

SUMMARY OF THE UNDP - REGIONAL BUREAU FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN BIODIVERSITY INITIATIVE VENEZUELA CONSULTATION:

BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEMS: WHY THESE ARE IMPORTANT FOR SUSTAINED GROWTH AND EQUITY IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: 4-5 NOVEMBER 2009

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Regional Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) held a consultation in Caracas, Venezuela on Wednesday, 4 and Thursday, 5 November as part of a regional initiative entitled "Biodiversity and Ecosystems: Why these are Important for Sustained Growth and Equity in Latin America and the Caribbean" (the Initiative) to prepare a report on the role of biodiversity in wealth generation and support of wellbeing in the region. The first in this series of consultations took place in Mexico City, Mexico on 13-14 August, the second in Lima, Peru on 24-25 September, and similar consultations are slated for: Quito, Ecuador on 24-25 November; Bogota, Colombia on 30 November- 1 December; Central America (in Guatemala City) on 3-4 December; Brasilia, Brazil on a date to be determined; and the Caribbean nations in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, on a date to be determined. Each seeks the inputs of national experts and stakeholders.

The Venezuelan consultation included participants from: national, state and local government entities; conservation groups; the academic and scientific communities; and associations and companies representing the hydroelectric, hydrocarbons and fisheries sectors. On Wednesday, participants heard morning plenary presentations on the Initiative and the regional report, and in the afternoon they broke out into four working groups to discuss emblematic Venezuelan policies, identify key sectors for promoting investment in biodiversity and ecosystem services and any existing barriers to such investments. Deliberations resumed on Thursday with participants convening in two working groups to first discuss insights from case studies from Paraguay and Indonesia, and then to recommend inputs to the regional report on principal arguments to use, ways to convince decision-makers and dissemination strategies. In the final plenary participants recommended key messages and ways to enrich the regional Initiative.

BRIEF HISTORY

The 2008-2011 UNDP Regional Programme for LAC has identified the Initiative as one of its regional strategic areas. Organized in partnership with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Secretariat for

the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Initiative aims to convince policy- and decision-makers in the region to invest in and maintain biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The Initiative's primary product will be a report examining a number of issues including: financial and economic benefits and costs to countries from sustainable ecosystem management; the contribution of biodiversity and ecosystems to sectoral production and outputs; their economic value; and the role of biodiversity and ecosystem services in promoting growth and equity. The report's production is supervised and guided by a Commission for Biodiversity, Ecosystems, Finance and Development composed of the region's political leaders, economists, businessmen and civil society representatives. The report's quality control will be overseen by a technical advisory committee of regional, finance and economic experts, while much of the report's actual preparation will be done by a central technical committee composed primarily of environmental economists. With a view to reflecting the diverse experiences and views of LAC nations, a series of consultations across the region was initiated in August 2009 to seek direct input from representatives of governments, civil society, indigenous communities, academia and the private sector. The outputs of these meetings will be incorporated into the report.

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The final report is intended not only to contribute to national policies, but also to global and regional key policy events that will be held in 2010, including the: tenth Conference of the Parties to CBD; International Year of Biodiversity; Latin American, Ibero-American and European Union/Latin America and Caribbean summits; and post-Kyoto negotiations. The Initiative also will contribute to a global study being undertaken on Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity sponsored by the European Commission and the German Ministry of Environment.

MEXICO CONSULTATION: The first consultation under the Initiative took place in Mexico City, Mexico on 13-14 August and was attended by representatives of government entities, conservation groups, indigenous communities, the academic community and the state hydrocarbons firm, Pemex. Participants held discussions on four themes: contributions of biodiversity and ecosystem services to LAC's development and equity; paradigmatic cases of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services in Mexico and their impact on development and equity; strategic areas and mechanisms to promote investment in biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services; and inputs to the regional report.

PERU CONSULTATION: The second consultation under the Initiative took place in Lima, Peru on 24-25 September and was attended by representatives of: government entities; conservation groups; the academic community; organizations representing Peru's regions; indigenous communities; and associations and companies in the forestry, finance, hydrocarbon, fishery and ecological product sectors. The opening plenary was addressed by Peru's Environment Minister, Antonio Brack Egg. Working primarily in two discussion groups, participants examined four themes: contributions of biodiversity and ecosystem services to LAC's development and equity; paradigmatic cases of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services in Peru and their impact on development and equity; strategic areas and mechanisms to promote investment in biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services; and inputs to the regional report.

REPORT OF THE VENEZUELAN CONSULTATION

OPENING PLENARY

Facilitated by María Boccalandro, Arete Consulting Group, Venezuela, the consultation opened on Wednesday, 4 November. Yves Sassenrath, Representative, UN Development Programme (UNDP) Venezuela, explained that the links between other events, reports and declarations on biodiversity planned for 2010, the International Year of Biodiversity, and the UNDP Regional Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) regional initiative entitled "Biodiversity and Ecosystems: Why these are Important for Sustained Growth and Equity in Latin America and the Caribbean" (the Initiative). He pointed out that LAC has large percentage of world's biodiversity, and a majority of the world's mega-biodiverse countries are in LAC, so how the region manages its biodiversity has global implications. Noting that tourism and ecotourism account for about 12% of LAC's GDP, much of which depends on the condition of the region's biodiversity, he explained these sorts of interconnections are why UNDP initiated the regional dialogue in order to enrich the perspective of decision-makers on the importance of biodiversity and its economic impacts using deep analysis, trustworthy data and concrete, viable proposals. He further stressed that UNDP sought equitable growth, as under current models ("business as usual" – BAU) the rich gain and the poor lose, whereas the sustainable management of biodiversity will particularly benefit the poor. He said that case studies in Ecuador and Guatemala suggest that such a transformation is indeed possible for the region.

Isabel Martinez, Programme Officer, UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for LAC, pointed out that LAC has the greatest diversity of endemic species in the world and approximately half of the world's tropical forests – although in 2000-2005 66% of the world's forest loss occurred in Latin America. She noted that the region's biodiversity will play a key role in mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Martinez said that UNEP sees the global economic and financial crisis as presenting an opportunity to promote a new development model towards a "green economy." Briefly outlining a green economy initiative launched in 2007, *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity* (TEEB), she said the second phase now underway seeks to identify good experiences, develop a common approach to analyzing ecosystem services and promote access to information in order to improve the participation of civil society in biodiversity management. Lastly she noted that Venezuela's National Strategy for Biodiversity Conservation calls for ensuring the "fair, equitable and collective" sharing of biodiversity's benefits.

Boccalandro explained how the consultation would proceed and its general rules of conduct and then asked each participant to identify themselves and briefly express their expectations of the consultation.

SESSION ONE: CONTRIBUTIONS OF BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES TO THE REGION'S DEVELOPMENT AND EQUITY

On Wednesday morning a member of the regional report's preparation team, Carlos Eduardo Young, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, explained the Initiative's rationale and principal objectives. He stressed that the regional report is not just about conserving biodiversity, but also the role of ecosystem services. He described the Initiative and the International Year of Biodiversity (2010) as opportunities to bring attention back to the importance of biodiversity after the recent singular focus on climate change, and to stress biodiversity's interconnection with climate change and other policy themes. Underscoring that the Initiative seeks to change the perception of biodiversity conservation as being a source of problems and costs to being a source of solutions and growth, Young emphasized the need to integrate it into economic development planning, policymaking and decisions. He said the Initiative aims to fully engage government leaders, regional institutions and civil society in the issue, as they have become with climate change. He further stressed that, while there would be differing views on the many things that could be included in the report, it should focus on where there is a consensus and which Venezuelan examples and perspectives to incorporate.

Young then summarized the report's three main messages, that: sustainable ecosystem management (MES) is important for economic growth; MES particularly benefits the poor who have most to lose by following BAU; and moving from "conventional use" of biodiversity to MES is economically viable. He reviewed some barriers to greater sustainable use already identified, such as lack of financial and technical resources devoted to protected areas and the competition for land use. He then outlined the report's methodology as identifying the role of biodiversity and ecosystem services for economic growth and equity in focus sectors: agriculture, including products and agro-forestry; forest management, including wood and non-wood products, and CO₂ emissions; fish, including aquaculture and sport; tourism, both domestic and international; and protected areas. He further explained that the report would examine cross-cutting issues such as water, energy, health and climate change and listed several examples of the types of specific issues and case studies being considered.

In the ensuing discussion, one participant noted Young's mention of a case study about certification and traceability of wood products, and asked how that might be applied to

other sectors. He also expressed doubt that highlighting the importance of biodiversity conservation would change negative habits, pointing out that the costs of overfishing have been known for some time yet it continues. Young replied he was not certain how the certified wood example might be used in other sectors, but explained the report's idea is to provoke contemplation of such possibilities. On overfishing, Young suggested that BAU prevails there because decision-makers have not yet taken the key messages to heart and continue operating only with short-term vision. Martinez pointed out that in the World Trade Organization's (WTO) global trade talks there is an effort spearheaded by LAC nations to incorporate sustainability criteria in fisheries trade.

Two participants noted that Venezuela shares important biodiversity resources with its neighboring countries, and wondered how shared and trans-frontier resources could be managed. Young acknowledged that management of trans-frontier resources is a key issue for the regional report to examine, but pointed out that the problem also exists at the sub-national level in disputes and competition between local jurisdictions.

In response to a comment from a participant about the problem of encouraging government institutions to collaborate and integrate their management of key sectors and issues, Young said that the report team intends to refer to studies that demonstrate that the lack of joint and early planning between sectors significantly raises the final cost of managing resources.

One participant asked how participants could best help decision-makers fully understand the issue and act appropriately. Boccalandro explained that was one of areas the consultation would explore, and that while the main target audience of the report would be decision-makers, the "critical mass" of people who provoke action on the issue was present in the consultation. The key, she suggested, was getting everyone on the same page and spreading the key messages virally.

While one participant queried the status of the report's chapter on health, and lamented that Venezuela does not have studies of the health impact of biodiversity losses, another responded that such studies exist, but as they have been done by companies along with their environmental assessments and are not publicly available. Young said that he could not offer much insight on the report's health chapter because it was being done by Brazil's Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz) and he did not have its current version. He went on to stress that the purpose of the regional report was not to examine every health and environmental aspect of biodiversity loss, but rather how biodiversity and ecosystem services affect economic growth and equity and how sustainable management is economically viable.

SESSION TWO: EMBLEMATIC CASES OF BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES IN VENEZUELA AND THEIR IMPACT ON DEVELOPMENT AND EQUITY

First thing on Wednesday afternoon, participants divided into four working groups to identify which Venezuelan experiences and policies could be considered emblematic and should be mentioned in the regional report, following which the working group rapporteurs reported to plenary.

Cristina Fiol, PROVITA, reported that Group One considered nine cases as emblematic: the clean-up of Los Tepuyes, which did not work due to poor planning in the use of the Cerro Roraima natural monument; the Cuare Reserve which involved displaced populations; Los Roques National Park, which included good policies that had not been applied; PROVITA's efforts to conserve the yellow-shoulder parrot (*Amazona barbadensis*), blue crowned parakeet (*Aratinga acuticaudata neoxena*) and four species of leatherback turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*) found on Margarita Island; Tierra

Viva's efforts with cacao in Chuao and Paria; the Tropical Andes Programme's community tourism and its small rural inns (*mucoposadas*) network; efforts to promote the cultivation of shade coffee; a scholarship programme for studying endangered species and sustainable ethnobiological projects; and the Galipán rural community.

Josefa Señaris, LaSalle Foundation for Natural Sciences, reported that Group Two considered as emblematic: the hydroelectric group EDELCA's environmental management plan for the Caruachia project, and its environmental and social management plan for the Tocoma project; the "areas under special administration regimes" (ABRAE) of forest reserves, which involve both public and private sectors; the Gran Mariscal de Ayacucho education plan; local products cooperatives; and the 20-30 programmes to monitor endangered species.

For Group Three, Lila Meza, Foundation for Development of Mathematics, Physical and Natural Sciences (FUDECI), reported on a 10-year FUDECI-supported project in Amazonas y Anzoátegui states intended to create self-sufficient family farms sustainably utilizing local natural resources, while Meimalin Moreno, Venezuelan Institute of Scientific Research (IVIC), presented on energy and CO₂ balance studies done for both natural (the Morichales palms) and cultivated systems.

Leticia Marius, Andres Bello Catholic University, reported that Group Four identified six cases as emblematic: the establishment of a Biodiversity Observatory for the Orinoco oil belt, given impetus by the Total petroleum company; the water basin protection policy, which was well designed but poorly implemented, citing as examples the Mariposa Basin, Guataparo-Valencia dam, and Yaracuy River; Pueblo Llano, involving misuse of the Sierra Nevada National Park, indiscriminate use of pesticides and other contaminating agricultural production activities; the negative impacts of uncontrolled ecotourism in the Canaima National Park; the Laguna de las Marites National Monument in Nueva Esparta, which the National Parks Institute (Inparques), with support from the Tourism Ministry, withdrew from tourism activities and devoted to conservation of marine biodiversity, with the local community benefiting from regulated fishing; and the self-demarcation of territories started by indigenous communities, which has resulted in greater understanding of the relationship of those communities with the biodiversity in those zones.

SESSION THREE: STRATEGIC AREAS AND MECHANISMS TO PROMOTE INVESTMENT IN BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

During Wednesday afternoon's second session, the four working groups were asked to identify: strategic sectors for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services; opportunity costs and existing barriers to sustainable management; how best to provide incentives to invest in biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services; and innovative financing mechanisms toward these ends. After the group discussions, each working group rapporteur reported to the plenary.

Dinoira Moreno, National Statistics Institute (INE), reported that Group One agreed on energy, including hydrocarbon and hydroelectric, as one strategic area, identified barriers as profitability, company culture and philosophy and national policies that need adjustment, and suggested tougher environmental policies governing the companies coupled with tax benefits as incentives. She said the Group also identified tourism as a strategic area, with the barriers being cultural difference, lack of knowledge and economic support, and suggested tax benefits and efforts to demonstrate the profitability of sustainably managed ecotourism. They identified forestry as a third strategic area, with opportunity costs including possible loss of market to certified wood

and barriers including market prices, consumer culture, management policies and lack of enforcement, and suggestions including tax benefits and tougher environmental policies.

Cristina Fiol said Working Group Two considered what is and is not protected while reviewing maps of Venezuela, noting that while Venezuela created many of its parks long ago and the necessary structures exist, the problem is proper implementation. She said the Group also considered the petroleum sector, noting that many companies already produce studies, maps and data on biodiversity impacts, many of which are shared with the government but not publicly available.

Julio Cubas, Chacao Civil Protection and Environment Institute, reported that Group Three highlighted as strategic areas: protected areas, where the main barriers are managerial and administrative, proposing as incentives national and international agreements; health, where incorrect land use affects quality of life, calling for alternative vector control methods; sustainable tourism, where the greatest opportunities are in protected areas, and the principal barriers are cost, availability and safety, suggesting investment, training and promotion activities as incentives; sustainable agriculture, where the opportunity costs are food security and sustainable crop production, proposing incentives and new accessible technologies; fisheries (including ornamental), where practices are endangering the resource, calling for incentives to develop sustainable practices and protect traditional knowledge; and water, whose incorrect use endangers health, energy generation and a variety of other ecosystem services. Group Three also suggested that cross-cutting issues the regional report should highlight include lack of coordination among government entities and the problem of ensuring uninterrupted financing for projects.

Leticia Marius reported that Group Four agreed that the sectoral focuses should be: agriculture; fisheries, where an implementing regulation of the existing law seems necessary; forestry, which needs an enforcement system; water, where lack of control and enforcement mechanisms is the principal barrier; tourism, calling for an alternative model of local and endogenous development; mining, where the principal problems are lack of implementing regulations and control over concessions; and petroleum and its derivatives, proposing companies strengthen their environmental management departments and the creation of special dependencies charged with monitoring the impact of their activities on biodiversity.

In the subsequent discussion, Young asked participants to consider how these solutions would be paid for – through some sort of direct payment for ecosystem services, some levy on polluting industries, or another option. One participant remarked that international consultants had suggested such systems “for years,” but the idea had never found favor in Venezuela. Others agreed that the payment for ecosystem services concept would not be viewed favorably by the government. Martinez suggested that what is needed is a cost analysis of the new control and enforcement systems, incentives and other measures suggested, followed by a decision on how best to pay for it.

A participant explained in further detail the problems of the fisheries sector in Venezuela: artisanal fishing is regulated only by amount, not by where fishing is allowed; the coast is not well policed; and existing law does not really cover all possible fishing within Venezuela’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Another participant advocated greater emphasis on the role of environmental education, while another suggested that not enough is being done to harness the power of mass media.

SESSION FOUR: DISCUSSION OF CASE STUDIES

On Thursday morning in plenary, Boccalandro summarized the prior day’s work. Asking participants to convene in two working groups, she allocated each one a TEEB case study, one on ecosystem service payments (PES) access in Paraguay, the other on motivating Indonesian authorities to adequately

protect Leuser National Park in Aceh Province through studies of the economic losses. The working groups were asked to ponder the lessons from these case studies and how they might relate to Venezuela’s situation and to report back to the plenary.

César Sánchez, Venezuela’s Health Ministry, reported that the Group examining the Indonesian case study concluded it was worthwhile attempting economic impact calculations such as that undertaken in Indonesia, since it can aid planning and help force consideration of social costs. They suggested that an appropriate national entity dictate the policy for other levels of government to implement and that impact estimates should be presented to all actors involved in language appropriate for the audience while not sacrificing the objective of the studies.

Ramón Antonio Lozada Saavedra, Foundation for Sustainable and Responsible Fishing of Tuna (Fundatun), reported that the Group examining the Paraguayan case voiced reservations about applying such a system in Venezuela, noting for example that some indigenous communities do not utilize money, and suggested that any specific law on environmental services, or perhaps an implementing decree of Venezuela’s Organic Environment Law on the subject, could seek other ways of benefiting the communities that protect the environment. He said they envisioned five requisites for such a system to work: a minimum level of training and community organization; well-defined services and benefits; defined commitments to the communities; a diagnosis of community needs; and a programme for monitoring and follow-up.

In the ensuing discussion, several participants expressed skepticism about the likelihood of establishing a formal system of payment for ecosystem services in Venezuela. Boccalandro suggested that perhaps there were ways to adapt or “tropicalize” the idea so it could work in Venezuela. Several participants noted the likelihood of conflicts between different layers of government, and one raised the issue of how to handle compensation for environmental services Venezuela provides to other countries, such as water originating in Venezuela that benefits Brazil. Young reiterated that the jurisdictional conflict issue is not unique to Venezuela, for example, while Paraguay is centralized enough to rely solely on a national regime, in Brazil ecosystems payments are handled mostly by states, and the proposed national regime now being debated must take this into account.

SESSION FIVE: INPUTS TO THE REGIONAL REPORT

On Thursday, the two working groups were directed to reflect on several questions, in particular: what the principal arguments are for promoting biodiversity and ecosystem services as contributing to growth and equity; how best to convince decision-makers of the need to invest in biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services as cross-cutting *foci* in national development plans; and what actions should be undertaken to disseminate the regional report. Following their deliberations, the working group rapporteurs reported to plenary.

Luz Gamarra, National Civil Protection and Disaster Management Directorate, reported her group felt the principal arguments should be: every living being has its niche in nature, altering it alters the life of others; protecting all life; ensuring quality of life; promotion of biodiversity leads to increased tourism; protecting biodiversity and ecosystems for future generations; the human impacts necessitate adopting sustainable development, cleaner technologies and changes in consumption patterns; integrating traditional knowledge; assuming a personal commitment for local and global environmental problems; and corporate responsibility. On convincing decision-makers, they recommended highlighting: that it affects production costs in the medium- and long-term; success stories; political, economic, social and educational benefits; evidence and risk scenarios; the advantages of successful experiences and the disadvantages of disastrous experiences; and the value of implementing international

commitments. On dissemination, they suggested: creating national networks on the subject that reach all sectors; creating a special webpage; enlisting the help of universities in reaching all students and staff; promoting related research projects; involving social media in designing a campaign; involving community councils; making a simpler, shorter version of the report to be disseminated more widely; planning discussion forums at the local, state and sectoral levels; and disseminating the report to environmental and volunteer groups.

Daniel Muñoz, Audubon Conservation Society of Venezuela, reported that his group felt that the overall theme of arguments should be the impact on quality of life, while tying it into other concerns, such as climate change, changes in energy consumption paradigms, employment loss, increase in poverty, and changes in food and consumption patterns. He said they also suggested specifically identifying those natural resources that when properly managed can generate wealth and wellbeing and, on convincing decision-makers, they recommended showing both positive examples of measures that have generated benefits and examples where inaction has produced harm and degradation, related to local reality and presented in language appropriate to the audience. Regarding dissemination, they agreed that social networks and other new communication methods should be used, while also recommending involving traditional mass media and promoting the elaboration of a national biodiversity plan that can be inserted into the established strategies of the Simon Bolívar National Plan.

CLOSING PLENARY

On Thursday, in closing plenary, Boccalandro invited participants to brainstorm on: key messages to carry from Venezuela to the regional initiative; ways to enrich the regional report; and any other suggestions for the report, its process and next steps.

On key messages, the participants suggested:

- protecting life is the central theme;
- the need to reduce poverty;
- the need to promote alternative development;
- your life depends on existing diversity;
- biodiversity can help solve social problems;
- biodiversity conservation is an opportunity not a restriction; and
- we should resurrect the prior practices we had that enabled us to coexist harmoniously with biodiversity.

Regarding ways to enrich the regional report, they recommended:

- generating data disaggregated by sector;
- having a human focus;
- finding an intermediate language between dense/technical and simplistic;
- demonstrating hard facts that support the benefits of biodiversity conservation and show that alternatives to BAU are economically viable;
- making maximum use of the International Year of Biodiversity;
- involving universities;
- incorporating actors that were not present in the consultations;
- promoting a multidisciplinary approach that helps show the linkages between the environment and social issues;
- presenting biodiversity as a product that can be sold;
- improving the image of biodiversity;
- showing the evidence of losses and risks;
- finding creative ways to disseminate information more rapidly, such as social media and viral messaging;
- ensuring that the report does not become a source of information for experts only; and
- ensuring that the report gathers in one place information not readily found elsewhere.

Young told participants that the drafts of the sectoral chapters of the regional report would be ready soon, and offered to share the drafts with parties interested in reviewing and offering comments on them. Some participants discussed the idea of a national report for Venezuela with Young explaining that the regional initiative did not have the resources to do surveys and national reports, but if Venezuela wanted to do one based on the regional report and utilizing all the emblematic cases identified in the consultation, that would be welcomed. One participant suggested that perhaps there needed to be a special follow-up process created that would keep the biodiversity issue moving and developing, perhaps along the lines of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The consultation came to a close at 2 pm.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

UNDP - LAC BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEMS

CONSULTATIONS: The UN Development Programme – Latin America and the Caribbean region (LAC) Biodiversity and Ecosystems Consultations are taking place in eight countries across the region between August and October 2009. The first was held in Mexico City, Mexico, on 13-14 August, the second was held in Lima, Peru, on 25-26 September, and the third was held, as reported in this summary, in Caracas, Venezuela on 4-5 November. A consultation has been scheduled for Quito, Ecuador on 24-25 November, for Bogotá, Colombia on 31 November – 01 December, and for Guatemala City, Guatemala on 3-4 December. Meeting dates have not yet been set for consultations in Brazil and the Caribbean. For more information contact: Maria José Baptista, UNDP; tel: +1 212 906 54 18; fax: +1 212 906 6017; e-mail: maria.jose.baptista@undp.org

SIXTH EU-LAC SUMMIT: The sixth EU-LAC Summit will take place on 18 May 2010 in Madrid, preceded by a Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 17 May. The theme of the Summit will be: “Towards a new stage in the bi-regional partnership: Innovation and Technology for sustainable development and social inclusion.” The Madrid Summit aims to bring together not only Heads of State and Governments from LAC and Europe, but also important non-state actors. For more information see: http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/lac/index_en.htm

IBERO-AMERICAN SUMMIT: The Twentieth Ibero-American Summit, bringing together heads of state and government from Spain, Portugal and the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking nations of Latin America, will be held in Mar del Plata, Argentina on 11-12 November 2010. The subject of biodiversity is expected to be on the Summit agenda. For more information contact: Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB); tel: +34 91 590 19 80; fax: +34 91 590 19 81; Internet: <http://www.segib.org>

CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY WORKING GROUP ON ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING (ABS WG 9):

ABS WG9 will take place in Colombia on 18-24 March 2010 at a venue to be determined. For more information contact: CBD Secretariat; tel: +1-514-288-2220; fax: +1-514-288-6588; e-mail: secretariat@cbd.int; Internet: <http://www.cbd.int/meetings/>

CBD COP 10: The tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD (COP 10) will meet in Nagoya, Japan on 18-29 October 2010. COP 10 is expected to assess achievement of the 2010 target to reduce significantly the rate of biodiversity loss, adopt an international regime on access and benefit-sharing and celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity 2010. A High-level Segment will be held from 27-29 October 2010. For more information contact: CBD Secretariat; tel: +1-514-288-2220; fax: +1-514-288-6588; e-mail: secretariat@cbd.int; Internet: <http://www.cbd.int/meetings/>