



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
OF THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
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on the occasion of
WORLD TOURISM DAY
27 September 2017**

“Sustainable Tourism – a Tool for Development”

Tourism is central to economies around the world. The sector generates 10 per cent of the world’s Gross Development Product, 30 per cent of global trade in services, and 1 out of every 10 jobs. For many of the billions of tourists each year, visiting natural areas is the primary motive for travelling, creating an ideal opportunity for promoting awareness of the importance of biodiversity and the urgent need for its conservation.

Tourism is also remarkably resilient, as one of the world’s fastest growing industries. Total international arrivals between 2011 and 2016 increased by 25 per cent, and for 2017, growth is estimated at 6 per cent over 2016 figures, with more than 1.2 billion travelers crossing international borders. By 2030 this figure is expected to reach 1.8 billion. Ecotourism and rural community-based tourism are among the segments with the highest growth rates.

Healthy beaches, coasts and islands, mountains, rivers and lakes, all underpinned by biodiversity, are prime tourism attractions. For example, some 1.4 million people visit Australian parks annually to experience their natural landscapes and culture, and contribute \$23 billion to its economy. By the same token, the destruction of biodiversity poses a threat to the continued vitality of the tourism industry. For example, the loss of wildlife caused by poaching significantly impacts tourism development in Africa, thus reducing economic benefits as well as low-impact livelihood opportunities for indigenous peoples and local communities.

At the 2016 UN Biodiversity Conference¹ in Cancun, Mexico, Parties reaffirmed that tourism depends heavily on biodiversity, and adopted a decision on areas for action. Furthermore, the Cancun Declaration on Mainstreaming the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for Well-Being, adopted by

¹ Thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, Second meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing, held 2 – 17 December, 2016 in Cancun, Mexico.



Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity during the High-Level Segment of the conference, includes commitments for mainstreaming conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in tourism. This includes, among other things, integrating biodiversity into policies and models of economic and social development for tourism as an enabling agent for change.

Tourism can also provide direct financial support to protected areas, thus making tourism and conservation mutually-supportive. The tourism sector is recognized as being the largest global market-based contributor to the financing of protected area systems in many countries, including by reinvesting finances from fees, concessions, licenses and other market-based means back into the management of the areas. For some countries, tourism and visitation revenues constitute between 65 and 80 per cent of the annual funding of protected areas' agencies. To support such efforts, earlier this month, the publication "Guidelines for tourism partnerships and concessions for protected areas: generating sustainable revenues for conservation and development" was launched by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity at the 22nd United Nations World Tourism Organization General Assembly. Geared towards protected area authorities, ministries of environment and tourism, policy experts and the business sector, the publication aims to help such entities to strengthen the level of financial resources available for conservation from tourism concessions and partnerships.

This year's International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) celebrated the connection between biodiversity and tourism, also in support of the United Nations General Assembly's designation of 2017 as International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. 327 celebratory events were organized in 95 countries, IDB-related webpages were downloaded 10,000 times, and related social media were read by over 130,000 readers.

Today, on World Tourism Day, let us recall the key role of nature as one of the main attractions, and one of the basic factors for tourism development, and work together in ensuring that tourism becomes a catalyst for progress to reach the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity.
