



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS
on the occasion of
WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION**

17 JUNE 2016

“Protect Earth. Restore Land. Engage People”

This year’s World Day to Combat Desertification shows the importance of being inclusive as we cooperate to restore and rehabilitate degraded land. It also points to the convergence of international action and landmark agreements recently adopted which recognize the links between the different global challenges of our times. Apart from land degradation, these also include biodiversity loss, climate change, food and water security, and poverty eradication. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals prominently feature the importance of land resources, biodiversity and ecosystem services. The Paris Agreement on climate change highlights the role of conservation and sustainable management of forests. The target of Land Degradation Neutrality, recognizes the need to support ecosystem functions and services through sustainable land management and the rehabilitation of degraded land and soil. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, recognizes the role of ecosystems in reducing vulnerabilities.

The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets are also part of this convergence and provide a framework for biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration and sustainable land management to address not only climate change and desertification, but also health, water security, food security and human well-being. Aichi Target 5 aims to at least halve and bring as close to zero as possible the rate of loss of natural habitats, and significantly reduce degradation and fragmentation; Aichi Target 15 aims to restore at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combating desertification; and Aichi Target 14 aims to restore and safeguard ecosystems that provide essential services, including services related to water, and contribute to health, livelihoods and well-being, taking into account the needs of women, indigenous peoples and local communities, and the poor and vulnerable.

This year we celebrate the World Day to Combat Desertification under the theme, *“Protect Earth. Restore Land. Engage People”*. The Parties to many international agreements have recognised that the restoration of degraded ecosystems is becoming increasingly important. Conservation alone is no longer sufficient to achieve our goals for sustainable development. Restoration contributes to achieving many of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, but also the Paris Agreement, through adaptation and climate change mitigation, and the target of land degradation neutrality. Ecosystem restoration can also improve food and water security, provide employment and alleviate poverty.



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A short-term action plan on ecosystem restoration will be discussed for adoption by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its thirteenth meeting (COP 13) in Mexico in December 2016. The action plan provides guidance for integrating biodiversity considerations into ecosystem restoration and is intended as a flexible framework, adaptable to national circumstances for immediate action on ecosystem restoration towards the achievement of Aichi Biodiversity Targets, national targets, and other internationally agreed goals and targets.

Mainstreaming biodiversity considerations across sectors such as agriculture and forestry, and the integration of biodiversity considerations into cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies, such as development and land-use planning, is also essential for ensuring co-benefits.

At COP 13, Parties and stakeholders will have the opportunity to consider concrete ways to mainstream biodiversity across a variety of sectors and areas. Sectors including agriculture, forests, fisheries and tourism will be a particular focus, as well as the importance of the Convention towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other major international goals and targets. This will be a key opportunity to make advances not only on the achievement of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011 - 2020, but simultaneously, on other international agreements.

The impacts of land degradation affect the sustainability of the entire world, thus a global effort is needed. Land resources are the very foundation upon which our societies and economies grow and prosper. By restoring and rehabilitating degraded land we contribute to achieving the overall Sustainable Development Goals, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and the future we want.
