



# Global Taxonomy Initiative

## Closing the Knowledge Gap

Taxonomists, the people involved in the science of naming, describing and classifying all living organisms, have named about 1.78 million species of animals, plants and micro-organisms during the past 250 years of research. Yet the total number of species inhabiting the globe is still unknown. Experts put the number of all living organisms at somewhere between five and 30 million.

Taxonomists use an array of measures to classify types of life, including the structure, behaviour, genetics, and biochemical observations of organisms. Taxonomy identifies and enumerates the components of biological diversity, providing basic knowledge underpinning management and implementation of the CBD. Unfortunately, taxonomic knowledge is far from complete.

Governments, through the CBD, have acknowledged that this knowledge gap is a "taxonomic impediment" to the sound management of biodiversity. As a result, they established the Global Taxonomy Initiative to remove or reduce this taxonomic impediment by addressing a global shortage of trained taxonomists and curators, and by determining how this gap in our knowledge impacts our ability to conserve, use and share the benefits of our biological diversity.

The Global Taxonomy Initiative is a set of activities that highlight issues, facilitate information exchange and promote technical cooperation in the process of implementation of the CBD programmes and issues. The GTI provides guidance to governments, taxonomists, non-governmental and international organizations, which are responsible for implementing the GTI. The Initiative outlines strategies, planned activities, expected products, timelines, lead actors and resources needed.

### Why it is important:

- Taxonomy provides basic understanding about the components of biodiversity necessary for effective decision-making about conservation and sustainable use.
- Taxonomic information is essential for agencies and border authorities to detect, manage and control invasive alien species. Effective control and management measures can only be implemented when exotic species are correctly and promptly identified. Misidentifications can cost money when rapid decisions need to be made.
- If eradication is needed, taxonomists can offer expertise that is central to developing the most effective yet economic and environmentally benign eradication measures.

### What the CBD is doing:

Through the Initiative and with other partners, the CBD is developing outcome-oriented deliverables to advance the work of the GTI, and a timeline for action, for consideration by countries during COP 9. The CBD will also report on progress made towards the 2010 target and on options to ensure the necessary financial support for the Initiative through the establishment of a special fund.



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**For more information:**

GTI: <http://www.cbd.int/gti>

CBD COP decisions on GTI: <http://www.cbd.int/gti/decisions.shtml>

Documents : <http://www.cbd.int/gti/documents.shtml>



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COP 9 MOP 4 Bonn Germany 2008

Convention on Biological Diversity

