

**THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**



**WORLDBANK, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC JOIN FORCES TO SAVE TIGERS,
BIG CATS.**

World Bank innovative partnerships and environment review bring together biodiversity, long-term economic growth, and poverty reduction

The World Bank and National Geographic today announced they would join forces to save the tiger and other big cats, symbols of the threat to global biodiversity.

In the Year of the Tiger and on the eve of Earth Day, the World Bank, the National Geographic Big Cats Initiative, the Smithsonian Institution, the Global Environment Facility, and others under the Global Tiger Initiative met in Washington to inaugurate National Geographic's "Vanishing Icons" photo exhibit, dedicated to saving tigers and other big cats from extinction and expanding knowledge about the connection between biodiversity conservation and development.

"We are using the appeal of these charismatic big cats as a clarion call to draw attention to the need to protect biodiversity and to remind people of the wildlife and wilderness we stand to lose if we do not balance conservation and economic development," said World Bank Group President Robert B. Zoellick, just before the start of the Bank's Spring Meetings. "If we fail to save the tiger, its loss would be a dramatic indication of our failure to safeguard biodiversity and its largely untapped potential to spur balanced development."

The photo exhibit at the World Bank is dedicated to work on saving tigers and other big cats and expanding knowledge about the connection between biodiversity conservation and development. The Global Tiger Initiative was launched in June 2008 by Zoellick with partners as an alliance of governments,

international agencies, civil society, and the private sector.

The organizations view tigers as indicators of the overall health of the ecosystems they inhabit. Their situation epitomizes a comprehensive biodiversity crisis across the globe with direct implications for long term economic growth and human well-being. Climate change impacts, deforestation, habitat degradation, urbanization, and infrastructure development all present formidable challenges for countries where tigers are found. Without urgent action, wild tigers could disappear during the next decade.

Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution Wayne Clough and Editor in Chief of National Geographic magazine Chris Johns also spoke of the transformational role of global partnerships for conservation of wild nature. Senior officials from the 12 tiger range countries were in attendance, including Nepal Minister of Forests and Soil Conservation Deepak Bohara, who today concluded the Global Tiger Initiative's Executive Leadership Forum, a milestone event in capacity-building in support of tiger conservation and preparation for the Tiger Summit.

The renewed call to do more to save the tiger comes in conjunction with release this year of the World Bank's annual review, *Environment Matters*, focusing on biodiversity. According to *Environment Matters*, while economic activities sometimes result in biodiversity loss, this loss in turn undermines long-term economic growth, and is particularly counterproductive in the poorest communities in developing countries. While rich and poor people benefit from ecosystem services such as climate regulation, disaster mitigation, fisheries, and forestry, it is the poorest that directly depend on them for day to day survival.

Environment Matters, this year titled "Banking on Biodiversity", reports on the many ways in which the World Bank Group works to help conserve the world's natural resource base and stop ecosystem destruction and degradation that, combined with the impacts of climate change, hinder poverty reduction and economic growth.

"I believe we can – and must – have strong economic growth, help those living in poverty to overcome it, and serve as stewards of our common environmental heritage," said Zoellick, "...and to achieve this, we need a paradigm change so that the value of sensitive ecosystems and wilderness is factored into the equation of development."

A major funder of biodiversity worldwide

Over the past 20 years, the World Bank Group has been one of the major financiers of biodiversity initiatives, providing support to 624 projects in more than 122 countries, representing more than \$6.5 billion in biodiversity

investments. The total active portfolio of World Bank Group projects that address environment and natural resources activities, including biodiversity, amounts to some \$13 billion—representing about 10 percent of the total Bank portfolio.

Renewing a World Bank commitment

The World Bank Group recognizes that the process of development, including projects financed by it, can impact natural resources and biodiversity. The Bank Group's environmental safeguard policy framework is intended to minimize adverse environmental impacts from its investment and policy loans and grants, to mitigate unavoidable impacts and where possible to improve environmental quality.

To achieve more, though, there is a need to learn how to better measure the value of ecosystems and their support to sustainable development. For that reason, the Bank Group is developing a new Environment Strategy to enhance the sustainability of the entire portfolio.

"We are currently engaged in global consultations to develop an Environment Strategy that will articulate a set of principles and propose an approach for achieving environmental sustainability of the World Bank Group's portfolio," said Warren Evans, World Bank Director of Environment. "The International Year of Biodiversity is a particularly fitting time for us to be learning from our stakeholders and partners about the role they want us to play, and to explore how we can improve our performance."

by spokesperson

Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs.

WASHINGTON DC.

April 22, 2010