



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
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**on the occasion of
WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION
17 June 2014**

The land under our feet is ancient. Minerals and organic material have mixed together over decades, if not centuries and millennia, to provide the bed upon which our food is grown. The plants which grow in this soil are not only the basis for food and fiber they also contribute to our supply of clean water and are a storage place for carbon. Land is the key for life and livelihoods today.

As the global population increases in the years to come, and as climate change affects the availability of water, with consequences for water and food security, land will become even more important. Drylands hold a significant proportion of the world's soil carbon stock, and land degradation contributes to greenhouse gas emissions. Sustainable land management is therefore a key climate change mitigation strategy.

Biodiversity conservation and sustainable land management will be critical for managing our ecosystems so that they can support improved water security for food production as well as being more resilient to climate change.

Ecosystem-based adaptation, which integrates biodiversity and ecosystem services into an overall adaptation strategy, can be cost-effective and generate social, economic and cultural co-benefits. This approach can contribute to the conservation of biodiversity while providing climate change adaptation benefits.

The Tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, held 2010 in Japan, adopted the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and twenty Aichi Biodiversity Targets, which provide a framework for biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration and sustainable land management.

In particular, I would like to highlight Aichi Biodiversity Target 15 which calls for the enhancement of the resilience of ecosystems and the restoration of at least 15% of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combating desertification. Also relevant are: Target 5 which aims that by 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced; Target 7, which calls for areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry to be managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity; and, Target 14, which aims that by 2020, ecosystems that provide essential services, including services related to water, and contribute to health, livelihoods and well-being, are



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restored and safeguarded, taking into account the needs of women, indigenous and local communities and the poor and vulnerable.

As sister Rio Conventions, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification have many areas of convergence, the most significant being the work to conserve, restore and sustainably utilize dryland ecosystems. In fact, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets provide strong bases for implementing the synergies between the two Conventions at the national level.

As we prepare to celebrate the World Day to Combat Desertification let us strive for sustainable strategies that integrate the management of land, water and biodiversity through sustaining ecosystem services. In this way we can combat desertification, help adapt to climate change and achieve the goals of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.
