

For press room password, photographs, b-roll footage, or phone interviews, please contact:

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****MEDIA ADVISORY****

“Doomsday Seed Vault” to Open in Arctic Circle on February 26th

The first seeds will be placed in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault at an opening ceremony on **Tuesday, 26 February 2008**. During the ceremony, thousands of crop varieties from countries around the world will be placed in the fail-safe facility carved into the Arctic permafrost in the remote Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard. Constructed by Norway as a service to the world, and nicknamed the “doomsday vault” or “Noah’s Seed Ark”, the facility is located nearly a thousand kilometres north of mainland Norway. The seed vault will house and protect virtually every variety of almost every important food crop in the world.

The opening of the seed vault is part of an unprecedented effort, being led by the Global Crop Diversity Trust, to protect the planet’s rapidly diminishing crop biodiversity, a critical resource to sustain earth’s agriculture. The facility will secure hundreds of millions of seeds for centuries. In the event of a natural or manmade catastrophe, the vault would enable civilization to re-start agriculture. The seed vault may become one of the most important and recognisable structures on earth, though few will ever see it first-hand.

Materials related to the opening will be embargoed until time of release at 10:30 a.m. CET (09:30 hours GMT) on Tuesday, 26 February.

The official press room for the event, which will include streaming video of the opening ceremony, photos of the facility, and embargoed press materials, will be available at www.seedvault.no (password protected). For other background information now available on seeds being deposited, photos of crop varieties, and new interactive illustrations and maps, please visit the Global Crop Diversity Trust web site: <http://www.croptrust.org/main/seedvault.php>.

Who: Jens Stoltenberg, Prime Minister, Norway
José Manuel Barroso, President, European Commission
Wangari Maathai, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and Vice Chair, Global Crop Diversity Trust
Cary Fowler, Executive Director, Global Crop Diversity Trust

When: 26 February 2008 at 10:30 A.M. CET (09:30 hours GMT)

Where: Village of Longyearbyen, Svalbard, Norway

Construction of the seed vault was funded by the Norwegian government as a service to the world community. The Global Crop Diversity Trust will provide support for the ongoing operations of the Seed Vault, as well as funding for the preparation and shipment of seeds from developing countries to the facility. The Nordic Gene Bank will manage the facility and maintain a public on-line database of samples stored in the seed vault

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Svalbard Global Seed Vault (www.seedvault.no)

The Svalbard Global Seed Vault is designed to store duplicates of seeds from seed collections from around the globe. If seeds are lost, e.g., as a result of natural disasters, war or simply a lack of resources, the seed collections may be re-established using seeds from Svalbard. The seed vault is owned by the Norwegian government which has also financed the construction work, costing nearly NOK 50 million.

The Global Crop Diversity Trust (www.croptrust.org)

The mission of the Trust is to ensure the conservation and availability of crop diversity for food security worldwide. Although crop diversity is fundamental to fighting hunger and to the very future of agriculture, funding is unreliable and diversity is being lost. The Trust is the only organization working worldwide to solve this problem.