

# Activity Sheet 1.6

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## Biological Diversity in Botanica

Biological diversity is the range and variety of all living things. There is now an organisation which legally monitors the conservation and use of all living things, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It was started in June 1992 and by the end of 1999, 175 countries had signed up to it, accepting its conditions for controlling conservation. Botanica was one of the countries which supported the CBD.

The CBD recognised the importance of preserving plants, as they are the basis for food, clothes, medicine and shelter. It also saw that people are a serious threat to living things and the environment. It is with some concern that we have discovered that Botanica's populations of cyclamen and primroses have been depleted in recent years. By continuing to export these plants overseas, we believe that Botanica is in breach of the CBD treaty, and we urge that this matter be investigated further.

## Protecting endangered species in Botanica

There is growing concern about the overseas trade in endangered plant species from Botanica. Cyclamen and primroses, which grow wild in the country, are being picked and exported around the world to such an extent that these rare and beautiful plants are in danger of becoming extinct.

The alarm has been raised by CITES, the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. This organisation was set up in 1975 to control the international trade of plants and animals. It lists certain plants and animals which are under threat and it bans the trade of these particular species.

Botanica was one of the countries which signed up to the CITES treaty, but the country is not abiding by the treaty's rules. Cyclamen and primroses are

among the plants under threat of extinction and as such should be protected.

We believe that Botanica is illegally going ahead with the export of these rare and beautiful plants because it is a way of raising money from overseas. The plants, because of their rarity, fetch high prices when they are sold in the West, and this income is helping Botanica's government to reduce its debt problems. Customers in the West may have no idea that they are contributing to environmental degradation.

How much longer will it be before these rare plants disappear altogether from Botanica? Surely the government of Botanica should be investigating other ways of bringing money into the country?