



STATEMENT BY ELIZABETH MARUMA MREMA

ACTING EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

on the occasion of

**WORLD WATER DAY – 22 March 2020**

*“Water and climate change”*

Water is one of our most precious resources in nature. However, climate change is projected to change the availability, distribution and quality of water and have an impact on our health and food security. While biodiversity needs water, biodiversity is critical to the maintenance of both the quality and quantity of water supplies and plays a vital but often under-acknowledged role in the water cycle.

Many different ecosystems such as forests, grasslands, soils, and wetlands, influence water. Vegetated land cover regulates water movement across land and water infiltration into soils. Wetlands can store water and regulate floods. Biodiversity supports water and nutrient cycling in soils. Together these processes control land erosion and regulate water quality. They constitute cost-effective nature-based solutions that can work in parallel with, or possibly replace, man-made infrastructures such as reservoirs, water treatment plants, irrigation systems and flood management embankments.

Biodiversity and ecosystem services are a crucial part of our effort to adapt to and mitigate climate change while achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Peatlands cover only about 3 per cent of the world’s land surface but store twice as much carbon as all of Earth’s forests. Mangrove soils hold about 6 billion tonnes of carbon. Conserving these and other natural terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems, while restoring degraded ecosystems is key for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Therefore, ecosystem protection and restoration are good strategies for increasing the provision of ecosystem services, reversing biodiversity loss and increasing human and ecosystem resilience to the impacts of climate change. Working with nature, rather than against it, brings multiple benefits.

In this Super Year for Biodiversity while governments are working to develop and negotiate a new global biodiversity framework let’s also take personal responsibility and take positive actions. For example, take five-minute showers and help preserve this precious resource. Eat more plant-based and locally sourced meals and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Reduce food waste. Presently, approximately 1/3 of all food produced worldwide is lost or goes to waste.

On World Water Day, let us take the steps, as communities and as individuals to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity. If we do this, we help increase climate resilience, improve ecosystem health, and reduce the risk of water-related disasters.

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