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WWF International
Avenue du Mont-Blanc
1196 Gland
Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 364 9111
Fax: +41 22 364 8307
www.panda.org

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Nature gets major boost from new biodiversity deal

Nagoya, Japan: Governments gathered for a meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) have struck an agreement which, when implemented, will set the world on a course to help prevent mass species extinctions and arrest the decline of the world's valuable nature.

"The Ministers have worked hard over the last three days to forge this agreement. We hope their spirit and determination will be carried into other fora, including the upcoming climate talks in Cancun." said Jim Leape, Director General of WWF International.

WWF welcomed the adoption of the new 10 year biodiversity rescue plan.

"This agreement reaffirms the fundamental need to conserve nature as the very foundation of our economy and our society. Governments have sent a strong message that protecting the health of the planet has a place in international politics and countries are ready to join forces to save life on Earth." added Leape.

Delegates at the meeting managed to overcome the deadlock over an issue that has defied resolution for the 18 years since this convention was signed - Access and Benefit Sharing of genetic resources.

"The Nagoya protocol is an historic achievement, ensuring that the often immense value of genetic resources is more equitably shared." added Leape.

Governments agreed a target to end overfishing, and a target of 10 percent protection for marine and coastal areas, including the high seas. While WWF recognises the important step to boost protection 10 times more than what the world currently has, the target is still only half what scientists recommend.

"Governments have agreed to protect 10 percent of all the oceans on Earth and to end overfishing – this is great news for the world's oceans."

The new biodiversity plan sets out a target of 17 per cent for protection of terrestrial habitats, a modest increase on the current global average which is at about 12 per cent. Governments also reached agreement on a target to reform harmful subsidies. The new deal requires countries to ensure that biodiversity is incorporated into national accounts - an important political signal which has the potential to set in motion a different approach to economic decision making.

While the host country Japan pledged significant funds this week towards biodiversity, developed countries were unable to mobilise an immediate injection of new funding. However, governments did reach agreement on a plan to identify the necessary funding by 2012 to implement the plan. New money is vital to urgently tackle the rapid loss in the world's biodiversity.

“While significant progress has been made on many fronts, there is still work to do to mobilize the resources that will be required to help the developing world reach their targets.”

“We were disappointed that most rich countries came to Nagoya with empty pockets – unable or unwilling to provide the resources that will make it possible for the developing world to implement their ambitious targets.” said Leape.

Governments are leaving here with a new direction agreed for how they will save life on Earth. It is now crucial they move fast to translate those promises into action.

For further information:

Natalia Reiter, Media Relations, nreiter@wwfint.org +41 79 873 8099, +81 90 9001 9605 (in Japan)

Sarah Bladen, Conservation Communications, sbladen@wwfint.org +41 79 415 0220

www.panda.org/cbd