

**THE STATE OF ERITREA  
MINISTRY OF LAND, WATER AND ENVIRONMENT  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT**

**REPORT ON THE CELEBERATION OF**



**INTERNATIONAL  
BIODIVERSITY  
DAY IN ERTIREA  
MAY 22, 2008  
ASMARA,  
ERITREA**



The International Day for Biodiversity (IBD), May 22, 2008, under the theme of *'Biodiversity and Agriculture'* was celebrated in Eritrea. This year's theme coincides with the Government of Eritrea (GoE) priority of food security through agricultural activities. This year's IBD was celebrated through the participation of students who were involved in various environmental activities. On May 22, 2008 students were engaged in tree planting, watering and environmental sanitation in their schoolyards and their neighborhood. IBD has been celebrated in Eritrea since March 1996- Eritrea's accession to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

As per the arrangement made between the Honorable Minister of Ministry of Land, Water and Environment, Mr. Woldemichael Gebremariam and the Honorable Minister of Ministry of Education, Mr. Semere Russom, it was decided that this year's IBD would be celebrated through the participation of students in tree planting, watering and environmental sanitation in their schoolyards and their surroundings to increase their understanding in biodiversity conservation thereby ensuring sustainability of the issue and contributing to food security. It is in response to this that all schools in Eritrea were involved in tree planting, watering and environmental sanitation. Moreover, the Ministry of Land, Water and Environment, on the occasion of the day, prepared an official message which was distributed to all schools prior May 22, 2008. School directors/Administrators read the official speech to students in their respective schools on May 22, 2008 before starting to celebrate the day. The message for this year emphasized the need to conserve biodiversity in general and agricultural biodiversity in particular, so as to ensure food security. It also highlighted the role of sustainable agriculture in biodiversity conservation. The message concluded by requesting students to plant trees in their schoolyards and environs. Teachers also gave clarifications on the importance of the day. In order to have wide coverage, the same message was also posted in the national mass media which have a good coverage all over the country.

Most schools in Eritrea have already established environmental clubs (Green Clubs) that have been involved in various environmental conservation activities in their schools. These clubs, with the assistance of the Department of Environment, have been engaged in building their knowledge and awareness on environmental issues. On May 22, 2008, these clubs facilitated the activities in their respective schools. Teachers played also a lead role in their schools in organizing the students' activities on the day.

A committee, whose members drawn from the Department of Environment (DoE) and the Ministry of Education, was established to oversee the planned activities. The committee visited representative schools from all levels (elementary, junior and secondary schools), held discussions with school administrators, teachers and students. The committees observed that schools were busy celebrating the day through the planned activities. Every school member was observed to plant trees, water them, and undertake the environmental sanitation in and around the school compounds.



*Students planting and watering trees, in Asmara Comprehensive Secondary School, on May 22, 2008*

As per the observation of the committee, most schools have managed to change their school environment into a green area, making the place conducive for students to study and entertain under the shades of the trees. Apart from this, the habit of tree planting, and taking care of them will instill a culture of conservation in the students, who will be the future conservation leaders of the country.





*Students studying and discussing in the shades of trees*

In some schools, students were observed to plant trees with a special attachment to them. A 10 year old girl, Lusan Michael from Mdre Babur elementary School, was observed to water and take care of a specific tree. She planted the tree to remember her martyr father Michael. As per her explanation, she planted the tree two years ago and she has been taking care of it ever since, as the tree symbolizes her father. It is beyond any doubt that she will take care of the tree as guardian and set a good example of sustainable commitment. In Eritrea, to remember the martyrs, trees are planted in homesteads, schools and Martyr Parks.



*Lusan Michael  
with the tree she  
planted in the  
name of her  
father- a martyr*

IBD-2008- celebration was made possible through the participation of many actors on the issue. The Department of Environment, the Ministry of Land, Water and Environment as the CBD focal point in Eritrea, facilitated the celebration of the day. The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Governors of the six zobas, all schools, teachers and students were involved to make the celebration of the day a success.

Moreover, FAO Eritrea provided 300 T-shirts with slogans that reflect this year's theme that helped raise the awareness on biodiversity conservation in general and this year's theme in particular. The World Bank also granted access to its Public Information Center for use that helped the staff of the Department of Environment to download documents with relevance to the day.

The future program of schools is to continue engage themselves in different environmental activities. It is in their major plan to continue to planting trees in their school yards and environs and contribute to the improvement of the local and global environment. They have also a plan of increase the capacity of the already established environmental clubs in their schools to ensure their participation in environmental protection.

The Government of the State of Eritrea has embarked afforestation programs since the independence of the country in 1991. Tree planting is becoming a cultural practice in Eritrea and people have been planting trees in different occasions. Tree planting has been carried out as part of the afforestation program, as a strategic activity for soil and water conservation in biodiversity conservation, climate change abatement and combating desertification. Furthermore, trees as sink to carbon dioxide-a green house gas- counter impacts the climate change. This is also a significant indication of achieving synergy due to an integrated effort. Since the independence of Eritrea in 1991, about 83 million trees are planted all over the country through different initiatives.