



PRESS RELEASE

1st Asian Conference on Biocultural Diversity promotes strengthening links between biological and cultural diversity

- *Cultural and biological diversity are the common heritage of humanity.*
- *Global erosion of diversity needs to be addressed in a holistic way that recognizes the links between biological and cultural components.*

29 OCTOBER 2016 – The 1st Asian Conference on Biocultural Diversity, held from 27-29 October in Nanao City, Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan, produced a regional Declaration on Biocultural Diversity and an annex of practical actions that can be taken at different levels to strengthen the links between biological and cultural diversity for a sustainable future living in harmony with nature.

In Asia, many local communities use resources provided by ecosystems for their distinct local cultures. It is essential that such local natural resources are regarded as assets to be protected and preserved, and furthermore, utilized appropriately and wisely for the vitalization of communities. In the conference Declaration, participants committed to further exploring and implementing integrated approaches to conservation, sustainable and equitable use and the equitable sharing of benefits arising from nature, through strengthening the and transmission of resilience of local biocultural diversity, including by enhancing and supporting local and traditional knowledge systems, technologies and cultural practices.

“Both cultural and biological diversity are the common heritage of humanity and must be recognized as such and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations,” said Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). “Cultural and biological components of the Earth’s diversity are not only closely related but are also inextricably linked. They have co-evolved and continue to change in an interdependent and mutually reinforcing way.”

The conference, organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), CBD Secretariat, United Nations University, and the Ishikawa Prefectural Government, highlighted that actions from local to international levels that value and protect biodiversity and cultural diversity can benefit people in many ways, including through better health, food security, access to clean water, and less poverty. These actions can also help people adapt to climate change, by adding resilience to both human communities and ecosystems and making them less vulnerable, and by providing the needed genetic resources to adapt food systems to face the impacts of climate change.



Convention on
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Yet, when it comes to policy making and management decisions aimed at reversing global trends of diversity erosion, biological and cultural diversity are treated as distinct and completely separate issues.

“These dual approaches often lead to diverging and sometimes conflicting agendas, undermining the advances made in the field of biodiversity at the expense of those in cultural diversity and vice versa,” said UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences, Flavia Schlegel. “In this context it becomes clear that instead of fragmentation, the global erosion of diversity needs to be addressed in a holistic way that recognizes the links between biological and cultural components.”

Conference participants committed to engaging in promoting diverse and culturally appropriate means of local, sustainable, and culturally appropriate development through dialogue, mutual exchange and learning –especially through local implementation of international designation systems such as the CBD, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems, UNESCO Biosphere Reserves and Geoparks, UNESCO World Heritage sites and others. Participants also invited international and regional organizations, national and local authorities, to establish or further develop and support platforms for dialogue, where citizens, indigenous peoples and local communities, municipalities, business entities and researchers, can build networks and foster exchanges and partnership, towards better policy development regarding biocultural diversity and urban-rural linkages.

The CBD Executive Secretary, Braulio de Ferreira de Souza Dias, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences, Flavia Schlegel, and the Governor of Ishikawa Prefecture, Masanori Tanimoto, opened the event.

The Declaration and related actions will be presented to the UN Biodiversity Conference¹ in Cancun, Mexico, being held between 2 and 17 December 2016.

NOTES TO EDITORS

The 1st European Conference for the Implementation of the UNESCO-SCBD Joint Program on the Links between Cultural and Biological Diversity was held in Florence, Italy in 2014. Discussions by researchers and practitioners who have been involved in biocultural diversity activities emphasized the importance of biological and cultural diversity for our welfare, and the Florence Declaration on the Links between Cultural and Biological Diversity, which advocates mutual coordination in policymaking on various levels, was adopted.

The website of the 1st Asian Conference on Biocultural Diversity can be accessed at:
<http://bcd2016.jp/english/index.html>

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and entering into force in December 1993, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. With 196 Parties so far, the Convention has near universal participation among countries. The Convention seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and

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 and second meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing, 4 to 17 December 2016; High-level Ministerial Segment of the meetings, 2 to 3 December 2016, Cancun, Mexico.

ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing are supplementary agreements to the Convention. The Cartagena Protocol, which entered into force on 11 September 2003, seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. To date, 170 Parties have ratified the Cartagena Protocol. The Nagoya Protocol aims at sharing the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources in a fair and equitable way, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies. It entered into force on 12 October 2014 and to date has been ratified by 88 Parties. For more information visit: www.cbd.int. For additional information, please contact: David Ainsworth on +1 514 287 7025 or at david.ainsworth@cbd.int; or Johan Hedlund on +1 514 287 6670 or at johan.hedlund@cbd.int.
