



PRESS RELEASE

India launches Biodiversity Decade for Asia and the Pacific

Montreal, 23 May 2011— With a guest list that included Ministers, Ambassadors, business leaders and celebrities, India held on 23 May 2011 in New Delhi the Asia and Pacific launch of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity, with the goal of raising awareness of the importance of the variety of life on Earth to human well-being.

The 500 or more participants were urged by representatives of youth to sign a pledge to “extend every effort to conserve the rich biological heritage of our Mother Earth and promise practical action in my sphere of study, work as well as at home.”

The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed 2011-2020 as the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity with a view of raising global awareness about biodiversity, its value to human well-being and the ways that individuals and societies can change their behaviour to become more sustainable.

In his message for the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity, the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, said: “We have all heard of the web of life. We risk trapping ourselves in a web of death. The United Nations Decade on Biodiversity is an opportunity to reverse this trend.”

He concluded that: “The coming decade can be a turning point in how humanity values and manages biodiversity. Together, we can build the foundations for a sustainable future.”

In a message to participants, Mr. Ryu Matsumoto, Minister of the Environment of Japan and President of the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, said: “In order to ensure the bounties of our rich nature can be enjoyed by many future generations, we will work with people from around the world, and will take, continue, and expand our activities to ensure everyone can live in harmony with nature.” Mr Hideki Minamikawa, the Vice-Minister of the Environment of Japan pledged the commitment of Japan to continue playing its leadership role in promoting the Aichi Targets and the objectives of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity in Asia and throughout the world.

The Decade aims at achieving the first target of the ten-year Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, agreed by Governments and their partners at the Nagoya biodiversity summit held in Japan in October 2010. At that meeting the world leaders committed to taking the steps needed to stop biodiversity loss and ensure that the ecosystems of the world continue to provide much-needed goods and services.

Jairam Ramesh, Minister of Environment and Forests of India and prospective President of the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties, while welcoming the international community to India, said: “As a megadiverse nation and a Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity,

India stands committed to the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention. Reverence for biodiversity is deeply embedded in Indian culture, tradition and ethos which embody the timeless Sanskrit saying ‘*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*’ (“Earth is one family”). Biodiversity has both ecological and economic values. Conservation of biodiversity is a national imperative for us as lives and livelihoods of millions of rural and urban people are dependent on its sustainable use – an important point which will get reflected in our national accounting systems.”

The ceremony was also attended by the Honourable Anura Priyadarshana Yapa, the Minister of Environment of Sri Lanka as well as Mr. Ghulam Mohand Malikiar, a Deputy Minister in the Government of Afghanistan . They both pledged their support for the early entry into force of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing, Currently, the Nagoya Protocol has 24 signatories and the Nagoya – Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety has 23.

Attending the ceremony, Ahmed Djoghlaf, the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, declared: “Today’s Asia and the Pacific launch in New Delhi of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity in is a reflection of the role of India as a megadiverse country and incoming president of the next biodiversity summit but also a reflection of the unique role Asia plays in promoting the biodiversity agenda.”

Regional launches of the United Nations Decade will take place around the world, including in Havana on 4 July for the Caribbean region; in Addis Ababa for Africa on 22 July; and in Costa Rica in October for the Central American region. A celebration with the participation of Heads of State and Government will take place on 20 September in New York in conjunction with the high-level segment of the sixty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly, which will be devoted to desertification.

Japan, in its capacity as current President of the Conference of the Parties and the country behind the initiative to proclaim the United Nations Decade, will host a major international event in Japan in December 2011 in partnership with the United Nations University.

The website for the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity is now available to the public at www.cbd.int/2011-2020. Over the course of the year, it will be gradually populated with information on events and activities around the world.
