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## **SOS Press Conference**

**Monique Barbut, CEO and Chairperson  
Global Environment Facility**

**COP 10**

**October, 18–29, 2010**

**Nagoya**

**October 28<sup>th</sup> - 14:30-15:30**

We keep hearing that our planet's rich biodiversity is declining at a fearful pace, at a rate that clearly shows we are running out of time to stop or even slow extinction.

The facts are irrefutable: among well-studied groups, we know that 1 in 4 mammals, 1 in 8 birds, 1 in 3 amphibians, and 1 in 3 corals are at risk of extinction in the wild.

This is a dangerous place to be: species are the fundamental components of biodiversity and we rely on their survival for our own existence. Outside of the basic physical need to have a wide variety of creatures there is also a powerful emotional need: iconic species such as the tiger or panda are recognized by all societies and cultures. They provide the most useful, and usable, indicators of biodiversity status and loss. Most importantly, the public understands and empathizes with them. Species are symbolic of the very diversity we celebrate in our own societies.

The GEF, as the largest public environment fund has together with its network of donors invested billions of dollars over the past two decades to address this global challenge. We have made significant inroads by pioneering innovative financing to reward local communities that protect fragile habitats. Yet clearly the only way we will be able to make meaningful and sustainable progress for the future is by pooling resources. That is why we are particularly thrilled about this partnership that we are signing today.

Save Our Species, or SOS is the most promising initiative yet to protect threatened species. Why? Because it combines the forces of the largest and most important public and private organizations working on biodiversity today.

Joining us is the World Bank, the largest development agency in the world; IUCN, the largest global network of experts in biodiversity along with a powerful new addition: Nokia, a global player in telecommunications who will put \$1.5 million dollars into the SOS fund. That's on top of the 5 million dollars that we have already contributed with a matching \$5 million dollars from the World Bank.

That translates into seed funding of \$11.5 million dollars that can be channeled through executing partners such as the World Wildlife Fund, Conservation International, The Nature Conservancy and others. Save Our Species has both the credibility and scope to offer meaningful and high profile return on investment from the private sector and others.

That may not sound like a lot of money but we see this as the catalytic spark that move the engine forward. Up until now, most species conservation funds and resources for biodiversity have come from public or philanthropic sources. SOS provides an opportunity for the private sector to engage directly, allowing biodiversity conservation to benefit from the financial resources and the ingenuity of businesses and corporations.

Already we have considerable interest of many other companies, here in Japan, and more than a hundred across the globe.

Our aim is to respond to priorities according to species status in the wild, and to cover all groups of species. We realize some species are clearly more charismatic than others. And many are central to the branding of companies, sports teams and even countries or regions. Partners therefore will be able to target their investment towards a particular species of interest while supporting SOS's overall objective: preserving the diversity of all living organisms.

SOS will also give grants to civil society all around the world to implement conservation action on the ground, focusing on specific threatened species and their habitats.

Grants will vary in size from ten thousand US dollars for emergency action in case of a sudden disaster, to hundreds of thousands for more complex projects.

As it is impossible to fund all species conservation projects, priorities will be identified by the world's top experts, led by the Species Survival Commission of IUCN. However what truly makes SOS a sure bet is that our structure is designed to ensure synergies with existing conservation programs that are being implemented by other leading organizations in the nature conservation field. SO no duplication of effort.

Thank you for your attention and now Mr. Jean-Christophe Vie from IUCN will be detailing for you in more details their role in this exciting new partnership.