

# Biodiversity Monthly Newsletter

*Institute of Biodiversity Conservation, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: [www.abc.gov.et](http://www.abc.gov.et)*

Biodiversity Conservation, Sustainable Utilization, Access and Benefit Sharing



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## Dr. Gemedo Dalle elected as Bureau member for SBSTTA

### SBSTTA adopted 15 recommendations

**7 May 2012;** Delegates of the sixteenth session of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) elected new members of the SBSTTA Bureau.

Dr. Gemedo Dalle from Ethiopia was elected as member of the SBSTTA Bureau to represent Africa. Delegates also elected as new members of the SBSTTA Bureau which include: Jean Patrick Le Duc (France) for the Western Europe and Others Group; Brigitte Baptiste (Colombia) for Latin America and the Caribbean; Ivna Vukšić (Croatia) for Central and Eastern Europe; Yousef Al-Hafedh (Saudi Arabia) for Asia.

SBSTTA functions in accordance to the mandate given to it under article 25 of the Convention; each Bureau member is a Vice-chair of SBSTTA.

The sixteenth session of the SBSTTA convened from 30 April – 5 May 2012 in Montreal, Canada, directly prior to the fourth meeting of the Ad hoc Working Group on the Review of Implementation of the Convention (WGRI). More than 400 representatives from governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, indigenous and local communities, business and academia attended the meeting.

SBSTTA adopted 15 recommendations that were forwarded to the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 11), to be held from 8-19 October 2012 in Hyderabad, India.

SBSTTA 16 adopted a package of recommendations on marine and coastal biodiversity, namely on: ecologically and biologically significant areas (EBSAs); sustainable fisheries and addressing adverse impacts of human activities on the marine environment; and marine spatial planning and voluntary guidelines for the consideration of biodiversity in environmental assessments in marine areas. A second package of recommendations was adopted on biodiversity and climate change, namely on: biodiversity safeguards, indicators and mechanisms to monitor impacts of reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries, including conservation (REDD+) on biodiversity; integration of biodiversity considerations into climate-change related activities; and impacts of geo-engineering on biodiversity and gaps in regulatory mechanisms.

SBSTTA also adopted recommendations on: an in-depth review of implementation of the work programme on island biodiversity; progress in implementing decisions on the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC), biofuels and biodiversity; incentive measures; capacity building for the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI); new and emerging issues; the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO); and collaborative work in the areas of agriculture, forests and health.

**Source:** <http://www.iisd.ca/vol09/enb09568e.html>

## Ethiopia marked the 11th International Day for Biodiversity at Bahirdar

**27 May 2012, Bahir Dar** - The Institute of Biodiversity Conservation organized educational and outreach activities on wetland biodiversity to mark the celebration of International Day for Biodiversity (IDB) on May 26<sup>th</sup> 2004 in Bahirdar.

The international theme of IDB for this year is "Marine Biodiversity". Ethiopia celebrated the day using the theme "Wetland Biodiversity: for sustainable development and food security", which is more relevant and timely.

IBC has organized a stakeholders' forum, educational trip to Lake Tana and Tis-Abay Fall to centralize the role of people in the management, conservation and sustainable utilization of wetland biodiversity.

Dr. Gemedo Dalle, the Director General of IBC, in his welcoming speech said that biodiversity is a sustainable base for development. Each region has rich biodiversity which needs to be conserved and sustainably utilized. Recognizing their value also facilitates their conservation and sustainable utilization.

Ato Awlachew Masere, Amhara National Regional State President Office Diaspora Affairs and Public Relations Directorate Director, at his opening speech on behalf of the Amhara Regional State President, addressed that wetlands have enormous values for the community in particular. He said "...In addition to tourism, Lake Tana and Abay have rich biological diversity which is not explored and used properly. Yet it needs social awareness to conserve and utilize them for sustainable development".

Three research papers namely; Fisheries Resources Base of Ethiopia and its Contribution to Food Security, Biodiversity of the Lake Tana basin: Challenges, Threats and Opportunities, and Fish diversity of the Amhara Region were presented by IBC, AAU and Bahir Dar Fishery and Aquatic Life Research Center, respectively and were discussed by participants.

Dr. Seyoum Mengistou, a Professor from Addis Ababa University, enlightened that although some wetlands are degraded beyond restoration point, there is room to rehabilitate them through conservation measures. According to Dr. Seyoum, restoration programs for the Lake Tana Water shade have shown promising results and should be continued.

Dr. Seyoum raised the issue of Lake Tana invasion by Water hyacinth as serious potential threat to the Lake, Abay River and the Great Renaissance Dam.

Dr. Seyoum said "... Lake Tana is being invaded by *Eichornia crassipes*, a water hyacinth which floats on water by forming a huge mass that blocks light and damages the fish breeding and feeding sites. The species reproduces very fast and enhances evapotranspiration eventually reducing the water volume. In the long run, it is a huge challenge that the invader may reach the Great Renaissance Dam and pose a serious threat. We have alerted policy makers and local authorities about the issue repeatedly. This needs urgent action!"

Dr. Misikire Tessema, Researcher at the Institute of Biodiversity Conservation, said that Ethiopia has 200 fish species which occur in different water bodies out of which 40 species are endemic and 10 species

are introduced. It is therefore not surprising that the fish genetic resources in the lakes and rivers of Ethiopia are of actual and potential interest for commercial uses.

Ato Alayu Yalew, Director and Researcher at Bahir Dar Fishery and Aquatic Life Research Center, pointed out that fish has many values such as ecological value, nutritional value, recreational value, economic value and social value. By reducing the pressures on wetlands and using them sustainably could ensure sustainable development and food security.

The half-day conference on IDB provided an opportunity for stakeholders to discuss existing and emerging issues and possible solutions related to the conservation and sustainable utilization of wetland biodiversity.

## One Ocean, Many Worlds of Life

**May 22th, 2012-** The International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) was declared by the United Nations “to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues.” The event is in its 11<sup>th</sup> year with Marine Biodiversity the theme for 2012. Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and everyone interested in marine life can take this opportunity to raise awareness of the issues affecting the world’s oceans and shores.

For 10 years, from 2000 to 2010, scientists from around the world, in an unprecedented worldwide collaboration set out to try to determine how much life is in the sea. The huge effort, dubbed the ‘Census of Marine Life’ involved 2,700 scientists from over 80 countries, who participated in 540 expeditions around the world. According to information on the Census website, “The Census investigated life in the global ocean from microbes to whales, from top to bottom, from pole to pole, bringing together the world’s preeminent marine biologists, who shared ideas, data and results. During their 10 years of discovery, Census scientists discovered new species, habitats, and connections and unlocked many of the ocean’s long-held secrets. They found and formally described more than 1,200 new marine species, with another 5,000 or more in the pipeline awaiting formal description.”

The CBD website states, “Today, about 40 percent of the world’s population lives within 100 kilometres of the coast; fisheries provide over 15 percent of the dietary intake of animal protein; toxins in some species may yield anti-cancer drugs and other pharmaceuticals potentially worth more than US\$ 5 trillion; and coastal ecosystems provide services, including tourism and protection from storms, that have been valued at nearly US\$ 26 billion annually.”

There is a booklet available for download that expands on the whole Ocean Biodiversity issue, with a forward by Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity where he states, “The survival of marine and coastal ecosystems and biodiversity is essential to the nutritional, spiritual, societal and religious well-being of many coastal communities. But even for the many millions of people who may not think that they have any strong reliance on the ocean, marine ecosystems and wildlife provide all kinds of benefits.”

**By Susan Colby ( ecology today)**

## On biodiversity day, UN chief calls for greater protection of world's oceans

**22 May 2012** – Marking the International Day for Biological Diversity, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today highlighted the fragile state of the world's oceans, urging greater protection for marine biodiversity.

“Oceans cover almost three-quarters of the surface area of the globe. They are home to the largest animal known to have lived on the planet – the blue whale – as well as billions upon billions of the tiniest of microorganisms. From sandy shores to the darkest depths of the sea, oceans and coasts support a rich tapestry of life on which human communities rely,” Mr. Ban said in a message to mark the Day. “Yet, despite its importance, marine biodiversity... has not fared well at human hands,” he added.

The General Assembly proclaimed 22 May as the International Day for Biological Diversity, to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues. The theme for this year's observance is marine diversity. In his message, Mr. Ban noted the impact of commercial over-exploitation of the world's fish stocks, with more than half of global fisheries exhausted and a further third depleted, and between 30 and 35 per cent of critical marine environments – such as seagrasses, mangroves and coral reefs – estimated to have been destroyed. As well, plastic debris continues to kill marine life, and pollution from land is creating areas of coastal waters that are almost devoid of oxygen.

“Added to all of this, increased burning of fossil fuels is affecting the global climate, making the sea surface warmer, causing sea level to rise and increasing ocean acidity, with consequences we are only beginning to comprehend,” he noted.

According to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the survival of marine and coastal ecosystems and biodiversity is essential to the nutritional, spiritual, societal and religious well-being of many communities, and not just those in coastal areas. Amongst its findings, it notes that fisheries provide more than 15 per cent of the global dietary intake of animal protein; oceans and coastal areas provide invaluable ecosystem services, from tourism to protection from storms; and, minuscule photosynthesizing plants called phytoplankton provide 50 per cent of all the oxygen on Earth.

Amidst the concerns over the future of marine biodiversity, Mr. Ban said, “there is hope.” He pointed to a 2011 scientific review which showed that, despite all the damage inflicted on marine wildlife and habitats over the past centuries, between ten and 50 per cent of populations and ecosystems have shown some recovery when human threats were reduced or removed.

“However, compared to the land – where nearly 15 per cent of surface area is under some kind of protection – little more than one per cent of marine environments are protected,” the UN chief said. “Lately, some progress is being made, particularly with the establishment of large-scale marine reserves and documenting areas of ecological or biological significance in open-ocean and deep-sea habitats.”

The CBD entered into force in December 1993, with three main objectives: the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of the components of biological diversity, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.