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## **New UN report urges better protection of biodiversity in Latin America and Caribbean**



3 December 2010 – Governments in Latin America and the Caribbean must act to protect the extraordinary wealth of plant and wildlife in the region and harness their potential as “biodiversity superpowers,” according to a new United Nations report.

“Latin America and the Caribbean have one of the greatest endowments of natural capital in the world,” said Heraldo Muñoz, Director of the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean at the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)), which produced the report.

“The policies recommended in our report have the potential to transform traditional models of development – raising the quality of life of millions by preserving and restoring our biodiversity and eco-system services,” he added.

The report – entitled “Latin America and the Caribbean: A Biodiversity Superpower” – is the culmination of two years of research and was launched on Thursday during the Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Governments, held in Mar del Plata, Argentina.

According to UNDP, the region is home to six of the world’s most biodiverse countries – Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela – as well as the single most biologically diverse area in the world, the Amazon rainforest.

South America alone has more than 40 per cent of the Earth’s biodiversity, and more than one-quarter of its forests.

The report urges policymakers to assess the economic contribution of the biodiversity and ecosystems services to areas such as food production, disease control, pharmaceuticals manufacturing, and tourism, among others, also making the case for sustainable business investments and contributions.

It recommends that governments provide incentives, such as tax breaks, to direct public and private investments while stepping up efforts to conserve ecosystems.

In addition, it recommends raising awareness among policymakers, consumers and the rural poor, and investing to be at the forefront of biodiversity and ecosystems services-based technologies, products and markets.

The report adds that biodiversity-related products and services are of crucial importance to the region and their sustainable and strategic use can help boost the region's long-term growth.

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