



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY  
BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS  
on the occasion of  
WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY  
10 MAY 2016**

*“Stop the Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds”*

As a vital part of biodiversity, migratory birds play key functions in the interconnected systems that keep nature healthy, including seed dispersal of plants for human and livestock consumption, ecosystem restoration and pest regulation, in addition to the important cultural, aesthetic and economic roles they play in the lives of people worldwide.

Yet despite this, incredible numbers of birds are being lost each year, as a result of illegal killing, taking and trade. While the motives behind these illicit activities are various, they are taking a devastating toll. Millions of birds are being killed each year. These numbers are completely unsustainable, and when placed alongside other pressures, such as habitat loss and climate change, many once common species are facing the very real and distinct threat of extinction.

While governments around the world have passed both national and international treaties to regulate and, in some cases, prohibit the exploitation of migratory birds, these laws need to be respected and enforced or a precious resource that is part of our shared natural heritage could forever be lost. Taking broad action to conserve biodiversity and sustainably use its natural resources by mainstreaming biodiversity within and across sectors, such as national planning and development processes, land-use planning, and marine spatial planning, and in sector-specific plans, such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry, tourism and others, and applying the ecosystem and precautionary approach, as required by the Convention on Biological Diversity, can be very beneficial to migratory species.

Accordingly, a large number of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets are of great relevance to migratory species. Parties to the Convention are encouraged to include actions to conserve migratory bird species in their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans in order to fill gaps in protection and management of critical sites and habitats for migratory bird along all flyways (*Aichi Biodiversity Target 11: By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes*). Parties are also encouraged to take prompt action to address immediate threats to critical sites



**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](mailto:secretariat@cbd.int) [www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int)



and habitats for migratory birds and restore key stopover and feeding sites and habitats reducing the direct threats to species, such as illegal killing, unsustainable hunting, bycatch and poisoning (*Aichi Biodiversity Targets under Strategic Goal B: Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use*), and to help contribute to avoid the extinction of known threatened species and improve their conservation status (*Aichi Biodiversity Target 12: By 2020 the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained*).

Migratory birds were once synonymous with abundance. Historically, people have hunted wildlife for a variety of reasons, such as for food and sport, and while in the past activities were conducted at a sustainable scale this is, in many cases, simply no longer true. For example, nets along the north coast of Africa kill millions of birds every year. But that is only one example of many. The methods used and the numbers taken have changed immensely, putting the survival of targeted species in doubt.

If migratory birds that were once common are to be prevented from disappearing, such as the Linnet that has lost 50 per cent of its population since 1980, or the farmland birds with a loss of 300 million individuals in Europe over the same period, the public has to be alerted to the urgency of the threat posed by illegal hunting, taking and trade. It is important to note that illegal activities not only affect bird populations, they also negatively impact our society in general, our existence, and our natural resources. Conservation, agriculture and the tourism sector in particular all suffer from these negative impacts.

Migratory birds know no borders, neither should international efforts to ensure that everyone can enjoy and benefit from their continued presence. We all stand to gain from the conservation of migratory birds. For example, adaptation measures that help maintain and improve the quality of wetland ecosystems for migratory waterbirds also directly benefit human communities dependent on those wetlands through ensuring continued provision of ecosystem services, such as water, food and fibre, and disaster risk reduction.

Throughout the year, migratory birds make incredible journeys across countries and continents, some from the tundra to the tropics, covering hundreds or even thousands of kilometers linking different ecosystems. By conserving these birds and their environment, we help ensure the survival of their habitats and the conservation of biodiversity on a wider scale.

-----