



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS
on the occasion of the
WORLD WETLANDS DAY
2 February 2015**

“Wetlands for Our Future”

Wetlands are among our most valuable ecosystems. The values of benefits provided by wetlands, per unit area, have been consistently shown to be orders of magnitude higher than for other ecosystems, with the major benefit delivered through improved water security. They provide enormous benefits to society including: freshwater and purifying and filtering harmful wastes from water; a source of foods, including fish and rice which account for about 20% of the world’s nutritional supply; act as buffers for extreme events and help reduce risks from flooding and drought; help combat climate change through providing protection from extreme weather events, with peatlands alone storing more than twice as much carbon as all the world’s forests; as a source of livelihoods for countless numbers of people; as well as supporting a vast array of biodiversity. Despite these benefits, wetlands continue to be lost at an alarming rate with estimates that 64% have disappeared since 1900 and 87% lost since 1700.

Throughout 2015 the global community will continue to discuss its aspirations for sustainable development culminating in the adoption of a new post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. These discussions are rightfully characterised by attention to various prominent themes which include food and nutrition security, water security, disaster risk reduction, sustainable cities, combating climate change and its impacts, conserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity, and eradicating poverty. Notably, the future of wetlands will be a key determinant of whether our aspirations for a sustainable future will be met. This year’s theme for World Wetlands Day, “Wetlands for our Future”, is therefore a timely reminder that while paying attention to our future, and that of our children, we must also recognise the critical action that needs to be taken in order to ensure it. In this regard, the conservation and restoration of wetlands must be a high priority.

Wetlands have always been implicitly recognised, as a cross-cutting ecosystem type, in the deliberations of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and there is a long history of their importance being explicitly recognised in decisions. Most recently, the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 12), held October 2014 in the Republic of Korea, emphasised the critical importance of coastal wetlands for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, in particular for migratory bird species, sustainable livelihoods, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. The COP invited Parties to give due attention to the conservation and restoration of coastal wetlands, and welcomed the work of the Ramsar Convention and initiatives that support the conservation and restoration of coastal wetlands, including options to build a “Caring for Coasts” initiative, as part of a



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global movement to restore coastal wetlands. Important linkages between wetlands and human health were also recognised. These illustrate the long-standing recognition of wetlands as critical to our future.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is the lead implementation partner for wetlands for the Convention on Biological Diversity and for actions to support wetlands in the context of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011 – 2020 and the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. I am pleased to acknowledge the continuing efforts of the Ramsar Convention in these regards, and recognise that the working relationship between the two conventions, and their Secretariats, continues to flourish.

On this important day I ask us all to reflect on how our society has been affected through the loss and degradation of wetlands, recognise what wetlands do for us now, consider the future challenges we face and do all we can to ensure that wetlands play a central role in shaping our sustainable future.
