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UN Biodiversity Year Launched in Berlin by Angela Merkel

- Accent on Business Implications



The opening ceremony took place at the Museum of Natural History in Berlin. Following the ceremony, Dr. Norbert Röttgen inaugurated the exhibition “Without Diversity in Nature, No Diversity in Business.”

This exhibition was part of the “Business and Biodiversity Initiative,” which the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety launched in 2007 to integrate businesses actively into the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity (<http://www.business-and-biodiversity.de>).



As the current chair of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Germany organizes the opening ceremony for the International Year of Biodiversity.

Since the Ninth Conference of the Parties in Bonn, in May 2008, the German CBD presidency has moved the debate on biological diversity forward. Significant advances were made, for example, in the negotiations of an agreement on the fight against bio-piracy or on the establishment of an International Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

Here Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel giving her speech

U.N. INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF BIODIVERSITY LAUNCHED IN BERLIN BY ANGELA MERKEL

UNITED NATIONS - / MaximsNews Network / 24 January 2010 - The United Nations officially launched the International Year of Biodiversity this month in Berlin and German Chancellor Angela Merkel urged the world to take the necessary steps to protect the biological diversity of the Earth and furthermore she stressed "the conservation of biological diversity has the same dimension as climate protection, we need a trend reversal - not at some point in the future, but immediately" said the German Chancellor speaking on behalf of the current Presidency of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, while addressing more than 400 participants from the diplomatic corps, government, civil society, international organizations, scientists, business, and media at the celebration held in the Museum of Natural History.

"Over the past half-century, human activities have caused an unprecedented decline in biological diversity," said U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in a video statement from the United Nations.

"Species are going extinct a thousand times faster than the natural rate – a loss now being further compounded by climate change. A wide variety of environmental goods and services that we take for granted are under threat, with profound and damaging consequences for ecosystems, economies and livelihoods," stated the Secretary-General.

"Worldwide, political decision-makers are increasingly recognizing that biodiversity protection is immensely important for human well-being, global economic development and combating poverty. The time has now come to ensure that these insights are followed by deeds", stated the Federal Environment Minister Norbert Röttgen.



**UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner
giving his speech.**

Abdul Rahman Fadhl Allryani, the Environment Minister of Yemen, the current President of the Group of 77 and China, which represents 132 countries, stated, "Preserving the rich biodiversity of Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula, in all of its beauty is a priority for us and should be a priority for all."

Achim Steiner, the Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](http://www.unep.org)) reminded the audience said that governments had earlier agreed to achieve by 2010 "a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional, and national level" – a target that is unlikely to be met, he said.

"The urgency of the situation demands that as a global community we not only reverse the rate of loss, but that we stop the loss altogether and begin restoring the ecological infrastructure that has been damaged and degraded over the previous century or so," said Mr. Steiner.

Ahmed Djoghlaif, the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the body in charge of organizing the International Year, stressed the vital importance of biodiversity as a global concern, "Climate change is indeed a problem, and biological diversity is part of the solution and is therefore a full component of the multilateral political ecology.

This is what the International Year of Biodiversity is all about; this is why we are here today in Berlin."

The Convention, which entered into force at the end of 1993 and now has 193 parties, is based on the premise that the world's diverse ecosystems purify the air and the water,



Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Thomas Koehler / photothek.net



Issei Tajima, Japan Vice-Minister of Environment

stabilize and moderate the Earth's climate, renew soil fertility, cycle nutrients and pollinate plants.

Scientists will report on the overall status and trends of biodiversity loss.

The CBD Global Biodiversity Outlook, is scheduled for publication in May and will provide the latest assessment and policy recommendations for Governments and a new set of targets is proposed to be adopted by the international community at the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit in Japan in October of this year.

"The International Year of Biodiversity is a critical year because we can all share a common idea that we need to reverse biodiversity loss and restore biodiversity," said Issei Tajima, Senior Vice-Minister of the Environment for Japan. "This will lead us to concrete actions," at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention scheduled in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, 18-29 October 2010.

"In such a remarkable year, Japan will host the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. I express our determination to make that meeting a success," said Minister Tajima.

"Biodiversity is Life, Biodiversity is Our Life," is the slogan of year and its observance of the International Day for Biological Diversity on 22 May. The theme of the Year is *Biodiversity for Development and Poverty Alleviation*.

"It becomes crystal clear that the problems of our planet are highly interlinked - without combating climate change we will fail to stop the loss of biodiversity, without protecting ecosystems with their carbon storing capacity it will be extremely difficult to meet climate change targets," said Jochen Flasbarth, President of the German Federal Environment Agency. "And without both of them we will fail in our efforts to fight hunger in the world." he stated.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits from utilization of genetic resources.



**Abdulrahman Fadhl Al-Iryani, Yemen
Minister of Environment**

The CBD aims to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change.

The headquarters of the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) are located in Montreal, Canada.



Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel (centre), Minister of the Environment Dr. Norbert Röttgen (left), UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner (right) and other prominent guests have launched the International Year of Biodiversity, in January 2010, during a ceremony at the Museum of Natural History in Berlin. Thomas Koehler / photothek.net



Minister of the Environment Dr. Norbert Röttgen explains: "Across the world, political decision-makers increasingly recognize the immense importance of the conservation of biological diversity for human wellbeing, global economic development and poverty alleviation. Now is the time to walk the talk."

Furthermore, he announced to start a "Federal Program for Biological Diversity" to implement the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan which was passed in

the last legislative period. “A strategy to conserve Nature is important – now we start the concrete implementation of the decisions,” Röttgen said.



From left: Issei Tajima (Japan Vice-Minister of Environment), Reinhold Leinfelder (Director of the Museum of Natural History), Minister of the Environment Dr. Norbert Röttgen, Achim Steiner (UNEP Executive Director), Abdulrahman Fadhl Al-Iryani (Yemen Minister of Environment) and Ahmed Djoghlaif (Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity) at the opening ceremony of the International Year of Biodiversity.



Discussion with representatives of civil society (from right to left): James Leape (Director of WWF International), Pavan Sukhdev (TEEB Study Leader), Moderator Carla Kniestedt, Gudrun Kopp (Parliamentary State Secretary in the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development), Volker Hauff (Special Ambassador of the International Year of Biodiversity), and Reinhold Leinfelder (Director of the Museum of Natural History).



Minister of the Environment Dr. Norbert Röttgen (right) with the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity Ahmed Djoghlaf (left) and the Director of the Museum of Natural History, Reinhold Leinfelder (centre).

For additional information, please contact: David Ainsworth on +1 514 833 0196 or at david.ainsworth@cbd.int ; Johan Hedlund on + 1 514 287 6670 or at johan.hedlund@cbd.int