



PRESS RELEASE

The Republic of Korea, the champion of the green growth, now also a champion for the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity

Montreal 20 May 2011. The Republic of Korea celebrated the International Day for Biological Diversity in Sangju City today with the participation of more than 1,000 people. This year's celebration of the International Day coincides with the celebration of the International Year of Forests and is being celebrated worldwide under the theme "Forests and Biodiversity".

In his message on the occasion of the International Day, United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon reminded the international community that: "Last year, Governments agreed on a new strategic plan for biodiversity at the Nagoya biodiversity summit in Aichi, Japan. The Aichi targets call for a significant reduction in the rate of loss, degradation and fragmentation of all natural habitats including forests by 2020."

He added that: "One of the important tools agreed in Japan is the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from Their Utilization. Forests contain a vast- and barely catalogued store of biodiversity. The early ratification and implementation of this protocol can support forest protection and the sustainable use of biodiversity. This in turn, can contribute to poverty alleviation and sustainable national development."

Addressing more than 1,000 participants, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea, His Excellency Kim Hwang-sik, stated: "Biodiversity is crucial to life in harmony with nature. I would like to ask all participants to participate in the campaign for biodiversity conservation."

The Minister of the Environment, Mr. Lee Maan-ee, stated that: "Biological resources not only enhance living standards but are also becoming recognized as national assets." He referred to biodiversity as "Green Gold" and called on his fellow citizens of Sangju to "recognize the need to preserve biological diversity and participate in efforts to make biological resources as valuable assets of Sangju City as well as of Korea."

The ceremony took place with the participation of Mr. Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, who stated that: "Drylands are generally viewed as poor in both forests and biodiversity. This is far from the truth. About 40% of the Earth's tropical and subtropical landmass is open or closed forest. Of this, 42% is dry forest."

He added that: "Drylands are home to the world's largest diversity of mammals whose survival, literally, hangs on the arid-zone forests. And it is thanks to the genetic resources of the drylands, including its forest biodiversity, that you and I have enjoyed food security thus far. Tellingly, the significance of this drylands wealth is not equally matched by public discourse or policy action. To preserve our forests and its biodiversity then, we must think and operate outside the box and promote a synergistic implementation of the action programmes aimed at preserving biodiversity and combating desertification, especially at country and local levels."

The celebration coincided with the official launch by the Republic of Korea of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity 2011-2020, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session in an effort to engage all the citizens of the world in the battle for protecting life on Earth.

On this occasion, Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, stated that: “The United Nations Decade on Biodiversity is a unique opportunity to engage the people of the world in the battle to protect life on Earth. Indeed, a paradigm shift between man and nature is urgently required to live in harmony with nature. This is what the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity is all about. It is fitting that the Republic of Korea—one of the champions of the green economy—is also a champion of the Decade.”
