



وزارة الدولة لشؤون البيئة بالتعاون مع وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي
MSEA in Cooperation with MAAR

مشروع حفظ التنوع الحيوي وإدارة المحميات
“ **Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Area Management Project** ”
SYR/05/010

* The Ministry of State for Environment Affairs – MSEA in collaboration with Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform-MAAR is conducting biodiversity conservation and protected area management project (BCPAM – SYR/05/010).

Within its activities in 2009, the project is launching a public awareness campaign on importance of biodiversity conservation and protected areas. The project has organized a festival day to commemorate the international day of biodiversity under the title "risks of exotic species (introduced or invasive) on the eco-systems" at Abu Qubies PA site – Hama and under the auspices of H.E Minister of MSEA, Dr. Kawkab Dayeh.

Besides, H.E Dr. Dayeh, the governor of Hama Mr. Abdul Razzak Al-Koutaini, UNDP – Syria Resident Representative (RR) Mr. Ismail Ould Shiekh Ahmad, representative of H.E Minister of MAAR Dr. Ziad Al-Jebawi, the director of forestry, big masses of local communities within and around the PA site, NGO's representatives, project staff, and local communities representatives from the other two project sites of Al-Fouronloq – Lattakia, and Jebel Abdul Aziz – Hassakeh have attended.

The festival began with the Abu–Qubies PA site manager Mr. Fadi Al Mahmoud, Who addressed the guests by welcoming them and identifying the PA site and its importance. Then the national project coordinator Dr. Akram Eissa Darwich, the director of biodiversity and protected Areas at MSEA talked about Syria's endeavours to achieve 2010 objective to reduce biodiversity loss at all levels. He also referred to CBD, which works in 1010 to draw the coming period strategy (after 2010 period).

The representative of H.E Minister of MAAR, Dr. Ziad Al-Jebawi, director of forestry addressed the audience focusing on the importance of natural resources and genetic resources, which form one of the main pillars of economy due to their sustainable benefits and possibilities. Such importance necessitates strict and fair measures to conserve this wealth. He also denoted to incorporate of all efforts to study and protect these resources. He also said Syria as all other countries has established PAs that are effective means for conservation of plant and animal beings, and eco-systems with the aim to confront biodiversity degradation.

The UNDP Resident Representative (RR) Mr. Ismail Ould Shiekh Ahmad talked and confirmed the close linkage between biodiversity and sustainable management approach and comprehensive change concept, since changes happening in ecosystems, climate change, and human activities, cause a great deal of biodiversity loss. The RR then delivered the speech of UN secretary general Mr. Ban Ki Moon who said that conservation of biodiversity for development is one of UN priorities. He also said that poverty and biodiversity are linked since the poor mainly depend on biodiversity elements in their livelihood. The RR referred to Syria's big interest in environment and conservation of its resources, as it is seen in the attendance of H.E Minister of MSEA Dr. Dayeh, and the governor of Hama of the event.



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The governor of Hama spoke to audience about choosing this beautiful place on the Al-ghab mountains foot to celebrate the biodiversity day and participation of international family in this event comes is within government directions towards conservation of PAs, forests, wild-life, increase awareness and knowledge on environment protection, besides government plans, socio-economic, and development programs. All of these come within the march of modernizing and development led very wisely and bravely by Mr. President Bashar Al – Assad.

Then H.E Minister of MSEA Dr. Dayeh addressed the festival and said that celebrating this event in Hama due to richness of Hama governorate in biodiversity. H.E Dr. Dayeh said to avoid the effect of exotic species (introduced or invasive), which damage the eco system, where eco-systems in Syria are much like eco-systems in other countries are subject to exotic species threats. Such species are introduced under different titles and purposes.

H.E Dr. Kawkab Dayeh added that there are human pressures on planet earth environment; these pressures have reached such levels much higher than possibilities of eco-systems to meet demands of generations of tomorrow. In addition to heavy economic losses resulted from biodiversity loss. Such loss was estimated as three Trillion U.S \$. She confirmed that Syria through collaboration with different concerned parties is working to reach a sustainable situation of biodiversity that can achieve sustainable development through executing a lot of activities, projects and efforts aiming biodiversity conservation and PA management. She also referred to the completion of the fourth national report of biodiversity, which will be sent to CBD secretariat very soon. In addition, she referred to national efforts exerted to achieve 2010 objective. Finally, H.E the minister referred to the interest of the Syrian leadership in protection of environment components, and the evidence for this interest is formation a new Ministry to take care of environment affairs.

After that, some folkloric performances were presented by:

- 1- Al-Sukeilbia band for folkloric singing and poetry, performances focused on increasing awareness on conservation of natural resources as a national wealth should be preserved to coming generations.
- 2- H.E minister of MSEA, Hama governor, and other participants visited the exhibition at the festival site, some pictures of PA site which reflect its ecological features. In addition to some products and handicrafts of the local communities were shown.
- 3- The rural theatre play, focused on the relationship between local community and biodiversity components and PAs, since biodiversity components are the main sources for food and medicine for locals. The play also focused on the sustainable use of biodiversity.
- 4- Some poems were delivered and focused on the risks of hunting and showed the importance of livings species.
- 5- During festival different beverages, coffee and local refreshments were served. Some Brochures and other promotion materials were also distributed to participants.



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* The main second activity was national two days conference on the Biodiversity in Syria, the main items were on present situation, needs, new researches, alien species, protected areas. The conference was organized by the Damascus University (Ministry of Higher education) in cooperation with Ministry of State for Environment Affairs and supported by the Damascus University and some national private companies. More than 100. The conference hold on 25-26 May 2009, in faculty of science, Biology Department.

* Two T.V interviews (Syrian official television) hold in this important event:
The interviewed guests in the first one were: Dr. Akram Eissa Darwich the Director of Biodiversity and Protected Areas in the Ministry of State for Environment Affairs, Dr. Galib Shehada Biological Diversity expert (Teshrin University, Latakia Governorate), Eng. Ibrahim Ali representative of Syrian Society for Conservation of Wildlife (SSCW), Rakka Governorate, Ibrahim Hana, Department of Forestry (Ministry of Agriculture) Homs Governorate.

The interviewed guests in the second interview were: Dr. Akram Eissa Darwich the Director of Biodiversity and Protected Areas, and Dr. Nader Gazi Director of environmental awareness and education from the Ministry of State for Environment Affairs.

The main discussions and dialogues were on the situation, threats (specially the alien species), needs, achievements, researches, regional, international cooperation and future plans on Biodiversity in Syria.

* Syrian Society for Conservation of Wildlife (SSCW) –NGO- was planned already to implement in the occasion of IBD (2009) an awareness day on Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* migratory bird species (critical endangered), but for uncontrolled reasons it was delayed until the 29.June 2009, this activities will implement in cooperation with General Commission for Development of the Badia (Syrian Steppe), and supported by German Hanns Seidel Foundation.



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Explanations of the photos:

Photo no.1: H.E Dr. Kawkab Dayeh Minister of State for Environment Affairs (MSEA)
Mr. Abdul Razzak Kotaine Governor of Hama
Dr. Akram Eissa Darwich, Director of Biodiversity (MSEA)

=====2: Site manager explains to the guests on the local community products

=====3: Some of the local community products and handicrafts.

=====4: The rural theatre play.

=====5: Some of the participants in the central celebration.

=====6: The festival Panel.

=====7-8-9: the celebration news in the main official newspapers.

=====10-12: photos of the Damascus University, (Faculty of science) conference.

Photo no.14: Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremite*.

With best Regards

Akram Eissa Darwich
Director of Biodiversity and Protected Areas
Ministry of State for Environment Affairs.