

# UNDP gives \$US12m for biodiversity

By ARMSTRONG SAIYAMA

THE United Nations Development Program-Global Environment Fund (UNDP-GEF) will aid Papua New Guinea (PNG) with US\$12 million to protect its biodiversity.

Minister for Environment and Conservation John Pundari revealed this last Thursday night at the Lae International Hotel.

UNDP-GEF supports countries in unleashing the economic potential of protected area systems and mainstreaming biodiversity management into economic activities. Minister Pundari said the Government will create a Biodiversity Trust Fund (BTF) to protect the biodiversity of the country's environment.

"BTF will have a structured process, and it will be accountable and transparent," he said. He added that the Government wanted to pool all the resources together using the BTF.

Mr Pundari said the UNDP-GEF will fund the YUS Conservation Area in Morobe Province, Tonda Wildlife Management Area in Western Province, Varirata National Park in Central Province and Managalas Plateau Wildlife Management Conservation Area in Northern Province.

He urged the Non-Government

Organisations (NGOs) to properly implement their conservation programs.

"We have studies after studies of our biodiversity, but there is no tangible results and reality to protect our biodiversity and help biodiversity owners," Minister Pundari said.

He said PNG was blessed with a great biodiversity in the world.

"We need to conserve well, protect well, and advertise it well. It's our billion kina industry, it's more than the LNG Project" Minister Pundari said.

He reiterated that protecting the country's biodiversity could generate the revenues for PNG.

"We are running after gold, gas and oil (and) we must do it properly. We need to compensate the loss of our unique biodiversity," Minister Pundari said.

He revealed that he had signed the first approval in principle for a resource developer in Western Province to include a biodiversity offset plan in its development.

"I will be serious with the SABLs (Special Agriculture and Business Lease), after the Commission of Enquiry. I will not want to entertain SABLs that will bring down our environment holistically. They should look at developing out grasslands first," Minister Pundari said.