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PRESS RELEASE

2011-2020 United Nations Biodiversity Decade Launched in Kanazawa City, Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan

Montreal, 19 December 2011 – A future of life in harmony with nature is possible, if the world takes action now. The United Nations Decade on Biodiversity (UNDB) was launched in Kanazawa, Japan, on 17 December 2011, in a ceremony organized by the United Nations University, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment of Japan, Ishikawa Prefecture and Kanazawa City, and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

The global launch of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity counted on the participation of United Nations agencies, Parties to the CBD, and representatives of all levels of government in Japan. The three-day event included a workshop on national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

The very idea of declaring 2011-2020 the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity was initiated by Japan and endorsed at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, held in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010. It was formally proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session. The United Nations Decade on Biodiversity builds on the achievements of the successful celebration of the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity. It aims at implementing the first Aichi Biodiversity Target of the Strategic Plan on Biodiversity 2011-2020, namely to ensure that by 2020 all the people of the world will be aware of biodiversity and its value.

In his message addressed to participants, delivered by Mr. Kiyotaka Akasaka, Under-Secretary-General, United Nations Department of Public Information, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, called “on all the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and to all the biodiversity-related conventions, as well as all members of the United Nations system, the private sector, civil-society groups and individual citizens and consumers worldwide, to rally to the call of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity.” In conclusion, he stated, “Let us work together to live in harmony with nature, let us preserve and wisely manage nature’s riches for prosperity today and for the future we want.”

Mr. Katsuhiko Yokomitsu, Senior Vice-Minister of the Environment in the Government of Japan, speaking on behalf of Mr. Goshi Hosono, Minister of Environment of Japan and current President of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, said: “The intensive efforts of all participants enabled the Conference of the Parties to achieve substantial results at its tenth meeting, including the adoption of new global targets for biodiversity. Given the current status of biodiversity, it is incumbent upon us to endeavor continually and unfailingly to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. To pass on to our children the abundant natural blessings of this planet, we must harness the collective wisdom of humanity and begin and extend concerted efforts across the globe to create societies that exist in harmony with nature.”

Mr. Kazuhiko Takeuchi, Vice-Rector of the United Nations University, stated: “It is not too late to prevent the further loss of biodiversity. The presence of the representatives gathered here today from national governments, United Nations organizations, NGOs, the private sector and the public demonstrates the

resolve of the international community to find inclusive global solutions to address this complex problem.”

Mr. Masanori Tanimoto, Governor of Ishikawa Prefecture, said: “Biodiversity is a global issue but it is also very close to people living in each local area, so it is important for a local government to tackle this issue with the understanding of and in collaboration with local communities. For this reason, we have been making efforts to conserve biodiversity through conservation and sustainable use of *satoyama* and *satoumi* in collaboration with the UNU-IAS Operating Unit of Ishikawa/Kanazawa and Kanazawa University. We will enhance our efforts on this occasion, the starting year of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity. I’m expecting a strong message will be conveyed to the world today from here, Ishikawa.”

In December 2010, Ishikawa Prefecture also hosted the closing ceremony of the International Year of Biodiversity, which saw the launch of the 2011 International Year of Forests

Mr. Masaru Onishi, President of Japan Airlines (JAL), said: “The Aichi Biodiversity Targets to be achieved over the Decade require participation of all stakeholders. Companies can contribute to this issue in various ways according to their type of business. As an airline company we can, for example, work toward target 9 by preventing unintentional introduction of invasive alien species, target 1 by promoting public awareness, target 5 by monitoring and reporting forest fires and target 10 by sampling and monitoring air quality, and preventing global warming.”

While presenting the Japan Airlines ECO-Jet with the logo of the United Nations Decade, Mr. Onishi reiterated the commitment of JAL and its staff to make a distinct contribution in raising public awareness in support of the Decade’s objectives. On 12 October 2011, JAL hosted a ceremony to launch its ECO jet featuring the logo of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity (see <http://www.cbd.int/doc/press/2011/pr-2011-10-12-undb-en.pdf>). JAL was the first airline in the world to include the COP 10 logo on two of its Boeing 777s.

“The next decade will be crucial for the future of our planet. Only with action at all levels will we be able to secure a future of life in harmony with nature,” said Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, “Japan, as the motor force behind the declaration of this United Nations Decade, has demonstrated leadership and vision in support of sustainable development and, indeed, life on Earth.”

At the welcome reception, “Rio+20 and Biodiversity Japan”, newly established by Japanese civil society, introduced the “Ishikawa Declaration” to promote “living in harmony with nature”, the concept of the Aichi Targets, and concrete actions to achieve these targets in the international community on the occasion of Rio+20 in collaboration with other stakeholders.

The Ishikawa Declaration calls on the participants to the Rio+20 Summit, scheduled for June 2012, to give high priority to the biodiversity agenda and fully integrate the Aichi Biodiversity Targets as an integral part the Summit’s expected outcomes. The Ishikawa Declaration follows the official submission last month by the President of the Conference of the Parties of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets to the head of the secretariat of Rio+20 for inclusion as part of the expected outcomes of the Summit.

The international launch of the Decade was preceded by regional launches in the Republic of Korea, India, the Philippines, Cuba, Ethiopia, Ecuador and Costa Rica.

Notes to 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, 161 countries and the European Union are Parties to the 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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