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UN General Assembly Event to Spur Action to Stem Further Biodiversity Loss

New York, 21 September – With the continued loss of biodiversity representing a major obstacle for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the UN General Assembly will consider strategies for speeding up the implementation of measures to protect and conserve species and ecosystems around the world.

The one-day high-level meeting, on 22 September, taking place during the International Year of Biodiversity and coinciding with the conclusion of the Summit on the Millennium Development Goals, comes at a time when studies show that as a result of human activities, species are being lost at a rate that is estimated to be up to 100 times the natural rate of extinction.

The high-level biodiversity meeting aims to spur action by Member States, together with the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations to consider, “on the basis of the latest science, the status and trends of biodiversity, the risks that the continued loss of biodiversity represent for human well-being, development and security, and the necessary strategies and measures to reduce such risks.”

Populations of wild vertebrate species fell by an average of nearly one third globally between 1970 and 2006, according to the *Global Biodiversity Outlook 3* report issued earlier this year, with the sharpest loss occurring in the tropics. In the past century, 35 per cent of mangroves, 40 per cent of forests and 50 per cent of wetlands have been lost. The change in the abundance and distribution of species, compounded by climate change, has serious consequences for human societies and is moving ecosystems ever closer to thresholds, or “tipping points”, beyond which their services will be seriously undermined.

“This is an important moment for countries to focus on reversing the loss of our biodiversity,” says UN General Assembly President Joseph Deiss. “We can no longer ignore the continuing destruction of the ecosystems that not only provide us with material services such as food, medicine and carbon sinks, but also sustain humanity in our spiritual and emotional wellbeing. Fortunately, strategies exist for protecting and preserving our planet’s rich biodiversity. We now need countries to implement these strategies.”

The UN Convention on Biological Diversity, which has been signed and ratified by almost all Member States, has played an important role in developing approaches to address biodiversity.



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However, implementation has lagged, and the world did not meet the 2010 target for reducing the loss of biodiversity.

Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, said the General Assembly meeting would provide an important boost for the Convention's upcoming 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 10) in Nagoya, Japan, next month. COP 10, he said, is expected to adopt a new strategic plan for 2011-2020, including a 2020 biodiversity target and a 2050 biodiversity vision.

Djoghlaif said that meeting the challenge of the continuous loss of biodiversity compounded by climate change requires unprecedented coordinated efforts at all levels with the full engagement of all the stakeholders without any exception. "The unprecedented New York Biodiversity Summit is a clear demonstration of the will of the leaders of the world to provide leadership and to lead by example in ensuring that our common planet will continue providing its necessary goods and services for the benefit of present and future generations."

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