



**MESSAGE FROM BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS,  
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**  
*on the occasion of*  
**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2012**  
**“Empower Rural Women – End Hunger and Poverty”**  
*8 March 2012*

This International Women's Day is one of inspiration and celebration. This day serves to connect women from all walks of life in all parts of the world.

However, according to some estimates, women represent 70 per cent of the world's poor. These women are particularly dependent on biodiversity for their livelihoods, and in some cases, their survival. This year's theme “Empower Rural Women – End Hunger and Poverty” is particularly relevant to the first and third Millennium Development Goals, which call for the eradication of extreme hunger and poverty as well as the promotion of gender equality and empowerment. This cannot be done without special attention to the world's biodiversity without which we would all be economically, socially and culturally poorer.

The current rate of biodiversity loss is severe. So severe in fact that we are exacerbating the detrimental impacts of climate change and risk initiating further conflicts over limited natural resources and accelerating widespread poverty. The Convention is strongly committed to recognizing and promoting the integral yet distinct roles that women and men play in conserving, sustainably using, and sharing biodiversity. For example, the Convention has recognized the vital role of women in its preamble, and the Conference of the Parties has adopted the a Gender Action Plan, included women's needs into the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, emphasized the importance of mainstreaming gender into all the programmes of work under the Convention, and called for the full support of women in the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. Additionally, the Conference of the Parties has promoted national-level biodiversity management by requesting that gender be mainstreamed into Parties' national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

In December 2011, the first Expert Meeting on Biodiversity for Poverty Eradication and Development was held in Dehradun, India. This Expert Group produced recommendations on the integration, valuation, capacity development, and monitoring of how to mainstream biodiversity and ecosystem services into poverty eradication and development processes. One of the conclusions of the Expert Group was that the Convention process needs to ensure that women, indigenous and local communities, and the poor and vulnerable are able to understand as well as benefit from initiatives for conserving, using and valuing biodiversity.

As the world celebrates this year's International Women's Day, we at the Convention Secretariat are proud to be doing our part in ensuring that this goal will be met and that all citizens of the planet, without exception, can benefit from biodiversity and contribute to a sustainable future.

I wish all women of the world a memorable and meaningful celebration of this International Women's Day.

Montreal, 8 March 2012

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