



22 MAY 2013
INTERNATIONAL DAY
FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
WATER & BIODIVERSITY



On Biodiversity Day, GEF CEO Naoko Ishii Points to Urgent Need for Action for Health of Planet

Washington D.C, May 22, 2013 - In observance of the International Day of Biodiversity, Naoko Ishii, CEO and Chairperson of the Global Environment Facility, urged a renewed, energized effort to address growing threats to biological diversity worldwide.

“Biodiversity is not an abstract concept or just the sum total of genes, species, ecosystems and the services they provide. Biodiversity is life itself. And to say that biodiversity is under threat means nothing less than life itself being in jeopardy.” said **Ms. Ishii**. *“From clean water, food, health security and a safe space for humanity to thrive, biodiversity has defined the essence of who we are. For tens of thousands of years, biodiversity has allowed us to become the dominant force in this planet. Will we be able to rely on it when we most need this life-support system in our journey through the next thousand years?”*

Biodiversity is under heavy threat and its loss is considered one of the most critical challenges to humankind. The GEF’s efforts in the conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity responds to the key drivers of biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystem goods and services: habitat change, overexploitation and invasive alien species, as well as indirect drivers of change including environmental governance, institutions and legal frameworks, science and technology.

The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity defines biodiversity as the *“variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems.”* ([UN Convention on Biological Diversity](#), 1992)

Over the last 22 years, the GEF invested over \$3.3 billion and supported its projects with an additional \$9.7 billion in co-financing for more than 1,000 projects across 155 countries in the Biodiversity focal area. In addition, the GEF is placing increasing emphasis on achieving synergies across its areas of work by supporting multi-focal area projects that deliver benefits in biodiversity, climate change, land degradation and other GEF environmental focal areas.

Contact:

Mr. John Diamond

Senior Communication Officer | Spokesperson

Phone +1 202 458 7953

E-mail: jdiamond@thegef.org

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About the Global Environment Facility

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) unites 183 countries in partnership with international institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs), and the private sector to address global environmental issues while supporting national sustainable development initiatives. Today the GEF is the largest public funder of projects to improve the global environment. An independently operating financial organization, the GEF provides grants for projects related to biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer, and persistent organic pollutants.

Since 1991, GEF has achieved a strong track record with developing countries and countries with economies in transition, providing \$11.5 billion in grants and leveraging \$57 billion in co-financing for over 3,215 projects in over 165 countries. Through its Small Grants Programme (SGP), the GEF has also made more than 16,030 small grants directly to civil society and community based organizations, totaling \$653.2 million. For more information, visit www.thegef.org.

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