



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



International Year of Biodiversity 2010

Biodiversity is life Biodiversity is our life

Biodiversity and UNESCO:
human well-being through science, culture,
education and communication



The Global Biodiversity Challenge

Biodiversity, the variety of life, is the visible and invisible basis for human existence. Large segments of the increasingly urban human population are unaware of the extent to which their material, social and cultural well-being is founded on the rich biodiversity of our planet.

The services biodiversity provides are the basis of human well-being. Biodiversity not only provides food, fibre, building materials and medicines but is also vital in regulating air and water quality and climate, in protecting us from natural hazards, erosion, and diseases, in recycling waste, and in pollinating crops. Our belief systems are inextricably linked to the natural world clearly linking cultural and biological diversity. Biodiversity supports essential processes such as soil formation. In short, biodiversity is key to the services provided by the complex ecosystems on which our life-support system and well-being depends.

Biodiversity is being lost at an accelerating rate. Clearly identified causes include habitat loss, climate change, invasive species, over-exploitation and pollution. Underlying causes for this loss include poor governance, and poor understanding of the importance of biodiversity conservation for society's well-being, and prosperity in the long term.

With the adoption in 1992 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the international community recognized the value of biodiversity, and thus committed to conserve, sustainably use and fairly and equitably share the benefits of biodiversity setting the target of halting the current trends in its loss by 2010.

The International Year of Biodiversity: the UN and UNESCO's commitment

The United Nations General Assembly (GA) declared 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB):

- ▶ to increase awareness of the importance of biodiversity to human well-being;
- ▶ to contribute to halting current trends in its loss and;
- ▶ to celebrate its conservation success stories.

The GA expressed its deep concern for the social, economic, environmental and cultural implications of the loss of biodiversity, and the negative impacts on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity was invited to coordinate activities of the International Year of Biodiversity and identified UNESCO as a key international partner in the official implementation strategy it elaborated. In September 2009, during the UNESCO 182nd Executive Board, UNESCO Member States unanimously commended UNESCO's active participation in the implementation of the Year and the 35th UNESCO General Conference in October 2009 strongly endorsed the Executive Board's decision.

UNESCO has facilitated and catalysed research on biodiversity science through international scientific cooperation in the Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB) and the significant contributions to international scientific assessments on biodiversity science including



the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA) and the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD). Biodiversity conservation is also promoted in the context of World Heritage and the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) of which UNESCO is the lead UN agency.

From Commitment to Action: UNESCO's contribution to IYB

Biodiversity conservation, on which every aspect of human well-being and the achievement of the international development goals depends, can only be tackled by taking into account the multidisciplinary dimension of the challenge it represents. This is where UNESCO can effectively contribute to building and filling the gaps in the scientific knowledge base on biodiversity, by taking the cultural dimensions of biodiversity use into account and by raising-awareness, educating and communicating on the vital importance of its sustainable use. The following are the main UNESCO IYB activities, in collaboration with a variety of partners:

- ▶ High-level Inaugural Event: 21 and 22 January 2010, UNESCO, Paris — *Presentations and discussions by influential decision- and policy-makers, experts and opinion-makers to raise awareness on the global biodiversity challenge;*
- ▶ UNESCO IYB Biodiversity Science-Policy Conference: 25 to 29 January 2010,

UNESCO, Paris — *Scientific conference to contribute to knowledge on biodiversity responses to climate change and priority setting for the science-policy interface, re-search and funding;*

- ▶ IYB travelling exhibition: Launch 21 January 2010, UNESCO, Paris — *Exhibition conveying the main IYB messages to raise awareness among, and to educate policy- and decision-makers, students and general public audiences;*
- ▶ Biodiversity Learning Kit: Launch October 2010, CBD COP meeting Nagoya, Japan — *Educational kit on biodiversity for teachers and trainers to raise awareness and educate young and wider public audiences through an easy-to-use and appealing tool;*
- ▶ International Conference on Biological and Cultural Diversity: June/July 2010, Montreal, Canada — *International conference to exchange knowledge and practices linking biological and cultural diversity and to elaborate a programme of work to be jointly implemented by UNESCO, the CBD and other partners;*
- ▶ Special Side Event on Gender and Biodiversity: 27 January 2010 UNESCO IYB Biodiversity Science-Policy Conference — *Workshop exploring the links between gender and biodiversity to provide recommendations for taking into account the gender perspective in biodiversity-related research, policies and management.*



Join UNESCO through science, culture, education and communication to conserve the variety of life on Earth

<http://www.unesco.org/en/biodiversity>

Contacts:

Salvatore Arico
Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences
s.arico@unesco.org

Anne Candau
Executive Office
a.candau@unesco.org

Ana Persic
Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences
a.persic@unesco.org

Natural Sciences Sector
UNESCO
1, rue Miollis
75732 Paris cedex 15
France

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