



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
OF THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS
on the occasion of the
INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
22 May 2014**

"Island Biodiversity"

Today we celebrate the International Day for Biological Diversity, an opportunity to recognize the central role of biodiversity and healthy ecosystems to life on earth and to human well-being. This year, to mark the International Year of Small Island Developing States, our focus is on island biodiversity. Almost one-third of the world's countries are islands. Over two-thirds of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity have island ecosystems.

Islands constitute less than 5% of the Earth's landmass yet provide habitat for 20% of all bird, reptile and plant species. Islands harbour more than 50% of the world's known marine biodiversity, 7 of the world's 10 coral reef hotspots and 10 of its 34 conservation hotspots. The conservation and sustainable use of the natural resources of islands is critical to achieving the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Yet the biodiversity of islands is at risk. Due to the vulnerability of their endemic biota and their intense human use, islands have higher extinction rates. For example, 64% of all recorded extinctions in recent human history (over the last centuries) happened on islands. Extinction rates for mammals are 177 times higher in island ecosystems than the average for all ecosystems. Once thriving coral reefs are now suffering the effects of bleaching, ocean acidification, pollution and other threats.

Residents of islands understand the linkage between healthy ecosystems and biodiversity and human well-being. Biodiversity-based industries such as tourism and fisheries account for over half the GDP of the economies of Small Island Developing States. Coral reefs alone provide an estimated US\$375 billion every year in goods and services.

From the preservation of marine and coastal resources to climate change mitigation and adaption, from the production of renewable energy to the development of sustainable tourism, islands offer many lessons in resilience and sustainability. As discussions in the United Nations are progressing to frame new sustainable development goals, the experience and knowledge of islands can contribute significantly to the conservation and sustainable use of the biodiversity and natural resources of our planet.



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Pledges from Island governments such as the Micronesia Challenge, the Caribbean Challenge Initiative and the upcoming Western Indian Ocean Coastal Challenge, together with cooperation platforms such as the Global Islands Partnership (GLISPA), are showing the way for successful multi-Party commitments in support of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The Convention's Programme of Work on Island Biodiversity, adopted in 2006 by the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, provides a strategic framework to significantly reduce island biodiversity loss, thereby contributing to poverty alleviation and the sustainable development of islands. The programme contributes to meeting at least 14 of the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets, as well as the Barbados Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals.

Such innovative projects have come to be known as "Bright Spots." These projects are making a difference in advancing conservation and sustainable livelihoods.

To achieve the goals of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets, we need to build on these "Bright Spots." We need to identify those that have the potential to be scaled and replicated as solutions to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity throughout the world.

As we celebrate the 2014 International Day for Biological Diversity, let us celebrate the spirit of islands and work together for a sustainable future – a future of life in harmony with nature, the future we want.
