



Message from Kemal Derviş,
Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme

On the occasion of
The International Day for Biological Diversity
22 May 2007

It is now well recognized that poverty and biodiversity are intimately linked. The poor, especially in rural areas, depend on biodiversity for food, shelter, fuel, medicines and livelihoods. Biodiversity also provides the critical 'ecosystem services' on which development depends, including air and water purification, soil conservation, disease control, and reduced vulnerability to natural disasters such as floods, droughts and landslides. Habitats contain enormous carbon reservoirs and thus have a significant role in regulating our climate. Climate change also has a direct impact on degrading biodiversity, the very resource that can help regulate it and also increase species' resilience to shocks caused by it. Biodiversity loss exacerbates poverty, and similarly, poverty is a major threat to biodiversity. Given these links, UNDP has made Biodiversity for Development a key area of its work on Environment and Sustainable Development.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Convention on Biological Diversity global commitments to significantly reduce the loss of biodiversity by 2010 and the subsequent incorporation of this commitment as a new target in the UN MDG Framework is a noteworthy advance in creating the right enabling policy environment for global action on these critical issues. As we mark this year's International Day for Biological Diversity which focuses on "Biodiversity and Climate Change", it is clear that much needs to be done to address this major environmental challenge facing the world. Both the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change have a central role in driving these timely and urgent agendas forward to ensure that they are at the heart of global efforts to create a sustainable future for all.

Working with our partners in the UN system and beyond, UNDP is a global player in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and in responding to climate change with projects in over 140 countries around the world through UN Country Teams, and the Global Environment Facility, including the Small Grants Programme. On this day, it is, therefore, a pleasure to be able to also announce the winners of the Equator Prize for excellence in community-based biodiversity conservation, sustainable use and poverty reduction who will each receive \$30,000. The approaches taken by these five local communities to create livelihoods from the biodiversity in their surrounding environments are evidence of the sustainable routes that exist for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

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- In Madagascar, the Village of Andavadoaka demonstrates how communities can organize to manage a valuable resource, in this case the octopus fishery, so that it can provide benefits over the long-term.
- Shidulai Swarnivar Sangstha uses riverboat-based educational resource centres throughout Bangladesh's Ganges river delta to deliver information on sustainable agricultural practices and market prices.
- In Guatemala, the women of Alimentos Nutri-Naturales have reinstated the Maya nut as a staple source of nutrition, thereby conserving the Maya Nut forests in the buffer zone to the Maya Biosphere Reserve.
- Shompole Community Trust in Kenya conserves the inimitable vastness and beauty of the grasslands and savannahs to fuel a robust profit driven ecotourism venture benefiting the Maasai people.
- In Ecuador, in the Galapagos UNESCO World Heritage Site, the women of Isabela Island's "Blue Fish" Association are marketing a local delicacy, tuna smoked with guava wood, as a way of promoting alternative use of marine resources and controlling the invasive plant species.

In offering my congratulations to each of these remarkable communities, I would like to draw attention to the countless community initiatives around the world that are undertaking similar efforts to reduce poverty through the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. The proliferation and scaling-up of efforts such as these is critical to attaining our common goals to conserve and use biodiversity in a sustainable manner, respond to climate change and achieve the MDGs.