

SOUTH ASIAN BIODIVERSITY INFORMATION SYSTEM (SABIS) and SOUTH ASIAN CATALOGUE OF LIFE (SACoL)

Chittagong, 24 May 2007

COMMUNIQUE by participants

(Released in a Press Conference in Chittagong Press Club)

The undersigned, representing Species 2000 Asia Oceania and BioNET-SACNET (South Asian loop of BioNET),

RECOGNISING the importance of South Asian biodiversity data and information for researchers, policy makers, agriculture, forest and fisheries managers, conservationists, the general public and other groups in society,

RECOGNISING further that, in addition to the primary species and specimen-level data accessible through the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) and other initiatives; an additional region-specific initiative is needed to collect, collate, and disseminate data and information about South Asian biodiversity and ecosystems to increase the availability of data, the ability to analyse, and to use such information in both traditional and innovative ways,

HAVE AGREED that basic primary biodiversity and ecosystem data should be freely and openly available to all to the greatest extent possible;

HAVE AGREED to develop a **South Asian Catalogue of Life (SACoL)** as the core of **South Asian Biodiversity Information System (SABIS)** by 2012, around which other types of data would be collated and interlinked.

HAVE FURTHER AGREED to develop and use the necessary standards and protocols to ensure interoperability of biodiversity and ecosystem data to reduce potential duplication of work and to facilitate practical implementation by bringing together distributed data custodians;

WILL ENTER into regional cooperation to foster the establishment of **South Asian Biodiversity Information System (SABIS)**, which aims at collection, collation, and dissemination of primary data about South Asian biodiversity, to serve as a platform for information and awareness-raising for the wider public as well as for enhanced scientific cooperation to achieve environmentally sustainable development in South Asia;

ARE WILLING TO COOPERATE with each other on a voluntary basis and in the most effective ways to contribute towards the implementation of the SABIS concept;
AFFIRM that SABIS must be an open collaboration based on mutual respect and benefit;

INVITE others from any part of the world to join these efforts;
AND APPEAL to national governments, regional and

international multilateral agreements, forums, and consortiums, as well as national, regional, and international funding agencies, and donors to support the establishment of SABIS and the development of SACoL.

Signed

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Annex

**Joint Species 2000 Asia Oceania - BioNET-SACNET
 Coordination Meeting on a South Asian Biodiversity
 Information System (SABIF) Chittagong, 24 May 2007**

Major initiatives, programmes, projects and networks represented by the participants to the meeting

Catalogue of Life Consortium (CoL)

Species 2000 is a global taxonomic organization devoted to indexing the world's known species. It works in partnership with the Integrated Taxonomic Information System (ITIS) in North America to create the Catalogue of Life (CoL), a synonymic species checklist and taxonomic hierarchy intended eventually to cover all organisms. It operates a federated program that presently integrates taxonomic sectors from an array of 47 contributing expert databases from around the world. The program recently celebrated reaching 1 million species, a significant milestone in its 10-year program to include all 1.8 million known species on Earth by 2011. The program is in the process of adding a network of regional taxonomic database hubs, such as the recently launched *Species 2000 China Node*, so as to access species recorded in regional databases. The Catalogue is used extensively as its principal species index by GBIF, by several programs of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), by the Barcode of Life Consortium, and by a wide range of local and national portals and projects.

The *Species 2000* and ITIS, Catalogue of Life is intended as a scientific infrastructure available to be used widely by projects, institutions and individuals around the world. It has been made available for use in the Encyclopedia of Life (EoL) and SpeciesBase programs, and is being linked with the regional system to be used in the Atlas of Living Australia.

BioNET

BioNET is an international not-for-profit initiative dedicated to helping people everywhere identify the living elements of their world. Focused in particular on capacity building for developing countries, BioNET provides a unique platform for applying innovative tools and approaches to solve the taxonomic challenges of sustainable development and biodiversity conservation.

BioNET-SACNET, our affiliated South Asian partnership for taxonomy, is uniquely positioned to help meet local taxonomic needs, in particular those relating to the Millennium Development Goals and the 2010 target to significantly reduce the rate of loss of biodiversity.

IndOBIS

IndOBIS (<http://www.indobis.org/>) is one of the 11 regional nodes of the Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS) which is data and information component of Census of Marine Life (CoML), a decadal international program in quest of unknown, known, and unknowable of world oceans. IndOBIS aims at collating and disseminating data about known life in Indian Ocean. In order to achieve this, it has developed IndOBIS Catalogue of Life (IndOBIS CoL), collating baseline information about 40,000 known organisms from Indian Ocean.

Biodiversity Research Group of Bangladesh (BRGB)

Biodiversity Research Group of Bangladesh (BRGB) (<http://www.brgb.org>) is a donor funded, non-profit, non government initiative devoted to (a) establish cooperative link in taxonomic research towards development of a national information on biodiversity, (b) organize short term training courses to build taxonomic capacity, (c) allow access to modern identification tools and databases essential and effective in capacity building, (d) collect and preserve research material in different institutions for long term sustainability of the initiatives. BRGB is also nominated as NACI of the BioNET-SACNET, South Asian loop of BioNET. It has engaged in developing web based species checklist of Bangladesh.

NCL Center for Biodiversity Informatics

NCL Centre for Biodiversity Informatics (<http://www.ncbi.org.in/>) is an effort to collect, collate, analyze, predict, and disseminate knowledge about Indian biota and its environment. Fostered by the National Chemical Laboratory (NCL), Pune, India, it has developed data products such as IndFauna - Electronic Catalogue of Known Indian Fauna, IndFlora - Electronic Catalogue of Known Indian Flora, SaGrIS - Sacred Groves Information System, IndTMK - Indian Traditional Medicinal Fauna Knowledgebase, and software products such as SAMPADA and IndCollections for digitizing specimen associated data, etc.

Tribhuvan University

Central Department of Botany, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal has lead the development of Nepalese Plant Database Information Service Centre (NEPDISC), specifically designed to manage data on Flowering and Non-flowering plants of Nepal. All information in the NEPDISC is based on published literature. It comprises three major botanical database packages: Flora Database of Nepal (FLODON), Medicinal and Aromatic Plant Database of Nepal (MAPDON) and the Ethnobotanical Database of Nepal (EDON).

Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment

Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment (ATREE), Bangalore, India was established in 1996 to combine principles of natural and social sciences to conserve biodiversity and promote sustainable development; and, to build the necessary social and human capital needed to address our most pressing environmental challenges. ATREE deals with the issues relating to India's rapidly diminishing biological resources and natural ecosystems, and the environmental, social and economic dimensions and implications of this decline. The Eco-informatics Centre at ATREE was established in 2004 to address gaps in ecological

information and to facilitate institutional exchange in the fields of ecology and natural resource management (NRM) in India. Its goal is to serve as a web-enabled, publicly accessible resource for integrated information on ecology and the environment. The Centre is working to provide a "Cyber Ecology" platform for India's biodiversity hotspots such as the Western Ghats and the Eastern Himalaya. In addition ATREE has developed data products such as Plants of India, Specimen Image Manager, Sasya Sahyadri and Sasya Bharati documenting taxonomy, distribution, and diversity of plants in Western Ghats and South India respectively.

National Institute of Oceanography

Bioinformatics Center of the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), Goa, India has committed itself towards improving the understanding of the marine biota in the Indian waters. The Centre is engaged in developing "NIO's Database on Marine Life of India" and as part of this, has developed several CDROMs modules such as "Marine Prawns of India", "Marine Crabs of India", "Mangroves of India", "Seaweeds of Central West Coast of India" etc. The main objective of the centre is to study and document the biotic resources in an organized manner and disseminate the information to all those who need it in any place at any time to aid in their effective management and conservation.