



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY,
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on the occasion of

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

5 June 2016

“Go Wild for Life”

The booming illegal trade in wildlife products contributes to the continued erosion of Earth’s precious biodiversity. The unsustainable rate of loss of animals robs us of our national heritage, and cultural ties, and can drive whole species to the edge of extinction. The illegal killing, trade and smuggling of wildlife and its products also undermines economies, the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, fuels organized crime and feeds corruption and insecurity throughout the world. That is why the theme of this year’s World Environment Day is crucial.

While huge efforts are being made to counter the illicit trade, including stronger policies, awareness campaigns, reformed governance approaches, and investments in community conservation and law enforcement, many species remain at risk and it will take a dedicated and sustained effort by each and every one of us to turn the tide.

But how do we accomplish this? For one, more people need to understand the damage this illicit trade is doing to our environment, including habitats and ecosystem services, livelihoods, communities and security. On the basis of this understanding, we can play a strong role, by being better informed and demanding accountability and transparency in commodity supply chains, only supporting biodiversity products that have come from sustainable sources that contribute to wildlife conservation and that ensure benefits to indigenous peoples and local communities.

The Convention on Biological Diversity has an important role in addressing wildlife issues – for instance, the importance of wildlife for livelihood needs and how benefits and vested management rights have motivated local engagement and sustainable wildlife management. The Convention is seeking to continue to heighten awareness on the multiple dimensions of sustainable wildlife management, including through



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the Collaborative Partnership on Wildlife Management. In this partnership, thirteen likeminded organizations, including the Secretariat of the Convention, have been working to generate a better understanding of the multiple benefits and values of wildlife, in order to safeguard biodiversity and sustainably use wildlife and its resources, strengthen the capacities and responsibilities of indigenous peoples and local communities, foster international cooperation, and inform policy and decision-making.

A significant approach for managing wildlife sustainably is to ensure the full engagement of indigenous peoples and local communities. Community-based approaches can minimize management costs, create opportunities for regulated uses of biodiversity, thus increasing sustainable use. It is also important to understand that such community-based approaches with a mixture of use, non-use and transfer rights, lead to more responsible use of biodiversity. Sustainability is generally enhanced if governments recognize and respect the "rights" or "stewardship" authority, responsibility and accountability to the people who use and manage the resource. To reinforce local rights or stewardship of biodiversity and responsibility for its conservation, resource users should participate in making decisions about the resource use and have the authority to carry out actions arising from those decisions. This must be supported through enabling policies that support community's abilities to exercise their options and opportunities to benefit from wildlife, and that build their motivation and capacity to steward wildlife. Fiscal, market and other livelihood incentive measures are additional elements for success.

At the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, held in 2012, the issue of traditional knowledge and the role of indigenous peoples and local communities under the CBD was discussed extensively. The programme of work on this issue was endorsed, and the plan of action on customary sustainable use of biological diversity that commits to, and calls for, concrete support for community-based sustainable practices in relation to biodiversity was adopted.

The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its twenty Aichi Biodiversity Targets has been adopted as a global framework to conserve, restore and sustainably use biodiversity and enhance its benefits for people. Wildlife conservation is at the heart of this Plan, which includes in its mission to, "take effective and urgent action to halt the loss of biodiversity". Target 12, for example, aims to prevent the extinction of threatened species by 2020 and improve the conservation status of those species most in decline.

Sustainable use of biodiversity cuts across several other targets, relevant to wildlife management and conservation. For example, Targets 5, 7, 9 and 13, which respectively, deal with: reducing the loss of natural habitats; sustainable forest management; measures to control and prevent invasive alien species; and strategies to safeguard genetic diversity of wild animals and plants, including other socio-economically and culturally valuable species. On the socio-economic front, Targets 2, 3, 4, 18, 19 and 20 respectively, deal with: cross-sectoral integration; incentives for sustainable use of biodiversity; sustainable productions and consumption; traditional knowledge; science and technology and financial resources. These are also essential components of sustainable wildlife management. Sustainable wildlife management could therefore be viewed broadly as a tool to promote species and ecosystem conservation, while fostering sustainable use of biodiversity and enhancing access to and benefits arising from wildlife to different stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and local communities.

Monitoring and curbing wildlife crimes inside and outside protected areas requires a coherent and cross-sectoral approach integrating wildlife values into other policies and plans to ensure consistencies in legal and policy frameworks. In revising their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans several

countries have been addressing a conservation related measures to manage their wildlife and its resources. These include measures coupled to community based approaches, such as the development of management plans and enforcement approaches, hunting regulations, licensing and permit systems for trade of species of wild flora and fauna, wildlife quota, environmental impact assessments, awareness raising, training measures and monitoring surveys. In addition, several measures have links to decisions taken by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and other international obligations, which also support of the objectives of the CBD.

Numerous challenges remain. These include rising profits from illicit activities, increased access to firearms by community members, increased poverty, loss of traditional governance systems, urbanization and changes to community value systems, among other land use and climate related threats. A growing human population, increased intensity of natural resource consumption, hunting pressures and the loss of natural habitat, both in space and quality, exacerbates the threat of loss to human wellbeing and biodiversity.

The limited distinction between illegal activities driven by large scale profits, versus those driven by poverty poses serious threats to local communities. The challenge for many countries is to counter the strong economic forces in the illegal trade that far outmatch incentives to conserve and sustainably use wildlife resource. The impact of declining wild populations of species that are important for subsistence use or income generation on livelihoods cannot be overlooked. In this context, empowering indigenous peoples and local communities and incentivizing them through co-management approaches, with equitable benefit sharing modalities and participation in decision making to sustainably manage wildlife, will be crucial.

The sheer breadth and scale of the benefits that wildlife provides is a compelling reason for maintaining wildlife populations and habitats in a productive and healthy state. We have a stronger economy, diverse food products and advancements in medical research all as a result of wildlife and natural ecosystems. It is imperative for ourselves and for future generations that we all take an active interest in their conservation and show zero-tolerance for the illegal trade in wildlife. Collectively we can bring about a sea-change in attitudes and policies toward both the trade and its products, and in turn help enhance rural livelihoods, and conserve biodiversity, while contributing to other significant sustainable development priorities.
