

PRESS RELEASE

GEO Biodiversity Observation Network to monitor and study the global biosphere

Implementation Plan launched for International Day for Biodiversity

Geneva, 21 May 2010 – The Group on Earth Observations Biodiversity Observation Network (GEO BON) is releasing today its detailed, 175-page Implementation Plan for a coordinated global campaign to gather and share information on biodiversity, provide tools for data integration and analysis, and contribute to improved environmental management and human well-being.

Recognizing that improved biodiversity monitoring is vital for advancing the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, dozens of government agencies and leading scientific and conservation organizations are collaborating through GEO BON. They include the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), DIVERSITAS, the European Union's EBONE project, the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), the UN Environment Programme's World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), and many others. Over one hundred experts from the GEO BON community participated in drafting the Detailed Implementation Plan.

Policymakers need reliable scientific information in order to craft programs for managing the planet's biological resources and to monitor the effectiveness of these efforts. However, data on the status of, and trends in, biodiversity are often dispersed, uncoordinated and incomplete. GEO BON is committed to upgrading these data, interlinking and expanding monitoring systems and data bases, and helping decision makers and managers to access the information they need.

“By working together and coordinating our strategies, we can dramatically improve our ability to track and understand biodiversity trends,” said Bob Scholes of South Africa's Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and Chair of GEO BON's Steering Committee. “We can also better monitor our progress on implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity and achieving the 2010 targets for reducing biodiversity loss and any future targets that governments may adopt.”

The complete and updated GEO BON Implementation Plan, which has been developed through broad and intensive consultations, is being launched to mark the International Day for Biodiversity (Saturday, 22 May). It is being posted on the GEO BON web site at www.earthobservations.org/geobon.shtml and will be presented at the Group on Earth Observations Ministerial Summit to be held in Beijing on 5 November.

Note to journalists: For more information, please contact Michael Williams at mwilliams@geosec.org or +41-22-730-8293. See also the GEO BON website at www.earthobservations.org/geobon.shtml.

