



**CONVENTION ON  
BIOLOGICAL  
DIVERSITY**

**PRESS RELEASE**

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Embargoed until 30 march 2005

**“Loss of biodiversity threatens human well-being”  
says the Head of Biodiversity Convention**

**Montreal, 30 March 2005** – “To protect vital ecosystem services, countries must make a stronger effort to substantially reduce the rate of loss of biodiversity,” urged Hamdallah Zedan, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Commenting on the results of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) Synthesis Report, a five-year study of the state of global ecosystems and their impact on human well-being, which was released today, Mr. Zedan indicated that the report provides additional evidence of the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity to ensure human well-being now and for future generations.

“Biological diversity makes ecosystems resilient and enables the continued provision of ecosystem services crucial to human well-being, including food, clean water, shelter and medicines,” said Mr. Zedan.

“The conclusions reached by this large group of eminent scientists demonstrate that if we allow the continued deterioration of biological diversity on the planet, progress on the Millennium Development Goals of eradication of hunger and poverty will be jeopardized,” he continued. “Although we will all suffer, it is the poorest who will bear the greatest burden.”

The report has found that 15 of the 24 ecosystem services that support life on Earth are being degraded or used unsustainably. It further underlines that the harmful consequences of this degradation could grow significantly worse in the next 50 years.

"Perhaps more significantly, the conclusions demonstrate that the changes may potentially be abrupt - reducing the time we will have to react," Mr. Zedan cautioned. "Possible problems include the emergence of new diseases, sudden changes in water quality, creation of "dead zones" along the coasts, and the collapse of fisheries."

"It is in this way that we are reminded that biodiversity is the life insurance of the planet, and provides security and protection from such sudden and adverse events."

"In light of this report, the commitment by countries to significantly reduce the rate of loss of biological diversity by the year 2010 becomes even more important. We have little time, however, to make the right choices and still achieve these targets in certain regions and areas."

The Millennium Assessment was prepared for the Convention on Biological Diversity and other organizations. The Convention, which was opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992, currently has 188 Parties and has as objectives the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources. Among its strategic goals is the 2010 biodiversity target – to achieve, by the year 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss, as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to all life on earth.

The MA has prepared a special report on biodiversity which has been reviewed by the Convention's subsidiary scientific body. This report – the Biodiversity Synthesis, is due to be released in Montreal on May 19 to coincide with the International Day for Biological Diversity.

**Note to journalists:** For more information, please contact Renata Watkin, Information Officer at the Secretariat, at +1 514 287-8703 or by e-mail at [renata.watkin@biodiv.org](mailto:renata.watkin@biodiv.org).