



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS**

on the occasion of

World Oceans Day

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The oceans of the world cover over two-thirds of the earth's surface. Oceans are the cradle of life. Nearly all living things on earth depend on the oceans in one way or another – for oxygen, absorption of carbon dioxide and the regulation of global climate cycles.

Marine and coastal biodiversity – ecosystems, species and genetic material – provide enormous benefits for human well-being. Hundreds of millions of people rely directly on marine biodiversity for their livelihoods. Roughly 40% of the world's population lives within 100 kilometres of the coast; fisheries employ approximately 200 million people, provide about 16% of the protein consumed worldwide and have an annual value estimated at US\$80 billion. Coastal ecosystems provide services, including tourism and protection from storms, valued at nearly US\$26 billion annually.

Leaders gathering at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in 2012 recognised that oceans, seas and coastal areas are an essential component of sustainable development. The importance of oceans is also reflected in the draft proposals for the Sustainable Development Goals being discussed by the United Nations General Assembly with oceans having their own goal. The theme of this year's World Oceans Day, "Ocean Sustainability", is therefore timely.

Marine ecosystems are, however, increasingly facing threats that undermine their ability to provide critical life-supporting services and contribute to sustainable development. The impacts of overfishing, pollution, habitat destruction and emerging threats of climate change, among other threats, are causing unprecedented biodiversity loss in the oceans.

The challenges facing the oceans are considerable, but if we act now, there are opportunities before us to reduce pressures on oceans and use them sustainably. Global leaders have stressed the importance of conserving and sustainably utilizing the oceans and seas. They have committed to protect and restore the health, productivity and resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems, and to maintain their biodiversity, thus enabling their conservation and sustainable use for present and future generations. Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) through the Aichi Biodiversity Targets have made tangible commitments to achieve sustainable fisheries, protect 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020, address invasive alien species and reduce the pressures on coral reefs, among other ambitious commitments.



**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 www.cbd.int



The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity provides support for tangible actions by governments and stakeholders to protect marine and coastal biodiversity. The Secretariat facilitates capacity-building including through the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative, the Sustainable Oceans Initiative, and the Maritime Innovative Territories' International Network. Important collaboration is realized with Small Island Developing States through regional initiatives such as the Micronesia Challenge, Caribbean Challenge Initiative and the Coral Triangle Initiative.

The Secretariat supports science-based decision-making and implementation of practical management tools to improve conservation and sustainable use. We have conducted and published research to improve the understanding of major threats, such as ocean acidification, underwater noise, coral bleaching and marine debris, and to identify practical means to mitigate the impacts of these threats.

The CBD's work on ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) is an important example of cross-sectoral scientific collaboration in support of informed and science-based management. Through a series of nine regional workshops, the CBD's EBSA process has compiled scientific information to describe more than 200 areas meeting the EBSA criteria around the world. This process has facilitated the sharing of scientific information, networking of experts across disciplines, and enhanced collaboration for marine conservation and sustainable use.

As we celebrate World Oceans Day, let us remember that although the task is large, together we have the power to ensure that oceans can sustain us into the future. Through a shared vision and strong commitments toward conservation and sustainable use, we can safeguard the sustainability of the oceans so that they can continue to nurture life everywhere on earth and be an important part of the future we want.
