



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY  
BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS  
on the occasion of  
World Oceans Day  
8 June 2013**

Earth is the only planet known to have liquid water on its surface. It is also the only planet known to contain life. The ocean gave birth to this life and constitutes over 90 percent of the Earth's habitable space. Earth is indeed an ocean planet.

Marine ecosystems are essential for the biogeochemical cycles that sustain all life on earth. It is no exaggeration to say that all of humanity depends on marine biodiversity. Moreover, hundreds of millions of people rely directly on marine biodiversity for their wellbeing and livelihoods. But these vast ecosystems are under threat. The oceans are filling with the wastes produced by human activities and impacting biodiversity. Marine biodiversity suffers from overfishing and other unsustainable fishing practices. The impacts of climate change and ocean acidification are growing.

These are grave threats but together we have the power to protect the oceans, which is the theme of this year's observance.

At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in 2012, governments recognised that oceans, seas and coastal areas form an integrated and essential component of the biosphere and are critical to sustaining it. At Rio+20, governments also reaffirmed the intrinsic value of biological diversity and its critical role in maintaining ecosystems that provide essential services. They reaffirmed the importance of area-based conservation measures for the protection of oceans, noting Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 which calls for 10 *per cent* of coastal and marine areas to be under protection by 2020.

The outcomes of Rio+20 that relate to oceans were reflected at the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 11) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), in October 2012, in Hyderabad, India.

At COP 11, governments welcomed the progress made since 2011 to describe ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs). Through a series of regional workshops with national and international experts, drawing upon the best available scientific information, up to 75% of world oceans including the marine areas beyond national jurisdictions have already been reviewed and documented, with assessment of the remaining areas underway. As decided by COP 11, the results of this work on EBSAs were transmitted to the UN General Assembly and its relevant processes.

Other emerging concerns on marine biodiversity were highlighted by COP 11, including the impacts of anthropogenic underwater noise and marine debris. COP 11 also addressed issues of climate change and marine biodiversity, with a call for further additional systematic scientific review on the impacts of ocean acidification on marine and coastal biodiversity and updates on work related to coral bleaching.



**Convention on  
Biological Diversity**

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity  
United Nations Environment Programme  
413 Saint-Jacques Street, Suite 800, Montreal, QC, H2Y 1N9, Canada  
Tel : +1 514 288 2220 Fax : +1 514 288 6588  
[secretariat@cbd.int](mailto:secretariat@cbd.int) [www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int)



Perhaps more importantly, COP 11 provided governments with practical tools to address various threats to ocean biodiversity. For example, the contracting Parties to the Convention were encouraged to apply the annotated voluntary guidelines for consideration of biodiversity in environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments in marine and coastal areas, including areas beyond national jurisdiction. Further work was also requested by the COP on marine spatial planning, so that such planning framework can better assist Parties in applying the ecosystem approach and implementing integrated marine and coastal management.

The complexities of marine ecosystems show us that cross-sectoral cooperation is critical to move forward in advancing our efforts toward implementation of the CBD and all agreements relevant for the oceans. This is why governments called for close cooperation with various relevant international and regional organizations. In particular fisheries management bodies were invited to play a stronger role in addressing the impacts of fisheries on biodiversity.

In order to effectively address this urgent need for cross-sectoral partnerships and capacity development, the Secretariat of the CBD has been coordinating the implementation of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative involving various partners from UN and international organizations, regional seas organizations, regional fisheries management organizations, relevant national scientific institutions, local authorities, and non-governmental organisations, that expressed their commitment toward the Initiative's mission.

As we celebrate World Oceans Day, let us remember that together we have the power to protect the oceans. I believe our concerted and cooperative efforts toward actions “on the ground” and in the waters are the only option we have to conserve our ocean planet and the life therein, so that they can continue to nurture life everywhere on Earth.

-----