



PRESS RELEASE

Montreal marks the International Day for Biological Diversity as a contribution to the celebration of the 2011 International Year of Forests

Montreal, 23 May 2011 – A large gathering of some 150 people assembled on Friday at the Biosphere environmental museum in Montreal to mark this year's International Day for Biological Diversity and celebrate the forests of the world. This year's International Day was held world-wide under the theme "forest biodiversity" as a contribution to the 2011 International Year of Forests (see <http://www.cbd.int/idb/2011/>)

In his message to the international community, the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon stated: "The benefits of forests are far-reaching. Forests catch and store water, stabilize soils, harbour biodiversity and make an important contribution to regulating climate and the greenhouse gases that are causing climate change," he said. "Yet, despite our growing understanding and appreciation of just how much we reap from forests, they are still disappearing at an alarming rate. This year's International Day for Biological Diversity is devoted to highlighting the need for urgent action."

Addressing the participants the Director of the Biosphere, Mr. Jean Langlais, stressed the role of the Biosphere in building awareness about biodiversity and spoke of the role of cities and urban citizens in the biodiversity solution.

Representing the city of Montreal, Mr. Alan DeSousa stressed the role of cities in solutions to the biodiversity crisis. He welcomed the decision by Governments at the Nagoya biodiversity summit in 2010 to support local action for biodiversity and stressed that the city of Montreal was ready, along with other cities, to take up the challenge.

Mr. Jean Lemire, the ambassador for *The Green Wave* initiative, urged the audience and others to act year round, not just on the International Day for Biological Diversity. He said that we need to be very frank and recognise the scope of the biodiversity crisis and act accordingly. He emphasized that awareness was a big part of this. Starting in the fall of 2011 and running for 1,000 days, Mr. Lemire will embark on a voyage to highlight the richness and importance of biodiversity around the world as a contribution to the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity.

Audience members were inspired by the words of five youth delegates as they read out the youth declaration they had been delivered in Nagoya last year. The students were from Saint-Laurent Academy in Ottawa.

In a symbolic gesture for living in harmony with nature, the ceremony culminated with the students and other participants planting two sugar-maple trees, native to Canada, on the grounds of the Biosphere as a contribution to the International Year of Forests and to *The Green Wave* campaign.

Addressing the participants, Mr. Ahmed Djoghla, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, said: "As we move towards the preparation of Rio+ 20 in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012, let us all

remember the wisdom of Severn Cullis-Suzuki. In June 1992, when she was 12 years old, this young Canadian addressed the first Rio summit, challenged adults to take care of the future, her future, and the future of the children of the world. This is why we are all gathered here today, to ensure that life will continue to be sustained on our planet for our benefit, but most importantly, for the benefit of generations to come.”

This year’s celebration of the International Day for Biological Diversity coincides with the launch of the 2011-2020 United Nations Decade on Biodiversity. Regional launches will take place in New Delhi, Havana, Costa Rica and Addis Ababa. Japan, in its capacity as the President of the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and the country behind this initiative, will organize in December 2011 an international event to celebrate this event at the service of the Aichi Targets, adopted by the Parties in October last year and aimed at engaging the people of the world in efforts to protect life on Earth.

Notes for Editors

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 of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. With 193 Parties, the Convention has near universal participation among countries. 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 is a subsidiary agreement to the Convention. It seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. To date, 159 countries plus the European Union have ratified the Cartagena Protocol. The Secretariat of the Convention and its Cartagena Protocol is located in Montreal. For more information visit: www.cbd.int.

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