



सत्यमेव जयते

भारत सरकार

पर्यावरण एवं वन मंत्रालय

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT & FORESTS

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D.O. No. 14/33/2005-CSC(BC)

May 26, 2005

**Sub : Celebration of International Day for Biological Diversity**

Dear Dr. Zedan,

This has reference to my earlier letter dated 17.5.05 informing you about organizing a Workshop for preparation of India's Third National Report to the CBD on May 20-21, 2005, and celebration of Biodiversity Day.

On the occasion of the Biodiversity Day this year, we had undertaken: (i) printing of 500 number of posters (developed by CBD Secretariat) on Biodiversity Day theme; (ii) preparation and printing of Brochure (500 number) on Biodiversity Day theme; and (iii) Printing of Biodiversity Day theme on white T-shirts (100 number).

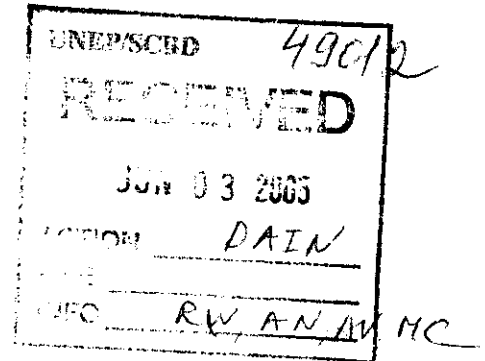
On the eve of Biodiversity Day, and coinciding with the Concluding Session of the two-day Workshop for preparation of India's Third National Report to the CBD, the Poster and the Brochure were formally released and distributed widely. The T-shirts with Biodiversity Day theme were distributed among the participants of the Workshop. In addition, a group of school children and their teachers composed and sung a befitting song describing the intricate relationship between biodiversity and water as to how water nourishes biodiversity, and vice-versa. Two copies of the Poster and Brochure, and some photographs taken during the function are enclosed herewith.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

(Desh Deepak Verma)

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# BI DIVERSITY

Life Insurance of Life Itself



International Day for Biological Diversity  
May 22, 2005



Ministry of Environment & Forests  
Government of India

## BIODIVERSITY – LIFE INSURANCE OF LIFE ITSELF



### The value of biodiversity



### Threats to Biodiversity



Biological diversity, or biodiversity, encompasses the variety of all life on earth. The biodiversity we see today is the outcome of over 3.5 billion years of evolutionary history, shaped by natural processes and increasingly, by the influence of humans. Biodiversity forms the web of life of which we are an integral part and upon which we so fully depend.

Biological diversity is the natural biotic capital of the earth, and affects us all. Humanity derives its supplies of food, medicines, energy and many industrial products from biological resources. Some of the products obtained from bioresources without which life would be difficult include wood, fuel, bamboo, thatch, fodder, paper, cosmetics, material for clothing and housing etc. Biodiversity maintains the ecological balance and continues evolutionary processes. The very survival of humankind depends on these core ecological functions. The indirect ecosystem services provided through biodiversity include : photosynthesis, pollination, transpiration, maintaining the balance of atmospheric gases, maintaining hydrological cycles, chemical cycling, nutrient cycling, soil creation and maintenance, climate regulation, waste management, pest control etc. Biodiversity also has aesthetic and recreational value.

Extinction of species and gradual changes in ecological communities is a natural phenomenon. However, the pace of extinction has increased dramatically as a result of human activities. Ecosystems are being fragmented or eliminated, and several species are in decline. The fragmentation, degradation, and loss of habitats pose serious threat to biological diversity. It has been estimated that species have been disappearing at 50-100 times the natural rate and this is predicted to rise dramatically. These losses are irreversible and pose a threat to our own well being, considering our dependence on food crop and medicines and other biological resources. The world's forests are shrinking rapidly. Upto 10% of coral reefs which are among the richest ecosystems have been destroyed. Half of coastal mangroves, an important habitat for several species, have already disappeared. Global atmospheric changes such as ozone depletion, climate change have added to the stress. Global warming is already churning habitats and the distribution of species. The loss of biodiversity often reduces the productivity of the ecosystem, thereby shrinking the nature's basket of goods and services on which life depends. It destabilizes ecosystems and weakens their ability to deal with natural disasters such as floods, droughts, and hurricanes.

Our cultural identity, which is deeply rooted in our biological environment, is also affected adversely by the loss of biodiversity.

## India : A Megadiverse Country



## The Convention on Biological Diversity



Biodiversity is not distributed evenly or uniformly across the globe. Certain countries, lying wholly or partly within the tropics, are characterized by high species richness and more number of endemic species. These countries are known as Megadiverse countries. India, alongwith sixteen other megadiverse countries, which are rich in biological diversity and associated traditional knowledge, have formed a group known as the Like Minded Megadiverse Countries (LMMC). These countries are Bolivia, Brazil, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Philippines, South Africa, and Venezuela. The LMMCs hold nearly 70% of all biodiversity.

Global concern about loss of species and ecosystems found expression in the International Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The CBD, one of the key agreements adopted during the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, is the first comprehensive global agreement which addresses all aspects relating to biodiversity. The CBD, which has near universal membership with more than 175 countries as its Parties, sets out commitments for maintaining the world's ecological underpinnings, while pursuing economic development. India is a Party to the CBD. The Convention, while reaffirming sovereign rights of nations over their biological resources, establishes three main goals: the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources.

The Convention has recognized for the first time that conservation of biological diversity is a common concern of humankind and is an integral part of the development process. It sets principles for the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources, notably those destined for commercial use. It also covers the rapidly expanding field of biotechnology, addressing technology development and transfer, and biosafety. The Convention is legally binding; the countries that joined it are obliged to implement its provisions.





## International Biological Diversity Day



While past conservation efforts were aimed at protecting particular species and habitats, the Convention recognizes that ecosystems, species and genes must be used for the benefit of humans, in a way and at a rate that does not lead to the long term decline of biodiversity. The Convention also acknowledges that substantial investments are required to conserve biological diversity, and that conservation will lead to significant environmental, economic and social benefits in return.

The United Nations has proclaimed May 22, the International Day for Biological Diversity, to commemorate the date of adoption of the text of CBD in 1992. The day is celebrated to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues. The celebration each year of this day is an occasion to reflect on our responsibility to safeguard the precious heritage of bioresources for our future generation. The theme for International Day for Biological Diversity 2005 is :

### **Biodiversity : Life Insurance for our Changing World**

The world is changing faster than ever before, and growing human populations and expanding consumption are placing severe pressure on biodiversity. This year's theme reminds us that in addition to providing the physical conditions for life, biodiversity also plays an important role in protecting life and making it resilient to the pressures brought about by the change. Thus, **biodiversity is the life insurance of life itself**. More specifically, diversity within species helps a given species survive rapid changes in surrounding ecosystem. Diversity between species increases the resilience of ecosystems by enhancing functions and providing multiple sources for ecosystem services. This makes sustainable development possible, protecting life from the potential consequences of change, including sudden changes to ecosystems, such as those brought on by disasters.





An additional focus for 2005 is the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA). This five year programme, initiated by the Secretary General UN, studied the relationship between ecosystems and human well being. The findings of synthesis of MA report highlights the role of ecosystem services in sustaining life and providing protection for the vulnerable. It also draws the link between the risks of rapid change and the increased demands that people are placing on ecosystems around the world. Ecosystem services provide human beings with options, which is of particular importance to the poor and vulnerable.



The report contains the following six key findings.

**What is the problem? (finding 1)** In the last 50 years, Human actions have changed the diversity of life on the planet more than at any other time in history. Our activities have lifted many people out of poverty, but at the price of a loss of biodiversity. If we continue down this road, we will reduce biological diversity, with life-threatening consequences.



**Why is biodiversity loss a concern? (findings 2 and 3)** Biodiversity is the foundation for human well-being. Not only does it provide the materials we need for food, clothing and shelter, but also gives us security, health and freedom of choices. The current pace and rhythm of our activities are harming ecosystems, consuming biological resources and putting at risk the well-being of future generations.





**What are the causes of biodiversity loss and how they are changing?**

**(finding 4)** Human activities are leading to the loss of the variety of life. Population increase and economic activity, fuelled by technological change and our patterns of political and cultural life are placing undue pressure on ecosystems. Our actions are changing habitats, the climate, overexploiting resources, creating pollution and promoting the spread of invasive alien species. If current patterns continue, the loss of biodiversity will accelerate, not diminish.



**What actions can be taken? (finding 5)** We know that in the past, actions and programmes that promoted conservation and the sustainable use of biological diversity limited biodiversity loss. This is promising, but we are not doing enough. To further reduce and to stop the loss of biodiversity will require a whole host of new and stronger actions. Sustainable human development remains the primary goal and we need to strengthen the range and power of our ability to respond to biodiversity loss.

**The 2010 target and its implications (finding 6)** The size of the task ahead of us is so great that the 2010 biodiversity target will only realistically be achieved in certain areas and regions if we engage in substantial efforts. This sobering conclusion is not hopeless. Humankind can choose to act now for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity if it changes the way it is causing change, carefully chooses the ways it responds to change and makes the right tradeoffs.



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