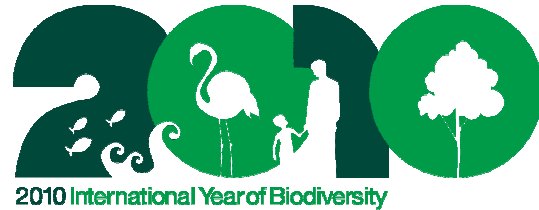


Thailand declares 2010 Year of Biodiversity



The Government of Thailand has announced that 2010 will be Thailand's Year of Biodiversity, in line with a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), which declares 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB).

The Thai Cabinet, during its meeting on 22 December 2009, approved the announcement proposed by the National Committee on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity and recommended by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. It also endorsed the Action Plan for IYB and instructed all relevant government offices to allocate funds for its organizations to operate in accordance with the action plan. The objective is to urge all groups of people and professions to be aware of biodiversity and cooperate in conserving and using biodiversity in a sustainable way.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment told the Cabinet that the UNGA made the declaration, coinciding with the 2010 Biodiversity Target adopted by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and by heads of state and governments at the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. Thailand ratified the CBD in October 2003. The Convention became effective on 29 January 2004, making Thailand the 188th Contracting Party.

Rich in biodiversity, Thailand is the home of 12,000 vascular plant species, 302 species of mammals, and 982 species of birds. There are more than 2,100 marine and 720 freshwater fish species in the country, accounting for 10 percent of the estimated total fish species worldwide. Even so, Thailand is facing a decline in biodiversity, which is caused mainly by over-exploitation. Therefore, it is stepping up education campaigns to encourage the general public to become more aware of conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity.

Research on biodiversity is conducted in cooperation with numerous countries, covering species, genetics, and ecosystems. Species diversity relates to the variety of animals, plants, and micro-organisms in any particular area. Genetic diversity holds potential benefits for livelihood, especially in agriculture and related production. Ecosystem diversity comprises habilitation, substitution, and topography, in that creatures form a community, in which they interact with one another and with the air, water, and soil around them.

About one third of Thailand's population makes use of medicinal plants from the forests, which are also increasingly used by the pharmaceutical industry. (*Thai Press Reports*)