



COMMUNIQUÉ

Cooperating for nature: South Africa as a regional hub for South-South cooperation on biodiversity for development

Montreal, 29 September 2011 – The Government of South Africa, through its Department of Water and Environmental Affairs, and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to further promote South-South and triangular cooperation on biodiversity for development at regional and global levels.

The initiative builds on a Plan of Action on this theme developed by the Group of 77 and China, under South Africa's chairmanship of the Group of 77 in 2006, and supported by the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its tenth meeting through decision X/23. Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity propose South-South cooperation as a complement to existing cooperation mechanisms, traditionally involving developed and developing countries (North-South cooperation).

Signed on the margins of the sixty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, the MOU will contribute to the biodiversity component of the agenda for South-South Cooperation through a variety of activities, including:

- Organization of joint regional workshops and other capacity-building activities on the transboundary management of biodiversity. Regional mechanisms such as the SADC Biodiversity Strategy, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the African Union, and the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Trilateral Commission will be involved;
- Sharing experiences and lessons learned with neighbouring countries on the development of appropriate incentives and policies for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use including the experience in optimizing the financial contribution and community engagement as well as disseminating best practice from other South African centres of excellence;
- Jointly promoting international scientific collaboration in the areas of biodiversity through sharing the latest information from South Africa's leading research and scientific organizations such as South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the South African National Parks (SANParks);
- Promoting the awareness, knowledge and appreciation of biological resources at various levels through joint campaigns and celebrations of the International Day for Biological Diversity at major regional events, such as the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN).

South Africa, as a regional hub for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, has long been an active proponent of South-South and triangular cooperation, and the MOU will leverage opportunities related to technology exchange, transboundary conservation programmes and scientific and technical cooperation.

Ahmed Djoghlaf, Executive Secretary to the Convention on Biological Diversity said: "South Africa has consistently played a key role in the Convention, and this MOU will be an example to be followed by other Parties. The Aichi Biodiversity Targets cannot be achieved unless we significantly strengthen and expand South-South cooperation."

The South African Minister for the Department of Water and Environmental Affairs South Africa, Mrs. Edna Molewa, said: “As a megadiverse country, South Africa has accumulated a critical mass of experiences with its regional and global cooperation initiatives, and it is time that, with the support of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, we reach out specifically to determine best practices and joint programmes with other developing country Parties to the Convention on biodiversity at the service of development. We look forward to working with the Secretariat in implementing these innovative activities.”

H.E. Mr. Héctor Timerman, Minister for Foreign Relations, International Trade and Worship of Argentina and Chair of the thirty-fifth annual meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77, held in New York on 23 September 2011, emphasized the importance of South-South cooperation “as a paradigm to replace the traditional concept of ‘aid’, taking into account that the thinking behind this form of cooperation serves to highlight the role of the beneficiaries of cooperation, while acknowledging the associated possibilities to achieve mutual benefits”.

The proposed Plan of Action on South-South Cooperation on Biodiversity for Development will be examined at the May 2012 meeting of the Convention’s Working Group on the Review of Implementation, which is expected to produce recommendations on the subject for consideration at the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Hyderabad, India, October 2012.
