



## PRESS RELEASE

### **UN Biodiversity Convention celebrates 25 years: Significant progress made, but more action needed to safeguard life on Earth**

- *Convention on Biological Diversity entered into force in 1993 following 1992 Rio Summit*
- *With 196 Parties, the Convention has near universal participation*
- *Anniversary celebrated on the International Day for Biological Diversity with commemorative event in Montreal*

**23 May 2018** – Opening with a traditional greeting from Charles Patton, a respected elder in the Mohawk Community of Kahnawa:ke, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was celebrated yesterday in Montreal at an event gathering together senior officials from the Government of Canada, the province of Quebec, the City of Montreal, representatives of the diplomatic corps and dignitaries from around the world.

Entering into force on 29 December 1993, the CBD, or UN Biodiversity Convention, is the global treaty that provides the framework for international action on biodiversity, the variety of life on Earth. For the past 25 years, Parties and a global community of diverse stakeholders and partners have undertaken significant actions to achieve the three objectives of the Convention: to conserve biodiversity, use it sustainably, and equitably share the benefits from the use of genetic resources. The CBD Secretariat is based in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Dr. Cristiana Paşca Palmer, UN Assistant Secretary-General and CBD Executive Secretary said: “On the International Day for Biological Diversity we celebrated the excellent progress made by Parties and partners. We have much to celebrate. Significant areas of the world are now being conserved as part of protected areas. We have seen enormous improvements in governance models and sustainable use approaches to manage key natural resources. The value of biodiversity for society, our social and economic needs as well as our own health and well-being, are now widely recognized. Furthermore, biodiversity lies at the heart of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. ”

“But we need to approach conservation in a more innovative manner, to create new incentive models and to engage with relevant actors to help redirect behavioral choices to mitigate biodiversity losses and generate greater safeguarding values to our natural assets. Biodiversity continues to decline in every region of the world. This destruction of biodiversity and natural capital compounds and accelerates other global challenges - such as climate change, water security, food security and public health.”

Around the world, governments held celebrations marking their accomplishments in support of the Convention. In China, Huang Runqiu, Vice Minister of Ecology and Environment, said China will raise



public awareness of the importance of biodiversity and strengthen biodiversity conservation supervision and biodiversity research to protect important natural ecosystems and wildlife. Huang added that the protection of biodiversity has been included in the ecological protection framework of local governments and results have been good. In the United States, California Governor Jerry Brown issued a proclamation declaring 22 May 2018 as “International Day for Biological Diversity.” California has been designated a global biodiversity hotspot. It is home to more species of animals and plants than any other state in the United States.

Since the entry into force of the Convention, membership has become near universal with 196 Parties ratifying the agreement. Almost all Parties have created National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans which are the focus of national efforts to implement the Convention. The next few years present a major opportunity to galvanize global action to increase attention to biodiversity.

Despite the worrying scientific data regarding the destruction of nature and biodiversity, this year’s International Day for Biological Diversity and the months ahead, represent a unique window of opportunity for the global community to engage on a transformative path in the way we relate to nature. With the end of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 rapidly approaching, countries will begin laying the groundwork for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework at the UN Biodiversity Conference in Egypt later this year to design an ambitious agenda for nature and biodiversity after 2020.

Messages of congratulations were received from around the world.

António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, said: “This year, Parties to the Convention will begin work on a new action plan to ensure that, by 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used for the benefit of all people. The entire world needs to join this effort. On this International Day for Biological Diversity, I urge governments, businesses and people everywhere to act to protect the nature that sustains us. Our collective future depends on it.”

Erik Solheim, Executive Director of UN Environment, said: “Perhaps the biggest achievement of the Convention on Biological Diversity is that we no longer see biodiversity conservation as a barrier to development. We can have development and take care of planet Earth in the same policies. The global development agenda aims to leave no one behind, to bring everyone out of extreme poverty. But if we don’t protect and value biodiversity we will not achieve this goal. UN Environment has been so proud to support this Convention over the years.”

European Union Commissioner Karmenu Vella said: “The Convention has delivered but much remains to be done to halt biodiversity loss. It is as much of a global threat as climate change. We need to make certain the CBD becomes as relevant as the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement. Discussions on a new post-2020 framework provide an opportunity for this challenge. An opportunity we cannot afford to miss.”

In Montreal, the celebrations were held at the summit of Mont Royal, a protected area in the heart of the city. A ceremonial tree planting featuring students from Montreal was held. Representatives from all levels of government participated and marked the occasion.

Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Canada, said, via video message: “Today, our resolve to address biodiversity loss and our commitment to the Convention on Biological Diversity, remains as firm as it was 25 years ago. The future will require all of us to work together to develop a vision for a new post-2020 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, one that strengthens the world’s resilience to climate change, makes our green economies more stable, and conserves our natural habitats for generations to come.”

Christine St-Pierre, Minister of International Relations and la Francophonie, said: “On this International Day for Biodiversity, it is useful to remind ourselves that despite all the progress made by the Convention, the challenges that the international community faces with regards to protecting biological diversity requires urgent additional efforts together with strong international cooperation. Therefore, we will need to double our efforts in the actions we undertake, and we will need to do so in close collaboration with our partners.”

Isabelle Melançon, Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Climate Change Management, said: “in order to celebrate the International Biodiversity Day, it is important to realize that the numerous pressure points on biodiversity in general and the degradation of natural ecosystems will lead to the loss of essential ecological services meant to ensure the population’s well-being, general health and security. Some of these ecological services are essential to fight against climate change and to help us adapt. Nature is generous towards us human beings and it contributes largely to our well-being in different ways. It is our responsibility to continue developing our overall knowledge and to act in the way that ensures the conservation of nature.”

Valérie Plante, Mayor of Montréal, said: “The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the entry into force of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity is a nice opportunity to remind ourselves that we are all affected by biodiversity, one way or another. Cities are on the front line, playing a more and more important role in the protection of natural sites and biodiversity. I am really pleased to see the many delegations from different countries present here today in Montréal to discuss this important issue. I remain very excited at the idea that together, we can act for the benefit of our citizens and the citizens of our planet.”

The Day’s celebrations demonstrated that while much is at stake, there is a unique window of opportunity for the global community to define an ambitious new deal for nature and biodiversity post-2020. Time is of the essence. Science has been signalling the alarm with a call to urgent action, as biodiversity remains under threat, a threat that jeopardizes the well-being and livelihood of everyone on Earth. For the UN Convention on Biodiversity, investing in data and science is crucial in the lead up to 2020. As the world embarks on developing the building blocks for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, there is a need for cross-pollination between different fields of study, and sectors dependent on biodiversity in order to collectively safeguard, invest and value this natural life-saving asset.

## **NOTE TO EDITORS**

For more information on the 2018 International Day for Biological Diversity, including welcome messages: [www.cbd.int/idb/2018/](http://www.cbd.int/idb/2018/)

## **The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and entering into force in December 1993, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. With 196 Parties so far, the Convention has near universal participation among countries. The Convention seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing are supplementary agreements to the Convention. The Cartagena Protocol, which entered into force on 11 September 2003, seeks to protect biological diversity from the

potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. To date, 171 Parties have ratified the Cartagena Protocol. The Nagoya Protocol aims at sharing the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources in a fair and equitable way, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies. It entered into force on 12 October 2014 and to date has been ratified by 105 Parties. For more information visit: [www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int). For additional information, please contact: David Ainsworth on +1 514 287 7025 or at [david.ainsworth@cbd.int](mailto:david.ainsworth@cbd.int); or Johan Hedlund on +1 514 287 6670 or at [johan.hedlund@cbd.int](mailto:johan.hedlund@cbd.int)

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