



**Message from the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity on the International Day for Biological Diversity, 22 May 2012**

(Foreword to the booklet for the International Day for Biological Diversity – 22 May 2012)

The International Day for Biological Diversity, on 22 May, is a special occasion to reflect on the role of biodiversity for our lives, and for all things on our planet. In 2012, the theme for the day is Marine and Coastal Biodiversity.

The survival of marine and coastal ecosystems and biodiversity is essential to the nutritional, spiritual, societal and religious well-being of many coastal communities. But even for the many millions of people who may not think that they have any strong reliance on the ocean, marine ecosystems and wildlife provide all kinds of benefits.

Fisheries provide over 15 percent of the dietary intake of animal protein. Many coastal environments provide protection for those farther inland from the ravages of the sea. Substances derived from seaweeds stabilize and thicken creams, sauces, and pastes, are mixed into paint and used to make paper and even in skin lotion and toothpaste. Many marine plants and animals contain a multitude of substances being used, or identified as being of potential use, in medicines. Tiny marine plants called phytoplankton release half of all oxygen in the atmosphere.

The protection of marine ecosystems, therefore, is crucial to human well-being. As part of its Jakarta Mandate on marine and coastal biodiversity, the Convention on Biological Diversity is committed to a series of specific goals that will, among others, develop, encourage, enhance and implement wide-ranging integrated marine and coastal area management (IMCAM) and includes a broad suite of measures at all levels of society.

At the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Japan in 2010, governments agreed to a Global Strategic Plan for Biodiversity for the period of 2011-2020. This plan and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets, include several specific and relevant targets for marine and coastal areas. These address the sustainable harvest of fish and invertebrate stocks and aquatic plants, and the establishment of greater levels of protection for coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services. And by 2015, the



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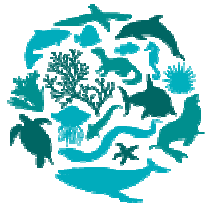


multiple anthropogenic pressures on coral reefs, and other vulnerable ecosystems impacted by climate change or ocean acidification are to be minimized.

There is no question that these are ambitious goals. But they are necessary, for time is short. Even as we are continuing to learn much about the environments and wildlife that inhabit our seas and coasts, the threats they face are clear, and the solutions are available.

The longer the delay, the more difficult solutions become to implement.

I encourage you to work to save biodiversity, not only on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May, but every day.



**22 May 2012**  
**INTERNATIONAL DAY**  
**FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**  
**Marine Biodiversity**