



# Parliamentarians and Biodiversity

## Essential to Integrate Biodiversity Concerns into National Legislation

Biodiversity considerations need to be put at the forefront of policy debates. Integrating biodiversity concerns into national legislation is urgent and essential to the achievement of the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

The link between parliamentarians and biodiversity is present at different levels. Nationally, parliament can review environmental bills and vote on biodiversity-related laws. Regionally, inter-parliamentary organizations, such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe or the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, also deal with environmental issues and promote cooperation between the concerned countries on these issues. Internationally, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), grouping over 140 national parliaments, is the focal point for worldwide parliamentary dialogue.

A cooperation agreement was signed between the United Nations and the IPU as early as 1996. In the UN Millennium Declaration and the 2005 World Summit Outcome, Heads of State and Government resolved to strengthen further cooperation between the UN and national parliaments through the IPU in all fields of work of the UN.

Several resolutions from the IPU concern biodiversity. During the 111<sup>th</sup> Assembly in 2004, a resolution was unanimously adopted on the role of parliaments in preserving biodiversity, supporting the commitment of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development to achieve a significant reduction in the current rate of loss of biological diversity by 2010. During the 114<sup>th</sup> Assembly in 2006, another resolution was passed on the role of parliaments in environmental management and in combating global degradation of the environment. A Presidential Declaration on Climate Change was endorsed during the 116<sup>th</sup> Assembly in 2007, 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. Climate change was also proposed as an emergency item during this year's 118<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the IPU.

## Why it is important

- As legislators, developers and monitors of government policy and guardians of public will and conscience, parliamentarians play a crucial role in global efforts towards the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity
- As decision-makers of policies, governmental plans and budgets, parliamentarians are the main players in deciding on legislation deriving from decisions of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. By proposing, amending and adopting laws, they can therefore translate the consensus reached internationally under the CBD into tangible actions at the national and local levels. For instance, a European Community Directive on Natural Habitat, ratified in 1992, requires member States to:
  - Take measures to maintain or restore natural habitats and wild species at a favorable conservation status
  - Establish a network of areas of conservation.





- As democracy is improving world-wide, the role and power of parliamentarians with regard to environmental issues is becoming even more important
- Parliamentarians can also strengthen the mandate of CBD National Focal Points, in their efforts to promote the implementation of the COP decisions and activities
- The areas of influence of parliamentarians can reach beyond Ministries of Environment or of International Affairs by integrating and mainstreaming biodiversity issues into national development strategies, programmes and plans, and translate them into concrete legislation, policy-making and legislative processes and into budgetary frameworks.

### **What the CBD is doing**

In 2004, for the 111<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the CBD Secretariat prepared a background paper titled *Promoting the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity: A challenge for Parliaments*. Following this paper, a resolution to call governments to take more effective action to implement the Convention was adopted by the Assembly of the IPU. In 2006, the Executive Secretary of the CBD called upon all parliamentarians to join the global effort to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010: ([www.cbd.int/doc/speech/2006/sp-2006-03-28-parliamentarians-en.pdf](http://www.cbd.int/doc/speech/2006/sp-2006-03-28-parliamentarians-en.pdf)).

The Environment Committee of the German Parliament will on 27 May 2008 hold its session in Bonn instead of its usual meeting venue of Berlin at the margins of COP 9. The Executive Secretary has called on all Parties to nominate Parliamentarian delegates to participate in a meeting with the German parliamentarians on 27 May in order to further promote the role of parliamentarians in biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. The Bonn Declaration on Biodiversity and Parliamentarians, demonstrating the commitment of parliamentarians toward the achievement of the objectives of the Convention, will be released at this time.

### **For more information:**

Parliamentarians and biodiversity: [www.cbd.int/parliamentarians](http://www.cbd.int/parliamentarians)