

# Message from Director General of SPREP, Mr. David Sheppard on the International Day for Biological Diversity - 22 May, 2014

## Focus on Island Resilience through Natural Solutions

The global theme for this year's International Day for Biological Diversity is 'Island Biodiversity', recognising 2014 is the UN International Year of Small Island Developing States.

Island biodiversity is at the cornerstone of the work of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), and the 2014 theme is an opportunity to celebrate and pay special tribute not only to our unique Pacific biodiversity, but to the communities and many organisations that are working so hard to protect and manage our precious environment.

The Pacific countries are home to many unique plant and animal species, many of which are found nowhere else on the planet. However, Pacific island biodiversity is under intense pressure from pollution, loss of forests, invasive species and the overarching threat of climate change.

Further, the small size and isolated nature of our islands makes them extremely vulnerable to these threats. Many of our plant and animal species are critically important as a source of food and habitat for local communities and are often of high cultural value.

To align with International Day for Biological Diversity, SPREP is launching a two-year regional campaign called 'Natural Solutions for Island Resilience.' This campaign will celebrate and promote the role that ecosystems, including mangroves and forests, play in providing protection against sea level rise, extreme events such as storm surges, and protection of key ecosystem services such as water supply and control of flooding.

Well planned and executed ecosystem-based adaptation approaches will help to retain and enhance ecosystem services for island communities and help build island resilience into the future.

Island biodiversity and natural ecosystems play a critical role in sustaining livelihoods in the islands of the Pacific. Maintaining and strengthening these services of nature is imperative to our long term wellbeing.

This International Day for Biological Diversity, I urge everyone – wherever you may be – to spend a moment to contemplate all that nature does for you – and, what you can do for nature.