



MESSAGE FROM MR. BRAULIO Ferreira DE SOUZA DIAS

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

On the occasion of

Africa Environment Day 3 March 2013

The United Nations Rio+20 outcome document “The Future We Want,” highlighted the critical role of biological diversity or biodiversity in short, in maintaining ecosystems that provide essential services which are the foundation for sustainable development and human well-being.

Biodiversity is responsible for providing food and water, for buffering the impacts of climate change, controlling the outbreak of diseases and supporting nutrient cycling. Biodiversity is also the foundation of many spiritual, re-creational, and cultural benefits. The recently released Africa Environment Outlook underlined that Africa's biological diversity supports human health, as a major source of food, medicines and ecosystem services. Eighty per cent of Africa's rural population depends on traditional medicine. In Zimbabwe, 50 species of mushrooms, 25 species of fruit and 50 species of leafy vegetables are harvested from the wild.

Unfortunately, too few recognise the importance of biological diversity. Fewer still are mobilising the tools and resources needed to ensure its conservation and sustainable use. With the loss of biodiversity continuing unabated, it is important to act now to create a future of life in harmony with nature, the future we want.

Tools are at hand to achieve this future of sustainability. The Millennium Development Goals remain important instruments for biodiversity. Their realization will also provide a much-needed boost for the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals under discussion.

The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, agreed by 193 Parties under the auspices of the Convention on Biological Diversity provides a roadmap to safeguard the diversity of life. The plan's 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets relate not only to conservation, but also to addressing the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across all sectors of government and society. Overall, the Targets aim to bring about change to our lifestyles, and to our development paradigm – in a direction that recognises biodiversity as the foundation for sustainable development and poverty alleviation.

African countries are leading in creating the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, as 51 out of 54 countries have completed this exercise. Many have even up-dated these strategies to



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emphasise the mainstreaming of biodiversity into economic activity. More are on the way. I urge you all to continue your efforts in this regard.

African nations have also been at the forefront of the negotiation of the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Twenty-nine African countries are signatories and 6 of the 14 ratifications as of today, are from African countries. The Nagoya Protocol will create greater legal certainty and transparency for both providers and users of genetic resources. The Protocol can, in light of this, help unlock the economic potential of biodiversity and meaningfully contribute to the sustainable development agenda. I congratulate countries who have ratified or acceded to the Protocol for sending a clear signal of their commitment to its entry into force and. I encourage other countries to follow suit to ensure the timely entry into force of this important international instrument.

On this Africa Environment Day, when we also reflect on the work and legacy of Dr. Wangari Maathai, who tirelessly promoted the need to live in harmony with nature, let us celebrate the successes in sustaining our environment. Let these sustain greater efforts in support of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and on all the environmental work we must carry out. This is for our sake, for the sake of Africa's children, and for the sake of life on earth.
