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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **GEORGIAN BANK SUPPORTS BIODIVERSITY IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE LIFEWEB INITIATIVE**

*Montreal, 27 September 2010* –The LifeWeb Initiative is pleased to announce that the Bank of Georgia, the leading universal bank in the Caucasus state of Georgia, will support the *Sustainable Financing and Improved Management Effectiveness for Protected Areas in the South Caucasus* project profiled on the Convention's LifeWeb clearing-house. This is the result of cooperation between Bank of Georgia and the Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF), a foundation that supports protected areas in Caucasus.

Through its Future Foundation, the Bank of Georgia is contributing a portion of the funding for the project and has become an official supporter of Georgia's Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park (BKNP). "Our contribution to BKNP now totals \$150,000," said Irakli Gilauri, CEO, Bank of Georgia. "We are proud to include support for BKNP as part of our sustainability initiative that highlights how conservation and development can go hand in hand. We are also delighted to be contributing to a project supported by LifeWeb."

The LifeWeb Initiative is a partnership platform to strengthen financing for protected areas to conserve biodiversity, secure livelihoods and address climate change, through implementation of the programme of work on protected areas under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The overall project, implemented by the Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF) in partnership with the Governments of Georgia and Armenia, is designed to support the protected areas of the two south Caucasus countries, which are home to large and valuable wilderness areas that house the highest level of biodiversity in a temperate climate zone in the world. The specific project is a \$350,000, three-year program to support the operations of BKNP, one of the largest national parks in Europe. Important mammals in BKNP include wolves, bears, lynx and, with the help of a programme currently under way to reintroduce it, the bezoar goat, which was hunted to extinction in the area. BKNP is an important bird area (IBA) according to Birdlife International, and has more than 100 species of butterfly within its borders as well as splendid and diverse flora.

The important Bank of Georgia donation, combined with CNF's other resources, will contribute to strengthening the park's management and improving the livelihoods of the local population. Over the three year course of the grant, a number of improvements will be made, including a significant renovation project of the aging visitor's center and the administrative facility in Borjomi, the purchase of patrol equipment and the modernization of BKNP's biodiversity monitoring programme, as well as improvements to the aging tourist infrastructure.

While the Bank of Georgia/CNF funding addresses the immediate needs of BKNP, the total funding required to meet the overall objectives of the project remains substantial. As conveyed in the submission to the CBD LifeWeb platform, the support of other financing partners is essential in order to improve the



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management effectiveness of and close the funding gap for many more protected areas in Armenia and Georgia.

Giorgi Shonvadze, Chairman of Georgia's Agency of Protected Areas (APA), said: "Supporting Georgia's magnificent protected areas is the APA's primary mission, and we welcome Bank of Georgia's contribution to our partnership with the CNF in BKNP. CNF Executive Director David Morrison added: "Bank of Georgia is the first in a series of new sponsors—governmental donors, corporations and private citizens—that we believe we can win who will enable us sustain and broaden our work to protect the Caucasus biodiversity hotspot."

Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, congratulated the Bank of Georgia for its conservation efforts and said: "Protected areas are cornerstones for biodiversity conservation and powerful tools for achieving multiple benefits by addressing climate change and promoting sustainable economic development. Implementation of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas, reinforced through the CBD LifeWeb Initiative, is one of the brightest hopes we have for the future of our planet and humankind."

## **Note to Editors**

### **About the CBD's LifeWeb Initiative**

The CBD LifeWeb was launched in May 2008 at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Bonn, Germany. CBD LifeWeb adds value to donors and recipients by providing a user-friendly clearing-house for countries to profile their financial priorities and invite international support, facilitating funding matches, coordinating counterpart financing among donors, as well as recognising donor support and innovation for natural solutions. To date, over 70 Expressions of Interest have been submitted to the CBD LifeWeb, totalling over US\$ 350 million in funding priorities. Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, further invites developing countries and countries with economies in transition to submit their funding needs through LifeWeb and encourages donors to consider these priorities, as consistent with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

Further information, please visit [www.cbd.int/lifeweb/](http://www.cbd.int/lifeweb/) or contact Jason Spensley on +1.514.287.8704 or at [jason.spensley@cbd.int](mailto:jason.spensley@cbd.int).

### **About the Convention on Biological Diversity**

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, 159 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](http://www.cbd.int)

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