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Conserving biodiversity is a business opportunity, say IUCN and Shell

Gland, Switzerland, March 27, 2008 (IUCN) – The business case for conserving nature is strong and getting stronger, according to a new report published today by IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) and Shell International Limited.

The report calls for policy reforms to increase the commercial rewards for conserving biodiversity, increased penalties for biodiversity loss and better information on the biodiversity performance of business. A key challenge facing all biodiversity businesses is the lack of accepted indicators to measure positive and negative contributions to biodiversity conservation.

As the world wakes up to the accelerating loss of biological diversity, businesses are increasingly viewing biodiversity conservation as a potential profit centre, says the report, Building Biodiversity Business.

*“There are numerous pro-biodiversity business opportunities that can generate significant profits as well as benefits for nature,” says **Dr Joshua Bishop, IUCN’s Senior Adviser on Economics and the Environment.** “But a few inspiring examples aren’t enough. This report shows how to achieve a major increase in business investment in biodiversity conservation, by linking policy reforms, technical assistance and innovative financing tools.”*

Ecotourism is one example of how money can be made from looking after species and their habitats. Environmentally-friendly tourism is expanding at a rate of 20-30 percent annually, compared with 9 percent for tourism as a whole.

Many other businesses, historically responsible for the loss of biodiversity, are starting to lead the way by protecting biodiversity. Markets for organic agriculture and sustainably-harvested timber are growing at double-digit rates. Another major area of growth is the demand for climate mitigation services, such as the protection of forests and wetlands to absorb carbon dioxide.

Bioprospecting, the search for new compounds, genes and organisms in the wild, is also a biodiversity business on the rise. Some suggest the sector could be worth as much as US\$500 million by 2050.

*“For businesses to conserve biodiversity it must ultimately become more profitable to protect nature and use natural resources sustainably, rather than ignore or destroy it,” says **Sachin Kapila, Group Biodiversity Adviser at Shell International Limited.***

To download the full report, please visit <http://www.iucn.org/dbtw-wpd/edocs/2008-002.pdf>

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About IUCN

IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing

environment and development challenges by supporting scientific research; managing field projects all over the world; and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN, international conventions and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice.

IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental network. IUCN is a democratic union with more than 1,000 government and NGO member organizations, and some 10,000 volunteer scientists in more than 150 countries. IUCN's work is supported by 1,100 professional staff in 62 countries and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world.

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