



Organization of American States



Message of the Director of Sustainable Development on World Environment Day

The Department of Sustainable Development (DSD) of the Organization of American States is pleased to join the observance of the World Environment Day as a unique opportunity to recognize the importance of achieving development in the Americas knowing and preserving the environment. This day takes on added significance as it marks the 60th anniversary of the signing at the OAS, of the Convention for the protection of flora, fauna and natural scenic beauty of the countries of America, one of the first international instruments for conservation. In addition, 2010 has been declared the International Year of Biological Diversity that under the slogan "Many species. One planet. One Future", aims to promote concrete actions that will save more than 17,000 species that are threatened and endangered.

The Americas have a rich biodiversity, hosting eight of the 25 most diverse ecosystems on the planet. However, every day we see more strongly the impacts of human activity in our region. During the last decade, the American continent reported a higher rate of deforestation than any other region of the planet and on average more than 4 million hectares of forest per year disappeared, with serious consequences for biodiversity loss in the region. Also, the environmental services provided by forests have been affected, which are essential for human life, such as purification and water regulation, flood control and raw materials provision and food for local populations among others.

There are great number of reasons that merit inviting civil society and governments to take strong actions aimed at ensuring human activity and economic development to be more compatible with the conservation of existing biodiversity and ecosystems as a source of goods and services critical to our survival. That is why the Sustainable Development Ministers of the Hemisphere will gather in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic next month of October to address emerging challenges in this field.

As part of the celebrations of World Environment Day, the DSD urged to strengthen our commitment as agents of change to promote the protection of our rich biodiversity with actions that safeguard natural resources offered by the planet. Also, we welcome to consolidate efforts to continue work jointly in implementing internal policies, as the strategy for greening the OAS, to strengthen the work we do together with and for our countries and thus build a more sustainable future.

Cletus Springer
Director
Department of Sustainable Development (DSD)