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8 September 2010

NOTIFICATION
Mass Extinction Memorial Observatory (MEMO) Project and
Bell ringing events on 22 September 2010

Dear Madam/Sir,

As we approach the high-level meeting on biodiversity at the United Nations General Assembly on 22 September, I would like to introduce you to the MEMO Project. MEMO, which stands for Mass Extinction Memorial Observatory, is a charitable organization based in the United Kingdom (UK). It is an inspiring initiative dedicated to building an ongoing memorial to extinct species on a cliff-top site that will overlook the sailing events of the London Olympics in 2012. The site on the Isle of Portland is part of the UNESCO Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site whose 95 miles of fossil rich cliffs record 185 million continuous years of life on Earth including two of the five Mass Extinctions of the geological past. The aim is to record the sixth, now underway, by the arts of stonemasonry and sculpture and so create a profound but accessible symbol capable of engaging very many people with both the facts and the human meaning of the critical erosion of biodiversity we are now witnessing.

The project is being pursued by a unique collaboration of sculptors and scientists with the active encouragement of the CBD Secretariat, the IUCN Species Survival Commission and the Royal Society, the UK's national academy of science. Among the eminent scientists supporting the project are Professor James Lovelock, originator of Gaia Theory and Professor E.O. Wilson, often described as 'the father of biodiversity'.

The monument will be a circular enclosure of stone open to the sky bearing the carved images of all species of plants and animals assessed by the IUCN as extinct since the dodo. Many of the carvings will be created at a major international carving festival immediately preceding the London Olympics in 2012. Extinctions will be marked into the future by the addition of carvings to the monument and by the tolling of a great bell to be incorporated in it.

To: CBD and CPB National Focal Points; SBSTTA Focal Points; CHM Focal Points; international organizations; non-governmental organizations; and relevant stakeholders



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In preparation for the casting of the big bell, trial bells have been cast and tolled on the cliffs of Portland to warn symbolically of the extinction crisis over the past two years. One of these, 'the Fossil Bell' (so-called because it was successfully cast from a mould of fossil-rich stone) will be ceremonially rung as part of proceedings at the United Nations on 22 September as a symbolic wake up call.

Bell traditions have evolved independently in cultures all over the world, and whether on ships and bicycles, in schools, town halls and factories, around the ankles of dancers, or the necks of domesticated livestock - as well as in temples, churches and shrines - bells form part of the 'soundscape' of everyday life all over the world.

The CBD Secretariat is proposing to all 193 Parties that the message that life on Earth is under threat as never before be communicated by the ringing of bells in each country on 22 September in concert with Fossil Bell at the United Nations headquarters at 9:00 a.m. (New York time) on the eve of the general debate of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly. I would like to encourage parties and stakeholders to participate and to encourage participation among the public. More information and details of how to report on bell ringing events for 22 September can be found at www.cbd.int/2010 and www.memoproject.org. I urge you to participate in this global initiative aimed at waking up the world to the biodiversity crisis.

While the 2010 target will not be met, the near universal ratification of the CBD is in itself a powerful demonstration of global agreement on this critical subject. We hope that the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to which the meeting at the General Assembly forms an important prelude, will result in strengthened commitment to a new strategic plan and biodiversity targets. Our joining together in the ringing of diverse bells around the world will be a potent symbol of our unity of purpose.

Please accept, Madam/Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Ahmed Djoghlaif
Executive Secretary