



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

BRAULIO F. DE SOUZA DIAS

on the occasion of

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY

12 August 2015

“Youth Civic Engagement”

Young people between the ages of 10 and 24 comprise about 1.8 billion people, or about one quarter of the global population. This, according to the United Nations Population Fund, is the largest youth population ever.

Youth bring with them energy and dedication. They are willing to get involved, learn and share their views on matters that affect them. When given the opportunity to engage in civic, social and political spheres, they have the will to positively influence others in finding solutions for the future.

In order to promote the effective and inclusive civic engagement by young people at the local, national and regional levels, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made *working with and for young people* a priority of his Five-Year Action Agenda. Youth civic engagement is also one of the main goals of the United Nations system-wide Action Plan on Youth. In fact, the engagement and participation of youth is essential to achieve sustainable human development and the post-2015 development agenda.

Biodiversity is featured prominently in the post-2015 development agenda, and biodiversity is an important issue for youth around the world. This is perhaps truer now than ever before. The world is rapidly changing. Biodiversity continues to decline at an unprecedented rate. Species continue to disappear and our ecosystems and the services they provide are damaged due to human activity. Every one of us, both young and old, is affected by biodiversity loss, and every one of us needs to understand the importance of getting involved in protecting and preserving biodiversity.

Youth however have an advantage in that they can contribute fresh ideas and be proactive in proposing solutions to biodiversity loss. They really are agents of change. They have access to information and communication technologies which allow them the possibility to quickly mobilize other young people, no matter where on Earth they live. They can influence others in adopting sustainable lifestyles and consumption and production patterns.



**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 (CBD) has always been committed to supporting young people in taking action for biodiversity. Through the activities of *The Green Wave*, an educational campaign on biodiversity for children and youth, thousands of school and community groups have demonstrated their enthusiasm for promoting biodiversity conservation.

The Secretariat has also encouraged youth to make the most of opportunities offered to them to engage in relevant intergovernmental processes related to biodiversity and sustainable development. Youth are invited to learn about and join the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN) which aims to represent the voice of global youth in the negotiations under the CBD and to empower young people to take action for a healthy environment and society. Also, under the theme ‘Young Global Citizens for a Sustainable Planet’, the upcoming 9th UNESCO Youth Forum, being held in Paris from 26 to 28 October 2015, will provide young people with the opportunity to have their voices heard and get involved in a number of key issues related to youth engagement in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, including on issues related to biodiversity.

The voices of young people need to be heard, and we will be listening. With the swell in the global population of young people, we must ensure that more efforts are put into raising the awareness about the importance of getting young people involved in the decision-making and implementation processes related to the issues that affect them. Having youth engaged in activities such as sustainable development and the conservation of biodiversity helps promote a sustainable and healthy future for us and for our environment.
