



PRESS RELEASE

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AT INITIATIVE OF UNCTAD, 500 PERSONALITIES TO LAUNCH APPEAL AGAINST GLOBAL LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY

Designers from around world to present "EcoChic" fashion show

**Seminar to explore role fashion industry can play in preserving
natural heritage, encouraging other sustainable
consumption patterns**

Geneva, 20-21 January 2010



Geneva, 8 January 2010 -- At the initiative of UNCTAD, more than 500 prominent figures from government, international organizations, and the fashion and cosmetics industries will meet in Geneva on 20-21 January to call for action against the rapid loss of the world's biodiversity.

This event, organized in connection with the United Nations 2010 International Year of Biodiversity, will begin with a high-profile business seminar and conclude with an "EcoChic" fashion show and exhibition launch celebrating sustainable fashion and accessories. Over 50 looks have been donated by designers from around the world, including the renowned figures Diane Von Furstenberg, Manish Arora, Bora Aksu, and Thakoon. In addition, established "sustainable" fashion labels such as Edun, Noir, Ciel, and Kumvana Gomani will contribute garments and accessories from their latest collections. All activities will take place at the Palais des Nations, building E, 3rd floor. For reasons of security, participants must register in advance.

During the seminar (*see Provisional Agenda*), discussions will focus on ecological practices available to the fashion and cosmetics industries. Debate and review of case studies will take into account such questions as: "Redefining Sustainability: Why Biodiversity and Why Now?"; "The Rise of the Ethical Consumer and Eco-Fashion"; "Luxury Brands as Sustainable Role Models"; "Environmental Traceability, Accountability and Certification"; and "The Role of the Creative Industries in Developing Economies."

Organized by UNCTAD's BioTrade Initiative, its Creative Economy and Industries Programme, and the charity Green2greener, this event is meant to spotlight biodiversity issues and to underline the role that governments, businesses, and consumers can play in promoting and supporting biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources.

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Sustainability is the message of the UNCTAD BioTrade programme, which helps local communities preserve local flora and fauna through the marketing of products which give them not only a moral but an economic interest in nurturing and preserving biodiversity. For example, local communities in Bolivia have successfully implemented sustainable management plans resulting in exports of skins and products derived from the Caiman yacare, a species of crocodile, to Italy, generating over US\$1.4 million in sales (a 282% increase over 2003). Exports of these products to the United States now total US\$500,000 (up 364% over 2003). Management plans adopted by the communities ensure that harvesting of the species does not exceed its rate of reproduction, and ensure that the communities maintain a clean environment that enables the species to thrive.

"EcoChic" fashions avoid environmentally damaging production processes and the overharvesting of wild species for their skins or natural fibres. Various processes in textile and other fashion-related manufacturing -- including scouring (washing) wool, retting flax (separating the fibres from the stalks), tanning leather, bleaching, dyeing, printing, and finishing - - consume large amounts of water and energy. Such processes also use toxic chemicals and produce effluents which can pollute air, water sources and/or soil. Leather tanning is particularly polluting, having one of the highest toxic intensities per unit of output. By contrast, ecological fashion firms adopt approaches which take into account the preservation of the environment. For example, organically grown cotton does not involve the use of pesticides and other chemicals that can cause species damage. Worldwide, cotton now accounts for 11% of pesticides and 25% of all insecticides used each year.

And eco-fashion does not involve the unsustainable harvesting of species such as the Tibetan antelope, which has declined in number from over 1 million in 1900 to 75,000 today because poachers sell the skins for the production of luxury shawls.

Biodiversity loss has accelerated in recent years and the current rate of human-caused (anthropogenic) species extinction was estimated by the 2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment to be 1,000 times more rapid than the "natural" rate of extinction typical of the Earth's long-term history. Loss of habitat is the principal cause. Some 11% of the natural areas remaining in 2000 may soon disappear, chiefly as a result of conversion for agriculture, the expansion of infrastructure, and climate change. Some 60% of coral reefs could be gone by 2030. Longer-term damage is still more extensive: in the last 300 years, the global forest area has shrunk by approximately 40% -- forests have completely disappeared in 25 countries -- and since 1900 the world has lost about 50% of its wetlands.

The 20-21 January event will emphasize the contribution of businesses and consumers to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the 2010 Biodiversity Target, an overall conservation target aiming to stem biodiversity loss by the end of the year 2010.

The EcoChic Geneva Exhibition, which will be open for two weeks, will explore the multi-faceted nature of sustainable fashion with a particular focus on uses of biodiversity that provide benefits and income for communities in developing economies. Through a range of creative displays of fashion garments, accessories and cosmetics, the exhibition will examine the journey from raw material to finished product and address the many issues that consumers, marketers, designers, and product developers engage with as they look to embrace more sustainable lifestyles.

About the organizers

UNCTAD

During the Twelfth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development held in Accra, Ghana, in April 2008, UNCTAD's 193 member States recognized that the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity provides new opportunities for developing countries. They stressed that the trade in products and services related to biodiversity can be an important tool for preserving biodiversity and enhancing development. The conference also acknowledged the social, cultural, legal and economic complexity of the issue.

UNCTAD has an important role to play in meeting the objectives of the International Year for Biodiversity through its contribution to shaping policy debates and thinking on sustainable development. It also works to promote the greater engagement of businesses and consumers in ecological concerns such as biodiversity. And it assists developing countries in addressing the challenges and opportunities of globalization in an ecologically responsible manner.

Green2greener

[Green2greener](#) (G2G) is a Hong Kong-registered charity established in 2007 with a mission to promote sustainable living. To achieve this, G2G works with businesses, communities and other non-governmental organizations to increase awareness, promote discussion, and drive the implementation of more environmentally and socially sensitive practices. One of G2G's main educational initiatives is the high-profile, multi-designer fashion event "EcoChic." Developed and launched by G2G in 2008, EcoChic events feature sustainable fashion on the runway in two forms: Eco-Couture and Ready-to-Wear.

Other sponsors

The 20-21 January events are being organized with the support of the Swiss Secretariat for Economic Affairs, the Government of Spain, Natura Cosméticos, and Gaultier Collette Communications Agency.

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