

## Statement by Astrid Schomaker, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity on World Soil Day (5 December) "Caring for soils: measure, monitor, manage"

This year the celebration of World Soil Day coincides with COP 16 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) taking place in Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) under the theme of "Our Land, our future".

Land is indeed our future. It is Earth's infrastructure for life. Healthy soils constitute the linchpin of that vital infrastructure—one of many wonders we owe to nature. From earthworms and termites, springtails and nematodes, and myriad fungi, protozoa and bacteria, soils are teeming with life to which we owe our own.

This 10<sup>th</sup> celebration of World Soil Day puts the spotlight on the importance of accurate soil data and information in supporting decision-making on sustainable soil management for food security. Assessing the state of soils and the trends affecting them is key and has far-reaching implications for biodiversity, the climate and people's wellbeing.

Measuring is caring. Robust monitoring of the state of soils is essential to their sound management—which is sorely needed. It is an all too familiar sight: unsustainable practices are driving nature to the brink and soils are no exception: they are compacted, eroded, polluted and sealed. Unbridled deforestation, reckless agricultural intensification and relentless urban encroachment are treating soils like dirt.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) is the world's masterplan to halt and reverse biodiversity loss through 23 action targets that must be implemented by 2030. Target 11 addresses restoring, maintaining and enhancing nature's contributions to people, including soil health and the regulation of water. The KMGBF is supported by an updated Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Soil Biodiversity.

The Plan of Action, adopted in 2022 alongside the KMGBF itself, includes the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of soil biodiversity as part of the required transformative change that needs to occur within agricultural and food systems.

Caring for soil is a fertile ground for synergies. Investing in healthy soils can yield multiple benefits in biodiversity and climate action, notably by sustaining biodiversity and vigorous ecosystems that help keep carbon where it belongs, away from the planet's cluttered atmosphere. Connecting the streams of national implementation of the KMGBF, Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) make synergies blossom. We look forward to Parties to the UNCCD landing ambitious agreements in Riyadh for nature and for people.





