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Editorial

Dear Readers,

Happy New Year 2011,

The term Biodiversity given to the variety of life on Earth provides, through its expression as ecosystems, goods and services that sustain our lives. Human pressures on ecosystems are causing changes and losses at rates not seen historically. People are changing ecosystems more rapidly and more extensively than over any other period in human history. Climate change adds yet another pressure on natural ecosystems. According to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, a comprehensive assessment of the links between ecosystem health and human well-being, climate change is likely to become the dominant direct driver of biodiversity loss by the end of the century. Projected changes in climate, combined with land use change and the spread of exotic or alien species, are likely to limit the capability of some species to migrate and therefore will accelerate species loss. The impacts of climate change on biodiversity are of major concern to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

The Convention also recognizes that there are significant opportunities for mitigating climate change and adapting to it, while enhancing the conservation of biodiversity. Commissioned by the G8, a recent report on The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity estimates the loss of biodiversity worldwide could be worth 7% of world GDP in 2050. Efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation), aim to minimize the rise in average global temperatures to 2°C. However, due to inertia in the climate system (the slow response to a change in emissions), impacts on biodiversity are inevitable. Along with the urgency of mitigation, adaptation measures are essential to deal with the consequences of climate change. Many commentators agree that important practical actions to conserve biodiversity in a changing climate include:

- conserving existing biodiversity*
- eliminating pressures not linked to climate change*
- maintaining large populations in diverse habitats*
- promoting dispersal and*
- addressing uncertainty.*

Biodiversity loss cannot be halted without addressing climate change, but it is equally unfeasible to adapt to climate change without addressing biodiversity loss.

Naturally yours

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vijikumar S.', with a large, stylized initial 'V' and a horizontal line extending to the right.

Vijikumar S.