



CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

PRESS RELEASE

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Theme for International Biodiversity Day announced World community urged to protect biodiversity in deserts

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY • 22 May 2006

PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY IN DRYLANDS



ACHIEVING THE 2010 BIODIVERSITY TARGET!

Montreal, 9 January 2006 – Reflecting that 2006 has been declared the United Nations International Year for Deserts and Desertification, the Convention on Biological Diversity announced today that the theme for the International Day for Biological Diversity, 22 May 2006 is “Protecting Biodiversity in Drylands.”

“Almost half of the land surface of the earth is drylands if we include grasslands and all arid regions,” said Mr. Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary to the Convention. “One in six people depends on these fragile ecosystems for their survival,” said Mr. Djoghlaif. “These are the poorest of the poor and any further degradation of the biodiversity of drylands will lead to increased poverty.”

“Recognizing that some of the poorest countries on the planet are affected by desertification, the international community declared 2006 as the International Year of Deserts and Desertification,” he noted. “At the Convention we have therefore chosen protection of biodiversity in drylands as the theme for the International Day for Biological Diversity in order to draw attention to the need to reduce the rate of loss of biological diversity as a result of human activities and therefore prevent further land degradation.”

“If implemented, the Convention’s programme of work on the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands can encourage conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in drylands,” he urged. “It is within our power to substantially reduce the rate of loss of biological diversity in Drylands by the year 2010 and make a substantial contribution to poverty reduction, for the sake of all live on earth.”

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*The International Day for Biological Diversity 22 May 2006
Achieving the 2010 Biodiversity Target:
Protect biodiversity in drylands!*

47% of the land surface of the Earth is drylands. This includes semi arid lands such as the Karoo and the Horn of Africa, savannah landscapes such as the Eurasian steppes and the North American Great Plains, and so-called Mediterranean landscapes. Home to a richness of biological diversity, they are also central to the livelihoods of almost 2 billion people. Drylands ecosystems receive very erratic rainfall, and as a result are very fragile.

Biodiversity in these ecosystems is under threat from a variety of human activities. The transformation of habitats for human use, mostly agricultural, and increases in overexploitation, including overgrazing, has led to the degradation of up to 20 percent of drylands ecosystems – with stark results: desertification and drought, the endangerment of 2,311 species, the loss of over 40 billion dollars a year in lost agricultural production and the resulting rise of social, economic, and political tensions. Poverty has forced populations who are dependent on natural resources to overexploit already marginal lands in order to sustain their livelihoods. Existing incentive frameworks do not encourage the sustainable use of resources.

The urgency of these issues has been recognized in the decision of the United Nations General Assembly to proclaim 2006 the International Year of Deserts and Desertification.

Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity are also committed to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in drylands, and are working to ensure equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources in these ecosystems.

The Programme of work on the Biological Diversity of Dry and Sub-humid Lands provides guidance on actions to stop desertification and sustain biodiversity in drylands and realize the goal of reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by the year 2010.

Actions can be taken to reduce human impacts and therefore reduce the rate of biodiversity loss in dry and sub humid lands. Among others, these include:

- Reducing overgrazing in delicate ecosystems
- Reducing pollutants produced by intensive agriculture
- Slowing the conversion of grassland and savannah systems to agriculture and urban settlement
- Taking steps to control invasive alien species into these ecosystems.
- Helping to build institutions that will alleviate poverty and allow the poor to realize sustainable livelihoods.
- Mobilizing sufficient financial and technical resources, particularly for developing countries, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the 2010 biodiversity target.

In taking these and other actions, we will achieve concrete results. If we act now, it is within our power to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target and halt the loss of biodiversity in dry and sub-humid lands. For more information on the international day for biological diversity, please refer to our website at:

<http://www.biodiv.org/programmes/outreach/awareness/biodiv-day-2006.shtml>

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