
STATEMENT

MINISTER DION WELCOMES U.N. REPORT ON STATE OF GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY

OTTAWA, May 20, 2005 – The Honourable Stéphane Dion, Minister of the Environment gave the following statement today on the release of the United Nations' Millennium Ecosystem Report *Biodiversity and Human Well-being: A Synthesis Report for the Convention on Biological Diversity*.

Healthy species and habitat are critical to human health and lasting economic prosperity. This report makes clear both this connection and the need for global action to stem the losses of the world's irreplaceable, and therefore priceless, natural assets.

Over the past 50 years, to meet growing requirements for food, fresh water, timber, fiber and fuel, humans have been responsible for changing our ecosystems more rapidly and extensively than during any comparable time in history. The Government of Canada acknowledges the realities of the problems identified by this report and agrees that pressures on ecosystems will increase globally in coming decades unless human attitudes and actions change.

Building on contributions by 1,300 experts from 95 countries including Canada, this unprecedented report on the state of biodiversity around the globe will contribute significantly a global understanding of the importance of ecosystem health in connection with both human health and economic prosperity. This report can serve as the catalyst for the broad consultative process that will be required to identify and develop effective responses to biodiversity loss around the world.

Canada is committed to working with its international partners on the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable use of biological resources. The effects of human activity on our natural world can be profound, and Canada is a staunch supporter of cooperative action that allows for the preservation of genetic diversity and the integrity of ecosystems, both in our own backyards and around the globe.

At home, this is demonstrated by the Species at Risk Act and Bill C-15, new legislation passed just this week to protect Canada's coastal seabird life from oil spills. Moving forward, Budget 2005 made major investments to develop and implement an invasive species strategy, improve the ecological integrity of our National Parks and develop an Oceans Action Plan. Honouring our Kyoto commitments will not only safeguard our health by cutting emissions of smog-

creating pollutants and boost our economic competitiveness, but will green our communities and protect our wild spaces and the biodiversity that inhabit those spaces.

Abroad, Canada was the first industrialized country to ratify the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, in which more than 180 countries committed to conserve biodiversity. Fittingly, the Convention's Secretariat is located in Montreal. Our experts have been instrumental in revising guidelines for national biodiversity assessments, are participating in various expert forums on key policy issues, and are assisting developing countries to increase their capacity to conserve biodiversity and use biological resources in a sustainable manner.

On May 22, the world will observe International Biodiversity Day; a day to raise awareness on biodiversity and mark accomplishments made under the Convention. While Canada has made important contributions in recent years, the findings of this report underline a key fact: for our country and the global community, the work to achieve healthier biodiversity is just beginning. As a proud environmental citizen, Canada looks forward to doing its part.

For copies of the United Nations' Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Synthesis Report on Biodiversity and Human Well-being, please visit <http://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/index.aspx>

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