

Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP, invites you to participate in the following side-event:

**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO –
TACKLING THE BIGGEST ENVIRONMENT CHALLENGE IN AFRICA TODAY**

**Thursday 29th May, 13.15 - 14.45
Press Room, Maritim Hotel, Bonn**

9th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity

Background:

The DR Congo contains a wealth of natural resources including large areas of arable land, fresh water, forest products and minerals whilst at the same time it is one of the worlds poorest, least developed and least stable countries. The forests of the DR Congo cover some one million square kilometers and as such can be also considered to be one of the largest and most important carbon sinks on the continent and the world. Armed conflict has raged across DR Congo on a large scale since 1994 resulting in more than five million deaths. Low level conflict and chronic instability continues to plague eastern Congo. Large scale displacement due to conflict is also evident with approximately 500,000 Internally Displaced Persons found in eastern DR Congo alone. The DRC economy is almost entirely driven by largely uncontrolled natural resource extraction and utilization. This has taken a significant toll on many aspects of the environment, with deforestation, species depletion and mining associated pollution being the three most significant issues. UNEP has recently launched a special programme to address these issues.

Agenda:

This side event will provide an introduction to the UNEP Programme in the Congo, including the following:

- UNEP will report on our programme to assist the Congolese govt, including the post-conflict assessment, assistance with the environmental framework law, and facilitation of a stakeholder dialogue in the Virungas region.
- The DR Congo government will outline its current and future actions.
- The GRASP partnership will outline their latest activities in the country, including new funding for gorilla and chimpanzee conservation activities in Eastern DRC.
- CMS will announce latest developments on the Gorilla Agreement, which comes into force on June 1.
- CITES will report on latest figures the Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) programme has collected from Eastern DRC
- UNESCO will report on their activities regarding World Heritage Sites in Danger
- Professor Ian Swingland will discuss how DRC can benefit from using the market effectively to conserve its biodiversity

For further details, see www.unep.org/grasp/



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