

PRESS RELEASE

Launch of an important web tool to implement a global programme of work for protected areas

Montreal, 11 May 2010. A new website for the programme of work on protected areas (PoWPA) under the Convention on Biological Diversity was launched today at the fourteenth meeting of the Convention's Scientific Body, currently under way in Nairobi. The website provides important information, e-learning tools and forums for the community of experts working on protected area networks over the globe.

It also provides information on the values and benefits of protected areas, detailed information on each PoWPA goal and target, including access to over 1,000 tools and resources sorted by goals, searching through specific topics and types as well as language and geography.

The website includes an online platform for gauging the status of implementation of PoWPA at national, regional and global levels, thus facilitating the periodic update of country profiles by PoWPA focal points. It also has an online communication channel for posting documents, links and discussion forums among protected-area focal points and others.

A unique feature of the website is its e-learning curriculum—interactive, step-by-step guidance with examples, case-studies and tutorials to implement PoWPA themes, such as protected-area-network design, planning, management, finance, and policy. These e-learning modules will be available for all PoWPA goals in five languages—English, French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic by the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Nagoya in October this year.

“Focused capacity-building and sustained learning in a structured form underpins the success of the PoWPA. The new website and e-curricula add another feather in PoWPA's crown and show the way forward on how to deal with capacity-building for all programmes of work not only under the Convention on Biological but in other initiatives,” said Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention, while launching the new website.

“These e-curricula will become an indispensable tool for protected area professionals, policy makers and conservation training institutions and will build capacity in improving the management of protected areas worldwide”, said Mr. Nik Lopoukhine, Chair of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas.

The website is a response to the call by the Conference of the Parties in its decision IX/18 for the Executive Secretary to facilitate the development of a user-friendly, comprehensive central website to improve the national PoWPA implementation. In pursuance of this, the Secretariat, with initial funding from the Government of Germany, assembled web-based tools, resources and services that would facilitate implementation.

The new website can be accessed at www.cbd.int/protected.

The CBD programme of work on protected areas. In February 2004, the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity made the most comprehensive and specific protected-area commitments ever made by the international community by adopting the programme of work on protected areas (PoWPA). The PoWPA enshrines development of participatory, ecologically representative and effectively managed national and regional systems of protected areas, where necessary stretching across national boundaries. From designation to management, the PoWPA can be considered as a defining framework or “blueprint” for protected areas for the coming decades. It is a framework for cooperation between Governments, donors, NGOs and local communities, for without such collaboration, programmes cannot be successful and sustainable over the long term.

To date, there are many signs of progress and there is much to celebrate. Political will and commitments are clearly being catalysed. A recent summary of global implementation of the programme of work found that since 2004, nearly 6,000 new protected areas have been established, covering more than 60 million hectares. There are now about 130,000 protected areas, covering nearly 13% of the world’s terrestrial surface, and over 6% of territorial marine areas. Many of these are embedded in comprehensive national and regional networks of connected protected areas and corridors

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and entering into force in December 1993, 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 193 Parties, the Convention has near universal participation among countries committed to preserving life on Earth. The Convention 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 Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety a supplementary treaty to the Convention seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. To date, 157 countries and the European Union are party to the Protocol. The Secretariat of the Convention and its Cartagena Protocol is located in Montreal www.cbd.int/.

2010 International Year of Biodiversity. The United Nations declared 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB) to raise awareness about the crucial importance of biodiversity, to communicate the human costs of biodiversity loss, and to engage people, particularly youth, throughout the world in the fight to protect all life on Earth. Initiatives will be organized throughout the year to disseminate information, promote the protection of biodiversity and encourage countries, organizations, and individuals to take direct action to reduce biodiversity loss. The focal point for the year is the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. www.cbd.int/2010/welcome/.

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