

## ***Libreville, Gabon to host African environment ministers and UN ahead of Convention on Biological Diversity COP 10***



Libreville, the capital city of the Republic of Gabon will host the first African High-Level Conference on Biodiversity from 12-17 September 2010 . Entitled **“Biodiversity and the fight against poverty; Opportunities for Africa”** the conference will be attended by Environment Ministers from across Africa and other stakeholders who will discuss and formulate a common African position ahead of the UN High level Conference on Biodiversity in New York (22-23 September) and the 10<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties (COP 10) of the Convention of Biological Diversity in Nagoya,

Japan in October.

The meeting is being organized by the Government of Gabon in partnership with the United Nations Secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) with support from the African Union Commission (AU), African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

The United Nations has declared 2010 to be the international year of biodiversity. `

Gabon’s Minister of Environment, Rufin Pacome Ondzounga, addressing Gabonese media this weekend said: *‘Gabon is proud to be hosting this important conference. The purpose is to consider together how to harness our natural environment to drive development and reduce poverty in Africa. The need to discuss common themes ahead of the UN Biodiversity conference in New York on 22-23<sup>rd</sup> September, and to try to develop a common position ahead of the 10<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties (COP) on the Convention of Biodiversity in Nagoya in October, is also pressing.’*

### ***Contacts:***

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### ***About the host country:***

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1. Gabon forms part of Africa's greatest rainforest ecosystem, the Congo Basin, the second largest carbon sink in the world behind the Amazon. The protection of this asset and its

associated biodiversity will play a significant role in international efforts to reduce the impact of climate change. The Congo Basin captures about 15% of global carbon emissions.

2. Gabon has set aside 11% of its surface area to 13` national parks. With the exception of Costa Rica, Gabon has assigned more land than any other country in the world to conservation.
3. Gabon is home to 680 bird species', 98 species of amphibians, more than 100 species of reptiles and more than 6,000 species of plants and 198 different species of mammals.
4. In June 2010, Gabon signed an agreement with Brazil and France to establish a satellite monitoring facility in Libreville. Once operational, this technology will enable central African states to monitor any changes within the 2 million km<sup>2</sup> of rainforest in the region.
5. At a meeting hosted last year in London by the Prince of Wales Rainforests Project, Gabon's President Ali Bongo Ondimba said that the world's atmosphere and forests had to be seen as a "common good". *"This calls for a common vision... a new environmental world order."*
6. In an article for the Guardian newspaper (UK) published on March 21, 2010, President Ali Bongo Ondimba said; *"The cohesion and common position achieved by African countries at the Copenhagen summit on climate change has awoken Africans and the world to the potential power of a collective African vote. If we as Africans can continue to find common positions on significant global issues, we can wield a lot more influence in multilateral institutions such as the United Nations and the World Bank, something which has hitherto eluded us."*

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