



**MESSAGE OF THE SECRETARIAT OF THE  
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**  
**on the occasion of**  
**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**  
**8 March 2017**

*“Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50-50 by 2030”*

This year's theme for International Women's Day highlights women in the changing world of work, and sets our collective sights on the objective of making gender equality a reality by 2030.

The importance of gender equality for achieving sustainable development was recognized by the UN General Assembly through the inclusion of a goal on gender equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in emphasizing its relevance for the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals. The Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity have likewise recognized the importance of gender equality for the attainment of the Convention and its Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. The full and equitable participation of women in work involving natural resources, from small scale agriculture to protected areas management, can increase the efficiency and reach of approaches to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity. Important measures to address existing barriers include more equitable access to resources and services, such as land, water, technology, and credit.

Numerous countries are taking steps to adopt policies and programmes that can help to address the constraints faced by women in obtaining equitable work in such areas as sustainable agriculture, biodiversity conservation and others. In its Fifth National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Burkina Faso reported that the national Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Gender had financed 273 women's groups through an employment development program to promote equitable access for men and women in the agricultural production sector. In South Africa, the Working for Water Programme focuses on removing invasive alien plants from water catchments and providing employment to local community members, with the aim of recruiting 60 per cent women as staff. Since 1995, over one million hectares of invasive plants have been removed and about 20,000 people, of which 52 per cent are women, have benefitted from employment and training.

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Policies are also needed to address the over-representation of women in what is known as the informal economy — areas of labour that are typically characterized by a lack of minimum wages, standards for working conditions, or unemployment or disability benefits. This is particularly the case for women working in natural resource-based sectors, such as fisheries, forestry and agriculture, where women may receive little to no pay for their work. Some countries have taken measures to legally recognize work undertaken by women in such areas, which in turn allows them to collect benefits, such as unemployment insurance and retirement pension.

Supporting opportunities for women to take on non-traditional roles in relation to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity is another important aspect for women's advancement. One such example is the employment of women from local communities in the all-female Black Mambas Anti-Poaching Unit of the Balule Nature Reserve in South Africa, which has contributed to local livelihoods while improving conservation outcomes. The female rangers participate in anti-poaching patrols, outreach, and community education programs. Since its inception, the Black Mambas have contributed to a 76 per cent reduction in poaching on the reserve. Similarly, the employment of female rangers in Virunga National Park has, in addition to helping women become active participants in the reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of Congo, contributed to positive conservation results.

Addressing gender issues in the world of work requires tackling deep-rooted social norms and patterns that perpetuate inequalities between men and women. It requires ensuring equitable access to resources and services. It means putting supportive policies in place to enable women to enter, remain and advance in the workforce. And it means changing our views of what is considered 'women's work' – towards a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

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