



MESSAGE FROM MR. BRAULIO F. DE SOUZA DIAS

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

On the occasion of

INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN DAY 2014

MOUNTAIN FARMING

11 December 2014

Covering about 27 per cent of the Earth's land surface, mountains directly support the 720 million people who live within mountain regions and indirectly benefit billions more living downstream. As repositories of rich biodiversity, mountains provide lowland people with a wide range of goods and services, including most of the world's freshwater and food – of the 20 plant species that supply 80 per cent of the world's food, six (maize, potatoes, barley, sorghum, tomatoes, and apples) originated in mountain areas. In these ways and others, what takes place in mountains plays a critical role in moving the world towards sustainable development.

This year, declared International Year of Family Farming by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Mountain Day is being celebrated under the theme of "Mountain Farming". Mountain agriculture, which is predominantly family farming, has for centuries been a model for sustainable development. Inextricably linked to world food security, family farming preserves traditional food products, while contributing to a balanced diet and safeguarding the world's agro-biodiversity and the sustainable use of natural resources. There are many examples: Philippine farmers have developed hillside irrigation systems that allow them to share water from field to field; Peruvian Andean potato farmers have learned to dig trenches around their fields and fill them with water warmed by sunlight during the day, giving off steam that protects crops from frost at night. Farmers in the desert oases of Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Morocco and Tunisia have developed sophisticated irrigation architectures and multi-



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layer gardens that capture the shade of date palms to grow the fruits, vegetables and cereals that feed their populations.

Mountain people, however, tend to be among the world's poorest and most disadvantaged. Moreover, current global challenges such as climate change, population growth, urbanization and the migration of men and youth to urban areas or neighboring countries exacerbate the hardships they face. Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in mountain areas, for example, are the first to experience the changes that are likely linked to climate change. The consequences of these changes could include direct effects on water resources and hydro generation, and therefore on the livelihoods of mountain dwellers.

The challenge before us is to identify new and sustainable opportunities that can benefit both highland and lowland communities and help to eradicate poverty without contributing to the degradation of fragile mountain ecosystems. An enabling policy environment, such as fair trade policies, removal of technical, legal and administrative barriers to technology transfer, sound economic policy, regulatory frameworks and transparency, could improve farmers' access to resources and increase their capacity to generate income.

Within the CBD programme of work on mountain biological diversity, adopted in 2004, Parties have committed to promoting sustainable land-use practices, techniques and technologies, including those of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities and community-based management systems, for the conservation and sustainable use of mountain biodiversity. Parties also committed to supporting the activities of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities involved in the use of traditional mountain-related knowledge, in particular concerning sustainable management of biodiversity, soil, water resources and slope and to promote partnerships between all stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, involved in the sustainable use of mountain biodiversity.

A resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly on 20 December 2013 underlined the fact that action at the local level is a key factor in achieving progress in sustainable mountain development, and invites the international community to support the efforts of developing countries to develop and implement strategies and programmes, including, where required, enabling policies and laws for the sustainable development of mountains, within the framework of national sustainable development plans. It also took note of a decision adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its tenth meeting, where Parties noted with appreciation the progress made by the Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment and invited Parties, other governments and stakeholders to take specific actions for the conservation, sustainable use and benefit-sharing of mountain biodiversity.

These actions, if implemented, would greatly contribute to Parties' efforts toward achieving multiple Aichi Biodiversity Targets (including Aichi Targets 5, 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15 and 18) of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.

On International Mountain Day 2014, let us celebrate both the richness of life in mountain ecosystems and the mountain farming communities that shape and protect landscapes that provide ecosystem services vital for development, reaching far beyond mountain areas.
