



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
BRAULIO F. DE SOUZA DIAS
on the occasion of the
INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY
17 OCTOBER 2015**

“Building a sustainable future: coming together to end poverty and discrimination”

Poverty eradication is one of the greatest global challenges facing us today. Fortunately, the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity can provide solutions to a range of societal challenges and is critical to achieving the newly adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — critical because 70 per cent of the world’s poor live in rural areas and depend directly on forests, waters, wetlands, fields and pastures for their survival and well-being. The urban poor also rely upon biodiversity, not only for the production of food and other necessary goods but also for ecosystem services, such as the maintenance of air and water quality and the breakdown of waste. Poverty can adversely impact the environment; the unsustainable use of wood and other resources, for example, may lead to deforestation. Biodiversity loss is a central element in this vicious circle.

Maintaining biodiversity, therefore, is related not only to direct conservation measures but also to pursuing poverty reduction and human development in ways that are sustainable. Biodiversity and sustainable development are inextricably linked. Many socioeconomic activities depend directly on biodiversity and contribute to poverty reduction. For example, protecting ecosystems and ensuring access to ecosystem services by poor and vulnerable groups are an essential part of poverty eradication. Biodiversity is also relevant for issues surrounding poverty, such as climate change. Reducing deforestation and forest degradation and enhancing carbon stocks in forests, drylands, rangelands and croplands is not only a cost-effective way to mitigate climate change but it also generates other social and economic benefits.

Biodiversity is directly linked to the top priority of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — poverty eradication. Target 15.9 calls for the “integration of biodiversity and ecosystem values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts.” The Sustainable Development Goals will provide a tremendous opportunity to mainstream biodiversity in key national priorities and, at the same time, help countries achieve the objectives of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets, which were agreed by 192 Governments in



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2010 and reaffirmed in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). The 2050 vision of the Strategic Plan, which is recognized as the United Nations-wide framework for action on biodiversity, can help shape a shared vision for action towards sustainable development and poverty eradication.

The importance of biodiversity for poverty eradication cannot be overstated. While the benefits of biodiversity are important to all people, some benefits are especially important to the poor and to vulnerable groups. The impact of environmental degradation is most severe for people living in poverty because they have few livelihood options to fall back on. Biodiversity within species, between species and of ecosystems is crucial to poverty alleviation and development. For example, genetic diversity helps farmers adapt to climate change by providing crop and livestock varieties that can cope with new conditions, such as rising temperatures, drought and flooding. Species diversity provides goods that can be used for subsistence, barter and trade, such as fruit and vegetables, medicinal plants and building materials. Ecosystem diversity supplies important ecosystem services, including carbon sequestration, plant pollination, watershed protection and erosion control and maintenance of soil fertility and pasture regeneration.

Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in a way that integrates the economic, social and environmental dimensions will be crucial in ensuring that the purpose of the new development agenda is realized. However, efforts to incorporate the protection of biodiversity into poverty reduction and development strategies will only be effective with the collaboration of all stakeholders. The sustainable use of biodiversity provides us with an important opportunity to help achieve broader social and economic goals and to address many of the current challenges and concerns for the future in proactive, coherent and cost-effective ways. Reducing poverty goes hand in hand with conserving biodiversity and using it in a sustainable manner. Let us work together to ensure that the future we want allows us all, especially the poorest on the planet, to live in harmony with nature.
