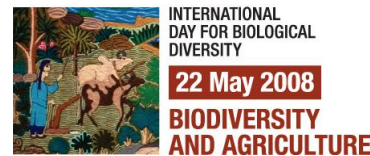




Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity



PRESS RELEASE

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BIODIVERSITY NEEDED TO FEED THE WORLD THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY 22 MAY 2008

Bonn, 22 May 2008—Against a background of rising food prices, and with pressures from climate change affecting fields and orchards, celebrations of the International Day of Biological Diversity (IBD) will stress the need to properly protect and manage the world's biodiversity in order to ensure a secure supply of food for a growing world population.

“Agriculture can promote biological diversity if it shows due respect for nature. But agriculture can also become a danger for biological diversity, e.g. through the excessive use of pesticides or by creating monocultures. However, one thing is beyond doubt: agricultural production is directly dependent on the resources and services provided by the diversity of nature”, said German Environment Minister Sigmar Gabriel, President of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity which is taking place in Bonn, Germany, until 30 May.

“The protection of the world's biodiversity is essential to the world's food supply,” Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, noted that: “If current extinction rates continue, it will be hard to provide sufficient food for a global population that is expected to reach nine billion by mid-century.”

Mr. Djoghlaif went on to say “Biodiversity will become even more crucial in the future as climate change is creating uncertainty over which plant and livestock species will remain viable under changing conditions. For example, farmers in the Andes guard against crop failure from heat or frost by planting a number of different varieties of potatoes. Access to these varieties protects their livelihoods.”

In his message for the International Day, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that “Of the 7,000 species of plants that have been domesticated over the 10,000-year history of agriculture, only 30 account for the vast majority of the food we eat every day. Relying on so few species for sustenance is a losing strategy.”

At the ongoing meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in Bonn, delegates are reviewing the Convention's work on agricultural biodiversity and identifying ways in which countries can work towards more sustainable methods in agriculture. Government representatives, along with nongovernmental organizations, are deciding on a series of measures that would move the world closer to the globally-agreed goal of reversing the loss of biodiversity



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by 2010. It is estimated that human activity is causing species to become extinct at a rate of 100-1000 times the natural rate of extinction.

“Agriculture and nature conservation must find ways to work together hand in hand to significantly reduce the global loss of biodiversity”, Mr. Gabriel said, adding that “This is a very ambitious task that the delegates of 191 States have to solve within the next few days in Bonn.”

Later today, delegates will listen to remarks from the Environment Minister of Germany, the United Nations Secretary-General, a video message from Jacques Diouf, the Director-General of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and a keynote address by Robert Watson, on the International Assessment on Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD), among others.

Mr. Djoghlaif said that a major long-term goal in confronting the current global food crisis is to organize agriculture in a manner that both protects and supports surrounding ecosystems.

“We can ensure a secure food supply if we take the necessary measures to use our resources properly,” Mr. Djoghlaif said. “We need to ensure that we use our water resources efficiently. We need to use the right mix of fertilizer. We need to keep our soils fertile and we need to keep our forests and wetlands intact.”

Biodiversity, Mr. Djoghlaif said, will also play a major role in providing a balanced diet for more people. Greater diversity provides for a more varied diet, which permits people to strike a proper balance between growing and raising the right kinds of foods. “We need to promote the idea that our nutrition should be based to a large extent on the land’s ability to support a certain diet.”

Through the Convention on Biological Diversity, countries are working on guidelines for agricultural practices. In particular, there are a series of initiatives under the Convention to protect soil biodiversity, curb the loss of pollinators, and maintain the variety of foodstuffs needed to ensure proper food and nutrition.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits from utilization of genetic resources. With 191 Parties, the CBD has near-universal participation among countries committed to preserving life on Earth. The CBD seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community. The headquarters of the Secretariat of the Convention are located in Montreal. For additional information, please contact Marie Aminata Khan at +1 514 287 8701; email: marie.khan@cbd.int or David Ainsworth at +49 0170 558 5819; email: david.ainsworth@cbd.int.

The International Day for Biological Diversity

The United Nations proclaimed 22 May the International Day for Biological Diversity (IBD) to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues. For more information go to www.cbd.int/ibd/2008/