



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

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on the occasion of

WORLD OCEANS DAY

8 June 2018

“Preventing plastic pollution and encouraging solutions for a healthy ocean”

No matter where we live, every other breath we take comes from the Ocean’s breath – from the oxygen produced by its phytoplankton and its rich marine plant life.¹

The Ocean is the source of our life. And its vast depths are home to an even greater diversity of life.

But the Ocean’s breath – and our breath – is increasingly strangled by the plastic pollution that we create.

As much as 70 per cent of marine litter is non-degradable plastic. This material affects every aspect of the ocean and its healthy functioning. Plastics are present in all marine habitats: we find them from just below the ocean surface to all the way down in the seabed. They are present at every level of the food web.² Each year, plastics kill more than 100,000 marine animals.

From bottles and plastic toys to microplastics, approximately one truckload of plastics ends up in the ocean every minute. And the plastic debris is projected to increase threefold between 2015 and 2025!³

Action to address plastic pollution is gaining momentum. Responding to citizens’ demand, governments are starting to ban plastic bags and straws and to control the use of single use plastic bottles. Responding to consumers’ demand, companies are increasingly pledging that their packaging will be reused, recycled or composted in the near term⁴. And responding to their communities’ needs, individuals are turning into innovators, transforming plastic debris into things that they need – from the Manchester United

¹ <https://schmidtocean.org/cruise-log-post/every-other-breath/>

² CBD Technical Series 83

³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/634433/Future_of_the_sea_-_plastic_pollution_final.pdf

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/the-gef-partner-zone/2018/may/16/reversing-the-oceans-accelerating-decline>



soccer team new uniform,⁵ to India's local community of women who turn plastic collected by fisherman into materials used to strengthen roads.⁶

These are great steps that we, as humans, citizens and consumers, take and can start to take. But we need to do more as humanity.

The 196 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity recognize pollution as one of the major challenges facing the planet. In 2010, Parties to the Convention adopted Aichi Biodiversity Target 8 which aims, by 2020, to reduce pollution to levels that are not detrimental to ecosystem function and biodiversity. Unfortunately, we are falling far short of achieving this target.

We need, thus, to redouble our efforts. The lead up to 2020 and beyond requires urgent transformational change in the approaches taken to safeguard our biodiversity, including against pollution from plastics. This transformation needs to include: changes in behavior at the levels of producers, consumers, governments, and businesses; a deeper understanding, based on scientific evidence, of the factors, motivations and levers that can facilitate systemic change; and innovation in the means of implementation.

Working together is imperative for achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Target 8 and many other Global Biodiversity Targets. As Parties to the Convention begin preparations for a new post-2020 global biodiversity framework, the opportunity rises to more effectively address plastic pollution both at the source and in the oceans. To catalyze systemic change, we need to engage with all stakeholders to assess the factors necessary for national engagement and co-design nature sustainability pathways to 2020 and beyond. We must not wait for plastics to find their way into our magnificent oceans in order to act.

To keep the blue lungs of our planet filled with fresh air, we need to take care of their health.

Let us start by refusing to use plastic straws, grocery bags, plastic utensils, plates and cups. Let us choose cosmetics that do not contain microplastics. And let us engage in the clean-up of various nature-based sites – from beaches to rivers, streams or nearby parks – that may be littered with plastic.

Even more, let us step up action to achieve Aichi Biodiversity Target 8 and design a visionary post-2020 global biodiversity framework that supports our breath and the breath of all life on Earth.

Happy World Oceans Day!

⁵ www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-5660089/Manchester-United-2018-19-kit-leaked-online.html

⁶ <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2018/05/fishermen-kerala-india-recycle-plastic-pollution-culture/>