

Myanmar

Celebrations of the International Year of Biodiversity

The Celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity was held in Kyun Shwe War Hall of Ministry of Forestry in Nay Pyi Taw at 8 am on 22 May 2010.

1. Agenda

The agenda for the celebrations are as follows:

- Item 1- Speech to be made by the Chairman of NCEA and Ministry of Forestry
- Item 2- Read a statement by representative from FAO on behalf of the secretary of the CBD
- Item 3- Video Show and Exhibition
- Item 4- Paper reading sessions
- Item 5- Closing Session

2. Attendance

Approximately 200 representatives from various ministries, departments and enterprises, International organizations such as UNDP, FAO, Head of Universities and Basic Education High Schools, NGOs and all staffs from NCEA were attended.

3. Opening Speech

Chairman U Thein Aung delivered an opening speech. He said:

Excellencies,
Members of Natural Environment Conservation Committee
Representatives from UNDP and FAO
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,
A very Good Morning,

It is my great pleasure to deliver this opening speech in commemoration of International Day for Biological Diversity which falls today and International Year of Biodiversity 2010. I wish you all in good health and happiness. On this auspicious day, firstly, I would like to say the UN's efforts for designating commemorative days on important issues. This will be followed by some information on the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the role of biological diversity for our existence will come at the end of my speech.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are celebrating International Year of Biodiversity (IYB) today through technical papers reading, and so are being held through numerous events, actions, initiatives by a variety of organizations and countries. The theme of International Year of Biodiversity is, "**Biodiversity for development and poverty alleviation**".

UN has designated International Years since 1959 in order to draw attention to major issues and to encourage international action to address concerns which have global importance and ramifications. As you all are aware, the UN has designated the year 2010 as International Year of Biodiversity with a view to bringing greater international attention to bear on the issue of the continued loss of biodiversity. The next year, 2011, has been declared by UN general assembly as International Year of Forests.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

In the second part of my speech, I would like to emphasize on Convention on Biological Diversity. The convention entered into force on 29 December 1993 with the major objective of

sustaining the life on earth. Until now, a total of 193 countries has ratified the convention and there are three specific objectives in the convention and they are;

1. The conservation of biological diversity
2. The sustainable use of the components of biological diversity, and
3. The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.

Biodiversity is described as all life on earth- the variety of living things, the places they inhabit and the interactions between them. The Earth's biological resources are vital to humanity's economic and social development, as the motto says, “**biodiversity is life- biodiversity is our life**”. There is a growing recognition that biological diversity is a global asset of tremendous value to present and future generations. We all must therefore conserve biological diversity for not only present but also for future generations.

We have been making efforts to attain the Sustainable Development- our common goal. In doing so, conserving biological diversity is one of the environmental activities which has a significant contribution to attain the Sustainable Development.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Finally, may I draw your attention on the major role of biological diversity for our existence. At present, a total of 300,000 plant families has been discovered and 50% of medicine are produced based on those plants. And 80% of world's population mainly relies on plant-based traditional medicine. Water is vital for our survival and biological diversity, plants and eco-system in particular, are providing clean water to us.

Unfortunately, the threat to species and ecosystems has never been so great as it is today. Species extinction caused by human activities continues at an alarming rate. Out of present plant population, 34,000 plants are in the stage of their extinction. 40% of plants were lost between the years 1970 and 2000. Deforestation is also at an alarming rate for the fact that 6 million hectares of forests are being depleted annually all over the world. Human-being are also consuming biological products 20% more than their capacity to produce. Pertaining to marine biological diversity, 80% of marine products which we are consuming today come from oceans. And we are harvesting fish more than they can produce in their nature.

In addition to providing food, biological diversity is critically important in reducing global warming. Ecosystem sequesters 2,500 Giga tons of Carbon Dioxide whereas sea and oceans absorb 38,000 Giga tons of Carbon Oxide distributing 37,000 Giga tons in deep sea and 1,000 Giga tons in shallow area of the sea. To compare that carbon absorption with the atmospheric sequestration, we will find the latter is only at about 2% of the former. This clearly shows the fact that carbon sequestration by oceans and seas are much greater than any other in the world. In other word, oceans are protecting our planet from being extremely hot fireball.

Ecosystem services, including oceans and seas services, to human-being is evaluated at 33 Trillion a year and our survival in future will also depend on the good marine environment. The costal living population, however, is growing year by year and total costal population by 2015 is predicted at 50% of world's population and this increase will accelerate marine pollution in future.

In regard with the loss of biodiversity, the most important threats to biodiversity have long been habitat loss, due to large scale conversion of invasive alien species, over exploitation of natural resources and pollution. Climate change is now adding its effects to the cumulative pressures. Sea level has risen from 12 cm at least and 22 cm at most for global warming over the last one-and half century. Global average atmospheric temperature has risen for 0.76 degree Celsius. In summary for the last century, 35% of mangroves, 40% of forests and 50% of wetlands were lost due mainly to above-mentioned disturbances.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I now touch upon Myanmar efforts in conserving biodiversity briefly. Before the establishment of biodiversity convention, Myanmar has long tradition of protecting biodiversity in our history. Wildlife sanctuaries were established in the reign of Myanmar kingdoms. To safeguard the population of wild elephants, Wild Elephant Protection Act was enacted in 1879 followed by Forest Law in 1881. To implement the policies on protecting wild flora and fauna and natural areas and to fulfill international convention obligations, Protection of Wildlife and Wild Plant and Conservation of Natural Areas Law was put in place in 1994. Protection of soil, water, wildlife, biodiversity and the entire environment is identified as an important imperative in the 1995 Myanmar Forest Policy. Until now, total Protected Areas including national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and marine protective areas has reached 4% of total land area of Myanmar.

Myanmar has ratified Convention on Biological Diversity in 1994 and since then reporting on national biological conservation activities to the CBD secretariat has been on regular basis. Last year, fourth national biological report was developed and able to send to the secretariat on time.

In my conclusion, biological diversity and ecosystems are providing things essential for our existence and we therefore should protect them at our utmost. And we should not hesitate to invest in biological conservation. The more we invest in biodiversity conservation, the greater benefits will come to us.

THANK YOU

4. Statement of CBD

Speaking next, Representative of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Yangon Mr. Shin Imai conveyed a statement on behalf of Mr. Ahmad Djoghlaif, the Executive secretary of the CBD.

5. Video Show and Exhibition

After that the video “The time to act is now” was screened and Parks and Protected areas posters were displayed.

6. Paper Reading Session

Following the opening ceremony, presentations were made by representatives from biodiversity- related departments. Papers included –

“**Biodiversity Conservation in Myanmar**” by Director of Wildlife and Nature Conservation Division, Forest Department Mr. Win Naing Thaw,

“**A Glance at the Conservation of Biological Diversity in Myanmar**” by Dr San Oo, lecturer, University of Forestry,

“**Freshwater Fish Biological in Myanmar**” by Assistant Director of Fishery Department Mr. Myint Pe and

“**Agro Biodiversity Conservation in Myanmar**” by Assistant Researcher of Agriculture Research Department Dr. Ye Tun Tun.

7. Closing Session

The paper reading sessions came to close with concluding remarks by Secretary of NCEA and National Focal Point for CBD Mr. Sann Lwin.