

## INTERNATIONAL BIODIVERSITY DAY AND WILDLIFE WEEK CELEBRATION AT GILGIT

May 28, 2011

International Biodiversity Day and World Wildlife Week are being celebrated from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> of May every year, all over the world, to foster awareness about BIODIVERSITY and its role in social, economic and ecological stability of the mother EARTH. This year's IBD celebration was dedicated to "Forest Biodiversity" as a contribution to the International Year of Forests (2011). The Day's celebration was intended to help recall the central role that biodiversity plays in underpinning sustainable development, and in protecting humanity from the consequences of unexpected shocks like water scarcity, extreme weather events, emergence of infectious diseases and the genetic vulnerability of crops and livestock.

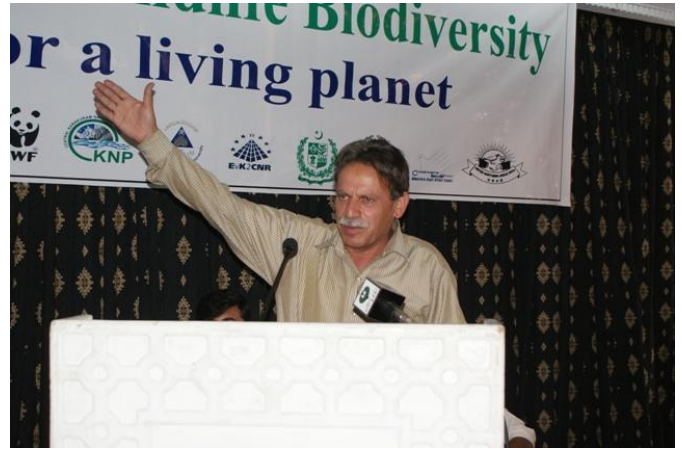
Loss of biodiversity threatens our life support systems and the livelihood of the poor. Reduction in this biological variability affects the ecosystem services. Clean water, fresh air, pollination, soil formation and protection, crop pest control, and provision of food, fuel, fibers and drugs, worth billions but bestowed freely are all products of the complex ecosystem interactions on earth. If these vital ecological services are damaged, the physical conditions maintained by the world's species and ecosystems will ultimately be jeopardized. So losing biodiversity is a bit like losing the life support system that we, and other species, so desperately depend upon.

There is no denial that the mountain environs cover about 27% of the Earth's surface, and many species adapt and specialize in these ecosystems, providing essential goods and services to people living in the mountain regions, like ours but the shrinking of glaciers modifies the water-holding capacities of mountains, affecting the quantity of freshwater available to both humans and biodiversity. And so, the conservation of mountain biodiversity is a key option for the adaptation to climate change, which may include establishing additional protected areas, managing mountain watersheds and establishing migration corridors, both horizontal and vertical.

In order to commemorate the International Day for Biological Diversity, WWF-Pakistan jointly with CKNP partners and UNAN organized an "Environmental Film Festival" at Gilgit on May 28, 2011, wherein CESVI and WWF documentaries on Biodiversity, conservation and eco tourism were shown to the audience.

Mr. Babar Khan, Head WWF-Pakistan (Gilgit-Baltistan) welcomed the participants and gave a brief orientation on IBD 2011. CKNP, SEED project and GBFWD representatives also gave presentations on CKNP, SEED and Wildlife Biodiversity of Gilgit-Baltistan. Through skits, the artists from Karakorum Arts and Culture Council presented issues related with forest and wildlife conservation in Gilgit-Baltistan.





The event, dedicated to CKNP, gathered around 200 people from various walks of life including representation from government, non government, private and community organizations. WWF and CESVI resource materials were also displayed on the occasion.



The purpose of celebration was to foster environmental awareness about ever increasing threats to biodiversity, their habitats and mountain ecosystems and their conservation values for social, economic and ecological stability and development of Gilgit-Baltistan. The event also helped sensitize people about their anticipated role in protection and management of fragile ecosystems and biodiversity through environment friendly actions, individually as well as collectively.



Secretary Forest, Wildlife and Environment (Gilgit-Baltistan), Mr. Abdul Hameed chaired the ceremony. While speaking on the occasion, he appreciated WWF for holding such events that help raise public awareness about biodiversity related conservation issues. Mr. Zafar Khan, Manager Baltistan thanked participants, partners and organizers for their interest, efforts and contributions.

