



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY  
BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS  
on the occasion of  
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FORESTS  
21 March 2014**

***“Celebrating Forests for Sustainable Development”***

Forests are central to sustainable development. Globally, forests cover one third of the land surface of the planet. They harbor exceptionally high levels of biodiversity which, in turn, provide a range of ecosystem services essential for prosperity. Forests provide vital ecosystem goods and services to people, including food, fodder, water, shelter, nutrient cycling and recreation. They also function as carbon storehouses.

Forests are central to the work of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). While recognizing the linkages between biodiversity, ecosystem services and human well-being, the Convention has highlighted that the values of forest ecosystems and biodiversity remains inadequately reflected in broader development policies designed to address the drivers of deforestation.

In 2010, the Parties to the Convention adopted the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 to address the underlying drivers of biodiversity loss and provide incentives to protect the benefits provided by healthy and resilient ecosystems. The Strategic Plan includes 20 headline targets, known as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, organized under five strategic goals. The Strategic plan sets out internationally agreed commitments on biodiversity and the means to achieve them. Five of the targets are particularly relevant for forests — by 2020, world governments have agreed to:

- At least halve the rate of deforestation and forest degradation (Target 5)
- Manage areas under forestry sustainably (Target 7)
- Protect at least 17% of land as part of improved protected area networks with connectivity across the landscape (Target 11)
- Safeguard ecosystems that provide essential services (Target 14)
- Restore at least 15% of degraded ecosystems, contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combat desertification (Target 15).

These Targets support the extended CBD programme of work on forest biodiversity, adopted in 2002, and complement other internationally recognized political commitments on forests in



**Convention on  
Biological Diversity**

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Agenda 21, including the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests and its global objectives. Parties to the Convention are developing national targets under the Strategic Plan as part of their updated national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs). Presently 179 (93%) Parties have developed NBSAPs in line with Article 6 of the Convention.

The CBD Secretariat has been privileged to work with the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to develop a range of studies on forest finance, climate change and forests, landscape approaches and links to the broader development agenda.

Bilateral activities have also been carried out with several partners, including the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, Center for International Forestry Research, International Tropical Timber Organization, United Nations Environment Programme, IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and the Secretariats of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. One such collaborative effort has been to advance common agendas through two series of capacity-building workshops – in 2009 on biodiversity, forests and climate change (REDD+), and presently on ecosystem conservation and restoration in a landscape context.

This work has helped countries translate commitments into practical actions that address not only the conservation and sustainability of biodiversity but also contribute to poverty eradication, food security, decent employment, livelihoods and broader socio-economic objectives.

The importance of forests and biodiversity for sustainable development has been well-recognized by the global community. Following the eighth session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), held in February 2014, forests were included in the focus area on Ecosystems and Biodiversity, one of 19 focus areas for possible SDGs. The inclusion reflects the multiple important contributions forest ecosystems make to sustainable development.

As we celebrate the theme of this year's International Day of Forests, "Forests for Sustainable Development", I encourage countries to assess the status of their natural forest capital and the socio-economic contributions that forests provide to society at large. More than 1.6 billion people worldwide depend on forests for food, medicines and fuel, as well as for their jobs and livelihoods. By measuring what we treasure we can find innovative ways to conserve, restore and better manage our forests and their resources for the benefit of present and future generations. This is truly the future we want.

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