

MESSAGE

from

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EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

on the occasion of

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY

12 August 2009

“Sustainability: our challenge, our future”.

The concept of sustainability embraces young people: meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. And sustainability lies at the heart of the Convention on Biological Diversity – whose objectives are the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components (genes, species and ecosystems) and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.

The sustainable use of biodiversity is essential to its preservation. And the preservation of biodiversity is essential to the well-being of future generations. Essential goods and services depend on the variety and variability of genes, species, populations and ecosystems. Biological resources feed and clothe us and provide housing, medicines and spiritual nourishment.

The deterioration of the natural environment is a key concern for young people all over the world. The ongoing loss of biodiversity – the result of human activities – is part of this deterioration and has direct implications for the well-being of youth both now and in the future. Children and youth will not only inherit the responsibility of looking after the Earth but, globally, they comprise nearly half the population. So the involvement of today’s youth in environment and development decision-making and in the implementation of programmes is critical to their long-term success.

Not only is the well-being of the younger generation and future generations central to the rationale of the Convention on Biological Diversity, but equally, the involvement, actions and voice of youth are essential to implementing the Convention and success in fulfilling its objectives. That is why last year partners in the Convention process launched a campaign and project, *The Green Wave*, to involve children and youth in the aims of the Convention. You can find information on the initiative at greenwave.cbd.int.

The Green Wave provides a platform to encourage and enable young people to make a tangible contribution to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. It aims to raise awareness and support education on biodiversity. As part of the project, each year on the International Day for Biological Diversity, children and youth in groups and schools around the world are invited to join hands. Each group plants a single tree for the future – sending a wave around the time zones of the world. At its heart this provides a simple message – we need to join hands and voice as part of a global and inclusive alliance so urgently required for protecting life on our planet.

I invite you all to become a part of *The Green Wave* and, in marking International Youth Day, I invite youth around the world to take a pledge to discover the biological diversity around you. Explore ways to communicate your concerns and knowledge to others so that people learn about the threats to this life-sustaining resource and use this knowledge to minimize the adverse impacts of our activities.

Next year, 2010, is the International Year of Biodiversity. Your full participation and action are vital for paving the way towards a sustainable future and life on Earth.

Montreal, 12 August 2009