



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity



PRESS RELEASE

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PARLIAMENTARIANS ISSUE DECLARATION IN SUPPORT OF BIODIVERSITY ACTION AT BONN CONFERENCE

Bonn, 28 May—Calling the present level of biodiversity loss “unprecedented”, parliamentarians attending the Bonn Biodiversity Conference issued a declaration yesterday expressing renewed resolve to ensure that they take the necessary legislative and administrative actions to implement programmes to achieve the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Biodiversity loss, the lawmakers said, would have “far-reaching” environmental, social and cultural impacts, and said they had a responsibility to build the political will necessary to slow the rate at which plant and animal species are becoming extinct.

“We will never succeed in conserving biodiversity without action by parliamentarians,” said Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. “The parliamentarians are the ones who represent the citizens and who translate the goals of the Convention into tangible actions by government. They decide on the budget and they are essential for raising awareness about biodiversity issues.”

The parliamentarians met in Bonn at the Biodiversity Conference with German legislators in the Environment Commission, who previously in the day held an exceptional session in Bonn instead of the capital, Berlin, to support progress at the Conference.

“Parliamentarians, as we all know, are the agenda setters,” said Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Minister of Environment and Tourism in Namibia. “Parliamentarians are elected by the people to be their spokespersons. They cannot afford to stand by while the environment is being destroyed.”

She added, “Biodiversity is the key to sustainable livelihood of all human beings. As such, parliamentarians, as representatives of people, have a strong role in mobilizing the population to protect biodiversity and ensure its sustainable use.”

Dr. Batilda Burian, Minister of State of the United Republic of Tanzania, said, “Addressing biodiversity actually means working on all three pillars of sustainable development. For this, I appreciate the complementary role of groups such as parliamentarians, NGOs, researchers, teachers, and business, to leverage synergies on all major issues handled at the COP”.

“Members of parliament are formidable opinion makers,” said Anders B. Johnsson, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. “From the public tribunal in parliament and in their contacts with the citizens, they can raise public awareness and muster citizen’s support for public policies to address urgent issues”.



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Mr. Johnsson went on to say that, as parliamentarians are generally “firmly rooted” in local and national politics, they are often not familiar with international treaties and conventions, adding that “International dialogue helps to fill this gap. Through international dialogue, parliamentarians can learn about the protection and support that international conventions offer and the obligations that States assume when they sign and ratify them.”

Petra Bierwirth, President of the Environment Commission of the German Federal Parliament, called the meeting “an important first step” that she hoped could lead to the establishment of a parliamentary network to share information on biodiversity issues.

Since its inception, the Convention has worked with parliamentarians and other major groups, such as women, indigenous peoples, local authorities, youth, and business. The Inter-Parliamentary Union has adopted several resolutions concerning biodiversity, including a 2004 resolution that recognized the Convention as the principal international instrument that addresses the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and called on Governments to take more effective action in implementing the Convention in order to achieve the target set by the World Summit on Sustainable Development of reducing significantly the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.

In 2006, another resolution was passed on the role of parliaments in environmental management and in combating global degradation of the environment. In 2007, a Presidential Declaration on Climate Change was endorsed expressing concerns over the adverse impact of climate change and calling for progress in awareness raising among parliaments related in particular to avoidance of deforestation, financial mechanisms, and the transfer of appropriate and environmentally sound technology.

More information from the Secretariat of the Convention on the role of Parliamentarians in biodiversity issues can be found at: <http://www.cbd.int/parliamentarians/>.

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 the international framework for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of its benefits. With 190 Parties, the CBD has near-universal participation among countries who have 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 is located in Montreal. For additional information, please contact Marie Aminata Khan at +1 514 287 8701; email: marie.khan@cbd.int