



COMMUNIQUÉ

Biodiversity on top of the environmental agenda in the Arab region

Montreal, 10 January 2012– At the 23rd meeting of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE), held in Cairo, Egypt, from 21 to 22 December 2011, Ministers adopted the Report and the recommendations of the 12th Arab Working Group on Desertification and Biodiversity meeting that was held in September 2011, also in Cairo.

The decision, Item (A) (Support to the Convention on Biological Diversity and Biosafety Protocol), contains 21 paragraphs directly related to the activities under the Convention. Among other things, the decision invites Arab countries to:

- Pursue the update of their national biodiversity strategies and action plans in line with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011- 2020, and their resource mobilization strategies in order to implement the Strategic Plan;
- Accelerate the ratification of the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of the Benefits Arising from Their Utilization;
- Take advantage of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) support given that only three Arab countries (Bahrain, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic) have applied for such support to date;
- Start the elaboration and implementation of national laws regarding genetic resources and access and benefit-sharing, and relevant traditional knowledge;
- Promote the early ratification of the Nagoya–Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

Civil-society organizations working on biodiversity education and awareness in Arab countries were also invited to support the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.

It must be noted that this decision by CAMRE follows the decisions of the African Union adopted in February 2010 at the initiative of the President of Gabon elevating biodiversity as a priority in all activities and programmes of the African Commission.

“The renewal of the Arab region cannot be achieved without protecting its nature capital. The CAMRE decision is a major step in the right direction to protect and use in a sustainable manner the unique biodiversity wealth of the people of the region,” said Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity.
