



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
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on the occasion of
INTERNATIONAL MOTHER EARTH DAY
22 April 2017**

“Environmental and Climate Literacy”

With the knowledge that comes from learning, citizens are able to make informed choices and act effectively. Today, on International Mother Earth Day, we are reminded that all of us need to become familiar with the issues around climate, biodiversity and our environment if we are to act effectively to sustain the living world of which we are a part and on which we all depend.

Literacy is about being competent and knowledgeable in a particular field so that we can follow ideas, debates and concepts with confidence and are able to contribute to a conversation, and understand how to act. Developing environmental and climate literacy around the world is about giving people the tools to understand their impact on, and relationship with climate, biodiversity and the environment around them.

Without such knowledge it can be overwhelming to know what steps can be taken to live sustainably. Without understanding the concepts that show how individuals, communities and societies interact with the biodiversity and environment that sustain them, a person may not be able or interested to take positive action for the environment. This requires giving people the vocabulary that enables them to understand the inextricable linkages between climate, biodiversity, society and our daily lives.

On the one hand, this involves bringing attention to disturbing facts, such that climate change is already driving significant loss of biodiversity, particularly in vulnerable ecosystems and, as a consequence, having severe impacts on peoples lives. On the other, it is about demonstrating that biodiversity and healthy ecosystems provide essential solutions in mitigating and adapting to climate change. The biodiversity of the world’s forests, wetlands and oceans contribute to long-term sequestration of carbon. Healthy and diverse ecosystems, reduce the impacts of extreme events produced by climate change such as droughts and floods. Biodiversity in food and agriculture provides resilience and protection to our food supplies in a changing climate.

Understanding these relationships brings understanding that each of us can and need to act to conserve, restore and ensure the sustainable use of biodiversity. Enabling people to develop such literacy helps empower them to act. It provides them with options and explains the benefits of sustainable choices.

For example, an understanding that reducing meat consumption has a positive benefit for the climate and biodiversity. The meat industry is responsible for approximately 20 per cent of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions. With the tripling of global meat consumption over the last four decades, and the result that 36 billions of tons of greenhouse gases are produced annually, this kind of knowledge can spur action.



With environmental literacy, the importance of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and achieving its Aichi Biodiversity Targets become clearer, as well as their contribution to keeping global warming to below 2°C above pre-industrial levels.

Today, on Mother Earth Day, let us encourage one another to learn to “read” and to understand the language of environment, climate and biodiversity. Then we can have the conversation that will take us all towards a sustainable future, a future of life in harmony with nature.
