



**STATEMENT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS
on the occasion of
WORLD TOURISM DAY
27 SEPTEMBER 2015**

“One Billion Tourists, One Billion Opportunities”

With continued growth and deepening diversification, tourism has become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. And because tourism is closely linked to development, it has become a key driver for socio-economic progress. For areas of unique natural beauty that attract large numbers of visitors, a healthy biodiversity is one of tourism’s greatest assets and fundamental to its long-term growth.

Tourism helps create jobs, promotes local culture and fuels development. Preliminary results in the first quarter of 2015, according to the World Tourism Organization, point to 1.18 billion international arrivals for the year, a 4 per cent increase over 2014, in a sector that generates 1 in 11 jobs globally, contributes about 10 per cent of the world’s gross development product, and 6 per cent of the world’s total exports. Tourism plays an especially crucial and increasing role in developing countries, which harbour the majority of the Earth’s species, both as destinations and as new sources of tourists. China, for example, already represents the fastest-growing source of tourists in the world, while Mexico is among the top ten most visited tourism destinations.

Tourism and biodiversity are intimately related, with the prosperity of the tourism industry directly dependent upon healthy ecosystems. Many tourism attractions are closely linked to biodiversity, including protected areas, unspoiled mountains, beaches and islands, and other places where traditional ways of life and native culture, charismatic wildlife and natural landscapes can be experienced. And because developing countries are the stewards of the vast majority of the Earth’s biodiversity, it provides their tourism industry with a unique opportunity. In fact, tourism has been identified as a priority sector for development for the vast majority of least-developed countries and small island developing States, and has been a key engine of development for countries such as Botswana, Seychelles, Cabo Verde and the Maldives. In terms of tourism volume, developing country destinations have grown twice as fast as destinations in developed countries, a trend that is expected to continue. Travel between developing



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countries, approximately 47 per cent of the total volume in 2011, is expected to grow to 60 per cent by 2030.

Tourism is of great relevance to at least 12 of the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets, a set of time-bound, measurable targets agreed by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Japan. Its significance for biodiversity has been reflected in the Convention since the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 5) in 2000, where a decision (Decision V/25) by the Parties recognized the importance of tourism for social and economic development at local, national and regional levels, up to a decision (Decision XII/11) adopted by COP 12 in 2014, which, among other things, recognizes the ongoing relevance of the *CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development* and invites Parties and stakeholders to promote awareness of sustainable travel choices.

The Secretariat of the Convention has been working on supporting sustainable tourism for several years. Most recently, with the support of Germany's Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety, the Secretariat collaborated with more than 120 renowned specialists to produce a revised and updated version of the CBD Guidelines, *Tourism Supporting Biodiversity: A Manual on applying the CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development*. Geared towards being both practical and accessible, the manual highlights the important role tourism plays for biodiversity and aims to improve knowledge and materials to better integrate biodiversity into sustainable tourism development. Thanks to partners such as Brazil's SEMEIA Institute, translations and adaptations of this manual into Portuguese will be launched at the end of October 2015 – we hope to see other versions soon. I am also pleased to note that "Tourism supporting biodiversity" is one of the main themes of the upcoming World Summit on Sustainable Tourism, ST+20, being held in November 2015 in Spain. This is significant, because lessons learned from the first World Conference on Sustainable Tourism in 1995, in Lanzarote, Spain, were incorporated into the CBD Guidelines adopted by Parties in 2004.

Sustainable tourism is a compelling lens through which to understand the importance of biodiversity. It helps raise awareness of environmental values. It can also serve as a tool to finance protection of natural areas and increase their economic importance. In other words, it can help improve environmental management and planning. It is important that we work towards an ecosystem-based approach to tourism, reduce its global consumption footprint and promote ways for the sector to make a fair contribution to the continuation of the services and products that ecosystems themselves provide. This means that we must adopt innovative approaches to build relevant green economy dimensions into tourism development, management and planning.

It is impossible to over-emphasize the influence sustainable consumption has in a multi-layered and competitive market such as tourism, where market demand shapes services more than the opposite. When people experience nature they not only begin to care about it, they become more apt to engage in its conservation. Over the past year, the Secretariat of the Convention has engaged with several innovative sustainable tourism leaders, such as Canada's G Adventures, Peru's Inkaterra Group, the Brazilian Association of Tourism Operators (BRAZTOA) and Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa, on awareness-raising campaigns. But in order to further encourage sustainable tourism we need new models of excellence and reference, expanding for instance on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's World Heritage list and biosphere reserves, and the Natura 2000 network, capable

of inspiring an effective link between biodiversity and tourism by promoting ways that tourism can contribute to protecting biodiversity and enhance biodiversity's role as a main resource for tourism destinations. In this regard, the Secretariat is ready to assist Parties in identifying opportunities and needs, best practices and their proponents.

Managed well, tourism can play a positive role in the social, cultural, economic, environmental and political development of destinations and as such represents a significant development opportunity for many countries and communities. By working together, we can harness the immense potential of tourism to drive economic growth, protect the environment and promote sustainable development and ensure that we live our lives in harmony with nature.
