

2012

Biodiversity Monthly Newsletter



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Public Relations & Communication

Directorate

Institute of Biodiversity Conservation

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FAO's State of the World's Forests 2012 Highlights the Contribution of Forests to a Sustainable Future

23 September 2012: The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) has released the full report on "The State of the World's Forests 2012" (SOFO 2012), which reveals that forest loss and degradation over the past ten years are estimated to have cost the global economy as much as US\$4.5 trillion per year.

The report, which is the tenth edition of the State of the World's Forests, highlights that forests cover about 31% of the Earth's terrestrial surface, and that an estimated one billion people around the world depend on forests including the 60 million indigenous peoples who intensively use forests. The report's analysis focuses on forests as energy sources, providers of ecosystem services, and as sources of economic activities.

With regards to the contribution of forests to sustainable development and green growth, the report notes that the value of woodcraft exports has increased from an estimated US\$500 million in 2002, to approximately US\$1.5 billion in 2010, while over ten million people are currently employed in forest management and conservation. The report notes that this growth could continue if further investments in forest products and industries are efficient, targeted and equitable.

In particular, the report stresses the importance of reforestation and forest restoration, the promotion of small and medium forest enterprises, including considerations of gender equity, good management of wood as an energy source, enhancing communication and coordinating sustainable development.

FAO.ORG

Crop Genetic Diversity shall Unlock its Potential

Cooperation for improved seeds and stable yields in Ethiopia

21 September 2012, Gatersleben - *Representatives of the Institute of Biodiversity Conservation (IBC) based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and IPK Gatersleben signed a MoU aiming at exchange of experience and scientific knowledge among the senior scientists, research associates and additional members of their academic staff, including students either post- or pre-graduated, to enhance the development of academic life and to benefit research at both parties.*

Ethiopia is one of the larger biodiversity hot spots of the world. Ethiopia fascinates with its rich flora and fauna that stretches over five climatic zones and hence harbours huge biodiversity potential.

A new collaboration between German and Ethiopian scientists aims to unleash the potential of Ethiopian genetic resources. The collaboration involves the Federal *ex situ* genebank of IPK Gatersleben on the German side and several Ethiopian institutes, among them the IBC in which is the largest and

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oldest gene bank in Africa. Overall coordination of the project is carried out by GIZ (German Society for International Cooperation).

As a supplement to the cooperation in the project, both institutions also aim at a closer collaboration in educating scientists and students via a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

“Building on our longstanding tradition in the preservation of plant genetic resources and their utilization, our Ethiopian colleagues may benefit from our expertise for an improved valorisation of their resources in plant breeding.” says Prof. Graner, Managing Director of IPK Gatersleben and head of the Gatersleben Genebank.

Ethiopian scientists will visit Gatersleben in the coming three years to gain first-hand experience in storing, propagating and analysing germplasm.

“It is not only that we want to benefit from the experience of our German partners in Gatersleben but that the scientific community worldwide will gain from our improved capability of preserving biodiversity.” expresses Dr. Gemedo Dalle, General Director of the IBC.

The Ethiopian germplasm collection includes numerous landraces and wild relatives of food crops such as barley and wheat. So far, plant breeders have not fully utilized those varieties for the development of new cultivars. Thus, the two institutions will join forces for detecting plants that can cope with the environmental conditions in Ethiopia and hence can make a contribution to an improved breeding programme and finally for increased and stable yields.

About Institute of Biodiversity Conservation

The Institute of Biodiversity Conservation (IBC) is a National Institute engaged in scientific research to promote conservation and sustainable utilization of biodiversity for the benefit and development of the people of Ethiopia. The Institute holds more than 70,000 accessions of plants, most of which are food crops, in cold storage facilities and field gene banks. Further information can be found from: <http://www.ibc.gov.et>.

About IPK Gatersleben

The Leibniz Institute of Plant Genetics and Crop Plant Research in Gatersleben is a non-university publicly funded research centre and member of the Leibniz Association. IPK has a staff of more than 500 coming from over 30 nations. Further information via <http://www.ipk-gatersleben.de>.

IBC

Ethiopia: Rescuing Endangered Wildlife Calls for Urgency

20 September 2012 Ethiopia is a country endowed with precious, endemic wildlife, tremendous and marvelous natural resources, cascades, and a range of tangible and intangible assets, among others.

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Owing to its geographical variation, the country is being home to different types of fauna and flora. This means that Ethiopia is also rich in many unique plants and wild animals. Cognizant of the fact that the country does possess such a tremendous wildlife resource, it has become one of the members of the nations issued the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) since 1993.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) entered into force in 1975, in response to concerns that many species were becoming endangered because of international trade. Because this trade crosses national borders, international collaboration and cooperation is crucial to ensure this trade is sustainable and controlled and does not threaten or endanger wildlife. The international community has also recognized the problem of endangered species. According to sources, in 1973, 21 countries gathered together to address this issue. The meeting culminated in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), was put into effect 1 July 1975. This international agreement instituted a trade ban approach to curtail international trade of species on the endangered list. As of 2009, CITES had been signed by 176 countries.

In addition to plants and animals and their parts, the agreement also restricts trade in items made from such plants and animals, such as clothing, food, medicine, and souvenirs. By 2009, more than 5,000 animal and 28,000 plant species had been classified.

James Isiche, Eastern Africa Regional Director for the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) in an exclusive interview with The Ethiopian Herald said that there have been numerous large seizures of illegal wildlife products originating from our borders. Even they are transported from many parts of the continent to other areas. "Over the last one and half year, IFAW has noted that the criminal gangs involved in wildlife trafficking have become more brazen and have started using routes such as seaports and airports in Kenya and Tanzania that were no-go zones in the past, with the contraband mainly destined for Asia," he added.

He also said that law enforcement areas have a great contribution in the fight against these illegal poachers even if the operations are delicate and complicated. "They are increasingly becoming life threatening. And they can also be very frustrating.

As to him, IFAW recognizes with all humanity and realism that wildlife trafficking is not easy to prevent or entirely eliminate. "The criminal gangs involved in this vice, just like in other illicit trade such as drugs, human trafficking and others, are always step ahead. The criminal gangs' operations surpass the individual capacities of any one country's law enforcement agencies. We also appreciate that in many cases, the good will from governments and law enforcement agencies is present. But they are baffled by the scarcity of human and financial resources because priority is mainly given to issues such as basic health, education and infrastructure that take up most of the available resources."

Isiche further said that if people are committed enough to get the roots of illegal wildlife trafficking dried and totally eliminated, working in collaboration must come at the forefront. "The coordination between and among various agencies should also be further strengthen. This means that the wildlife officers at many strategic areas have to consolidate network so that they are able to run every activity

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against illegal wildlife gangs and operators. In clear terms, products transported to the seaport on one side need to attract sense of responsibility of officers at another end.”

Isiche also said “Law enforcement agencies should also equally be duty-bound to combat the illegal trafficking. In general, there is a big problem in illicit wildlife trafficking. Since the wild trafficking practice comes up with a great deal of money, gangs often do it in a very organized manner with a view to making sure whether the products go to the market. The big problem that many African countries have been, are, experiencing is directly related to Ivory. Ivory trafficking has been drastically on the rise. And this trend does have a serious impact on Elephants because they have been poached for the sake of illegal market satisfaction. The need for ivory is mostly increasing in Asia specifically in China the principal market place for ivory.”

Ewnetu Bilata Debela, General Director of Ethiopian Wild life Conservation Authority explained that the government of Ethiopia has attached due attention to formulate a wildlife development and protection strategy in tune with the objective reality of the country and the existing international natural resources development and protection principles.

The objective is to arrest the decline of wildlife population and to help the country realize the maximum benefit from the sub sector. These have a great potential in enhancing the country’s development efforts. It is known that, the ivory tusks and other wildlife products are smuggled into markets in Europe and Asia. “Moreover, some smugglers think that Ethiopia is favored point of departure and the ivory items often transit through South-East Asian route to its destination. Nowadays, the illicitly trade in wildlife is a major threat to Africa,” he added.

A campaign to confiscate animal products Trans passing Ethiopian Airport and borders is lunched. In some specific areas like Elephant sanctuaries called Babile we are suffering from a great loss of Elephants. There is very bad and devastating situation existed in that Elephant sanctuary. The major limitation has been lack of organized approach to well inculcating the significance of conserving the park and the animals in the minds of the local community. Basically, the local community has to be prime actor and participant in preserving the parks along with guards and other concerned bodies.

Keeping all this in mind, recently Ethiopian Wild life Conservation Authority are working hard to get the community actively involved in protection and conservation of the park so that they could be benefited much out of the sector. In so doing, the local community could have opportunity to get the income generated by the park through their local government budgetary system. What I can practically realize is that a wider loophole has been witnessed in relation to communicating to the local community.

Ethiopian Press Agency (Addis Ababa)

Winners of the MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity 2012 announced

Tokyo/Montreal 20 September 2012 – The winners of the MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity have been announced today in Tokyo. The MIDORI Prize is a biennial international prize organized by the AEON Environmental Foundation in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to honour individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity at global, regional or local levels.

The winners of the 2012 Prize are: Dr. Juan Carlos Castilla, Professor of Marine Ecology at Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile; Dr. Rodrigo Gamez-Lobo, President of Instituto Nacional de Biodiversidad (INBio) and; Dr. Vo Quy, Honorary President at the Center for Natural Resources Management and Environmental Studies (CRES), Vietnam National University, Hanoi.

Each recipient is awarded a wooden plaque, a commemorative gift and a monetary prize of \$100,000 US dollars to support their work in safeguarding biodiversity. The Prize will be awarded at a ceremony in Hyderabad, India, on Wednesday 17 October 2012, held in conjunction with the high-level segment of the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP11) to the Convention on Biological Diversity. A Winners' Forum will then be held in Tokyo, Japan on Monday 22 October 2012 at the U Thant Hall of the United Nations University.

Tayuka Okada, the Chairman of the AEON Environmental Foundation said: "I hope the outstanding work of the winners, and the recognition given by the MIDORI Prize, will serve to inspire others to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the objectives of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity 2011-2020."

Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, said: "Protecting life on earth, which is the basis of, and closely connected to our daily lives, is not only the responsibility of the ministries and agencies in charge of protection of the environment, but is also the responsibility of each and every citizen and all sectors of society. The Secretariat is pleased to be a partner of this unique initiative that strongly supports promotion of public awareness on biodiversity".

The MIDORI Prize was established by the AEON Environmental Foundation in 2010, during the International Year of Biodiversity. The year 2012 is the second time the MIDORI Prize is being awarded.

Source: CBD Secretariat

IUCN Announces Partnership with Microsoft to Enhance Red List

11 September 2012: The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Microsoft have announced a new partnership, in which software developed by Microsoft will enable IUCN to begin to capture spatial information on species-specific threats.

With the agreement, Microsoft becomes the first corporate member of The IUCN Red List Partnership, and the two parties formalize a collaboration begun during the International Year of Biodiversity in

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2010. IUCN notes that the improved understanding of current and future extinction threats to plant, fungi and animal species, resulting from the Microsoft-supported research project, will enable better conservation policy frameworks to be devised.

Microsoft also will provide support in hosting and communicating The IUCN Red List information more broadly.

IUCN.ORG

Vavilov's Trail in Ethiopia: five parties agreed to organize an expedition mission (Part 2)

Ethiopia is considered as one of the richest genetic resources centers in the world in terms of crop diversity ever since the expedition of N.I Vavilov in the 1920s. This is principally attributed to socio-economic, cultural diversity and complex topography.

Around eighty five years ago Vavilov realized that hundreds of the crop varieties belonging to several dozen crop species were known only in Ethiopia. What is so interesting about the diversity of crops in Ethiopia is that so many are endemic.

His expedition in 1927 established the fact that Ethiopia is an independent center of origin especially for crops such as coffee (*Coffea arabica*), Safflower (*Carthamus tinctorius*), 'tef' (*Eragrostis tef*), 'noog' (*Guizotia abyssinica*), and 'anchote' (*Coccinia abyssinica*) and center of diversity for local cultivars/farmers' varieties of several major crops such as wheat, barley, sorghum, field pea and faba bean. As a result, Ethiopia is known as one of the twelve Vavilov centers of primary plant domestication and diversification in the world.

Vavilov's collection mission across Ethiopia made him to recognize many of the geographic patterns that had been accepted by botanists worldwide. He planned on physically mapping areas where he collected various seeds, so that other bio-geographers might build on his work later on.

Consequently, five parties from Ethiopia and Russia agreed to organize an expedition mission to collect genetic resources of cereals following Vavilov's collection routes to see the extent of changes from his collections. To this effect, the Institute of Biodiversity Conservation (IBC) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Joint Ethio-Russian Biological Expedition (JERBE) and other three Russian parties namely A.N. Severtsov Institute of Ecology and Evolution (IPEE), N.I. Vavilov Institute of General genetics (VIGG) and N.I. Vavilov Research Institute of Plant Industry (VIR) considering the importance of collecting, studying and utilizing plant genetic diversity for scientific and breeding purposes.

Under this MoU, the parties agreed to follow N.I Vavilov's trail and collect seeds of cereals to study these genetic resources using modern approaches of molecular genetics. The parties' travel would be

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largely in the Ethiopians highlands, where roughly 5,200 species of wild plants have been found, and 555 of them clearly identified as endemic.

The study is expected to estimate quantitative and qualitative changes in the Ethiopian agro-biodiversity structure occurred since Vavilov's expedition; organize rational and sustainable use of the Ethiopian agro-biodiversity and promote any social activities seek to save Ethiopian landrace agro-biodiversity.

Other related matters that the parties mutually agreed upon are the scope, modality of cooperation and activities. All partners will participate in the development and scientific justification of the mission route, target population and dates for conducting the collection mission which is from October-December 2012.

By signing the MoU, all parties have access in exchange of information, documentation and data on the collected plant genetic resources obtained during the collection mission for preparing scientific report. However, any transfer of genetic resources will be strictly in accordance with domestic Legislation on Access and Benefit Sharing of Ethiopia.

The MoU will facilitate the means for IBC staff to have training in modern methods of biodiversity screening (molecular genetics techniques) in Russia. The collected material and information regarding these materials in this mission will be deposited in the Ethiopian National Gene bank (IBC).

IBC