convention and its new Strategic Plan. The Government of Japan, as the incoming President of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, and the Minister of Environment of Brazil will transmit the declaration to the meeting.

The call for action will be also submitted to the ministerial meeting of the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture, Japan, from 27 to 29 October 2010.

“Hosting a meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention is a demonstration of the host country’s commitment. The establishment of the Biodiversity Ministerial Forum is a strong commitment of the COP presidency to provide leadership. The Geneva Ministerial Call for Immediate Action on Biodiversity is a both a strong commitment of the COP presidency to lead by example as well as a strong call to the leaders of the world to do the same when they assemble next month at the New York Biodiversity Summit,” said Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary to the Convention on Biological Diversity. “More than ever, responding to the biodiversity crisis calls for leadership and urgent action. This is the message of this Ministerial Forum.”

Moritz Leuenberger, Head of the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (DETECO) in Switzerland, said: "As environment ministers, we are committed to the principles of sustainable development. So, let us not forget the overriding meaning of sustainability: that is, conserving the earth and its flora and fauna for future generations. We humans are also part of this fauna.”



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“To achieve the urgently needed change of course, to reverse the continuing trend of biodiversity loss, we need political leadership and commitment at the highest political level,” said Norbert Röttgen, Federal Minister for the Environment of Germany. “I am therefore very pleased that during Germany’s presidency we could bring together all COP presidencies to send a message to the upcoming high-level event on biodiversity during this year’s United Nations General Assembly.”

Issei Tajima, Senior Vice-Minister of the Environment of Japan said: “The year 2010 is an important year for us, the international community, to take concrete and urgent actions for preventing the loss of biodiversity. As the incoming President of the Conference of the Parties, Japan will exert its utmost efforts to pass down the benefits of biodiversity to future generations.”

Izabella Teixeira, Minister of the Environment of Brazil, said: “Brazil looks forward with great optimism to the likely positive outcome of Nagoya but recognizes the need for great mobilization and political will such that we will be able to adopt the protocol on access and benefit-sharing and to ensure that the post-2010 targets are able to be met through new, additional and sufficient financial resources and the transfer of technology to developing countries.”

Mr. Jairam Ramesh, Minister of State (Independent Charge) Environment and Forests of the Government of India, stated as a co-chair of the meeting that “biological diversity is essential for the survival of the planet and its significance should be recognized and considered at par with climate change. The successful conclusions of the ABS protocol negotiations are of paramount importance for developing countries and the provisions of access need to be balanced with the provisions of compliance. India stands ready to support other countries in arriving at this balance.”

Following his briefing to the ministers on the issue of access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from their use, Mr. Timothy Hodges, Co-Chair of the Convention’s Ad Hoc Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing, said: “Together with my fellow Co-Chair, Fernando Casas, we welcome the opportunity to brief key ministers and support their global leadership during these last steps towards Nagoya and the adoption of the ABS Protocol.”

The upcoming tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in Nagoya, Japan, in October, will be the occasion for Governments to set a new Strategic Plan for the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Strategic Plan, along with a strategy for resource mobilization, and a new international regime on access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from their use, will be the global policy framework for biodiversity policy that conserves biodiversity, uses its components sustainably and ensures that the benefits from the use of the genetic resources of our planet are shared equitably.

Note 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, 159 countries and the European Union have ratified the Protocol. The Secretariat of the Convention and its Cartagena Protocol is located in Montreal.

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