

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY
OF BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

22 May 2019

From individual species through entire ecosystems, biological diversity is vital for human health and well-being. The quality of the water we drink, the food we eat and the air we breathe all depend on keeping the natural world in good health. We need healthy ecosystems to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to address climate change: they can provide 37 per cent of the mitigation needed to limit global temperature rise.

Yet the world's ecosystems face unprecedented threats. An alarming and authoritative new report from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services reveals that nature is declining at rates never seen before in all of human history. Since 1990, deforestation has caused the loss of more than 290 million hectares of forests that help to absorb harmful carbon dioxide emissions from the atmosphere. One million plant and animal species are at risk of extinction and more than 90 per cent of marine fish stocks are in decline or overfished.

The impacts on people around the world will be grave. Current negative trends in biodiversity and ecosystems are projected to undermine progress towards 80 per cent of the targets for the Sustainable Development Goals. We simply cannot allow this to happen.

This year's International Day highlights the impact of environmental neglect on food security and public health. The world's current food system is increasingly broken. Billions of people lack access to proper nutrition. Approximately one third of what is produced is lost or wasted. The ways in which we grow, process, transport, consume and waste food are leading causes of biodiversity loss, while also contributing to climate change.

We must act quickly to reverse these trends and promote transformative change. Solutions exist. By halting environmentally harmful practices, diversifying our food systems and promoting more sustainable production and consumption patterns, we can improve global health, increase food security and strengthen resilience to climate change.

On this International Day for Biological Diversity, I urge all -- governments, businesses and civil society -- to take urgent action to protect and sustainably manage the fragile and vital web of life on our one and only planet.