



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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on the occasion of

WORLD SOIL DAY

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"Caring for the planet starts from the ground"

Soil is a symbol of fertility. It is the origin of life. It is the basis for food production.

Soils are also home to a range of life forms, which are not, perhaps, as charismatic as bees or butterflies. However, soil biodiversity is fundamental to keeping Mother Earth fertile and for nurturing life on our planet.

Let's take a minute to think about how much biodiversity we have underground: small mammals, earthworms, insects and millions and millions of microorganisms. We estimate that soils host a quarter of our planet's biodiversity. The microorganisms themselves belong to another huge and fascinating world, a world we are still trying to discover. Understanding their role in maintaining soils and keeping plants and animals –including people—healthy is an ongoing challenge.

But what is well recognized is that thanks to the interaction of all this visible and invisible biodiversity, forests can keep their life cycles, water is purified, nutrients are absorbed and carbon can be sequestered. And, importantly, farmers can produce our food. In fact, the nutritional value of the food we consume is directly related to the health of the soil in which it grows.

Did you know that it takes thousands of years to form 1 cm of soil? Yet, it can be destroyed in almost no time at all. Unsustainable agriculture practices, urban infrastructures, pollution, erosion, climate change and other factors all contribute to the rapid degradation of our soils and to desertification. About 33 per cent of our lands are already degraded, and this increasing trend is putting in check the achievement of many global agreements.



Therefore, today on World Soil Day, I invite you to reflect on the importance of healthy soils for biodiversity, for our well-being, and to think about the ways that you can take action and contribute to keeping this underground world alive – for its own sake, and for the sake of humanity to be able to enjoy a sustainable life on the planet.

Happy World Soil Day!
