

## International Biodiversity Day Celebrated in Bucharest

**Bucharest, 22 May 2007.** Around the world the International Biodiversity Day was marked by lectures, seminars, film presentations, cultural events, exhibitions and school outreach activities. In Bucharest, a symposium on Biodiversity and Climate Change was hosted at the UN house, under the aegis of the United Nations Development Programme.

"With global temperatures set to rise by up to 5.8°C by the end of the century, this year's theme, climate change, is being hailed as the new great threat to biodiversity," said Soknan Han Jung, UN Resident Coordinator/UN Resident Representative, at the opening of the seminar. "A thickening layer of carbon dioxide pollution, mostly from power plants and automobiles traps heat in the atmosphere causing global warming. The day is a call for immediate action as the effects become visible in coral bleaching and the retreat of glaciers worldwide."

The key note speakers Mircea Dutu, Ph.D., Rector of the Ecological University and Dan Manoleli, Ph.D. of Bucharest University presented their findings to an audience comprised of members of the press corps and high-level officials: Silviu Stoica, State Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, Atena Groza and Silviu Megan, Director, Directorate for Nature Conservation, Biodiversity and Biosecurity, Mircea Verghelet, Director, RomSilva, Silvia Pisica, Director, National Institute of Statistics (NIS), Filofteia Panduru, former Director General NIS and Valer Bindea, State Secretary, Ministry of Labor, Family and Equal Opportunities.



*Prof. Dutu speaking. Soknan Han Jung UN RC/UNDP RR to his left. Monica Moldovan, UNDP Environment section, in the back.*



*Participants at the seminar.*

The scientists focused their presentations on the recent tendencies in global warming. According to the data offered, from 1980 to present the global temperature rose to 0.6°C causing significant changes to the ecosystems: the largest glacier on Mount Kenya has lost 92% of its mass; sea levels have risen by 105 cm, and the thickness of sea ice in the arctic has decreased by 40%. Professor Dan Manoleli described the impact of CO<sub>2</sub> from atmosphere on three biodiversity levels: individual, population and ecosystem, and explained how climate change will be forcing species to adapt either through shifting habitat, changing life cycles, or the development of new physical traits. Romania's climate has already warmed with severe flooding in 2005 and the warmest spring on record in 2007. Several counties, mainly in the south and east have already called on the authorities to be declared disaster areas due to the prolonged and extended drought.

Rector Mircea Dutu put the climate change issues into its legal context, explaining the international measures taken in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Among the environmental international agreements adopted at the 1992 Rio Summit, he specifically focused on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol. UNFCCC provides an overall policy framework for addressing the climate change issue. However, it does not set specific targets for greenhouse gas concentrations in the global atmosphere, so the Kyoto Protocol was adopted to this end. So far, the biggest polluters such as USA and Australia did not ratify the protocol which puts its relevance under doubt.

The seminar, followed by an animated question and answer session, ended with a screening of the Academy Award-Winning documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*, by former US Vice-President Al Gore.