



**STATEMENT BY BRAULIO F. DE SOUZA DIAS
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY**

on the occasion of

**INTERNATIONAL MOTHER EARTH DAY
22 April 2012**

The proclamation of 22 April as International Mother Earth Day is an acknowledgement that the Earth and its ecosystems provide its inhabitants with life and sustenance. It also recognizes a collective responsibility, as called for in the 1992 Rio Declaration, to promote harmony with nature and the Earth to achieve a balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations of humanity.

Mother Earth is a common expression amongst many peoples for the planet Earth. It reflects the view of not only the interdependence of all living beings but of kinship with the Earth itself. Many indigenous peoples in Latin America call Mother Earth “Pachamama”. For many indigenous peoples, including the Australian Aborigines, the Earth does not belong to them but they belong to the Earth – I come from there – she is my Mother (they would say).

The concept of Mother Earth is very much in harmony with the ecosystem approach which is one of the pillars of the Convention on Biological Diversity and also with the precautionary principle contained in Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and the preamble to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

International Mother Earth Day provides an opportunity to raise public awareness around the world to the challenges regarding the well-being of the planet and the life it supports. Accelerating environmental degradation and climate change make it all the more urgent to ensure the sustainability of development.

It is also an opportunity to draw attention to the role of indigenous and local communities and their traditional knowledge – that intimate in-depth knowledge of the local environment held by

indigenous and local communities. It is the knowledge of the cycles of the Earth and all that lives on it.

The Convention's work on respecting traditional knowledge (Article 8(j)) and its commitment to the effective participation of indigenous and local communities grounds the Convention in a daily reality of peoples directly dependant on biological diversity for their daily lives. Furthermore their contribution to the work of the Convention is immeasurable. Their presence is a constant reminder to all of us that we are all interconnected with each other and to the Earth itself.

I remain convinced that the Earth and its rich biodiversity will be preserved by the actions all of us take on a daily basis, to help nurture and sustain our common matriarch, Mother Earth.

Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias
Executive Secretary
Convention on Biological Diversity