



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

## Message from the Director General of ICIMOD

<http://www.icimod.org/?q=7242>

Celebrating the International Day for Biological Diversity  
(Kathmandu, 22 May 2012)

The International Day for Biological Diversity, celebrated every year on 22 May, gives us an opportunity to appreciate the wide variety of life on earth. The day, established by the United Nations in 1993, is meant to reaffirm and strengthen our commitments and actions to protect, conserve, and sustainably use the biodiversity resources that are vital not just for our survival, but also for the wellbeing of the entire planet.

This year's theme is marine biodiversity - the diversity of life in seas, in oceans, and along coastlines. Although the theme may seem far from ICIMOD's mandate for mountain ecosystems, it is important to us as well. All biodiversity resources, from small microbes to big fish, animals, and trees, require water. Water is the basis of all life processes. ICIMOD, on the occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity, would like to highlight this link that binds mountain and marine ecosystems together: water.

When we refer to the Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) mountain systems - which store immense volumes of water - as the third pole or the water tower of Asia, we must acknowledge that oceans are also giant water reservoirs. These two geographically distinct and often distant entities are linked by hydrological processes such as evaporation, condensation, and river flow. It is important to be aware of this functional interconnectedness when thinking about effective water resource management in the mountains.

ICIMOD, in its effort to support water resource management in the HKH, is monitoring the volume of ice and snow in the HKH mountains, studying glaciers and the associated risks and hazards to people and the environment, promoting watershed management strategies that support both people and the environment, and promoting the ecosystem approach to sustain biodiversity services from forests, wetlands, and rangelands. On this day, ICIMOD would like to reiterate the significance of the biodiversity of the HKH as an integral part of the cultures and traditions of the people in the region. This is also an opportunity to highlight the challenges that biodiversity resources in the region continue to face from changes in land use and land cover, climate change, globalization and economic growth, and socioeconomic and demographic changes; similar stresses are also affecting marine biodiversity.

This year, as ICIMOD joins the world in celebrating a day to increase awareness of the significance of marine biodiversity, we urge the people in the HKH region to play their part in conserving the biodiversity in the mountains. This will help maintain water balance in ecosystems across lands and ultimately across oceans and seas, benefiting the array of life these diverse ecosystems sustain. ICIMOD calls upon everyone to green the mountains and, by doing so, to contribute also to greening the blue - that is to sustain life in oceans and seas.

We hope that this day will not only help increase awareness and understanding of biodiversity issues, but also motivate people across the Hindu Kush Himalayan region to consider biodiversity as a resource not just for people's livelihoods in the mountains and the surrounding area, but also as a resource that helps maintain water balance, binding mountains and oceans together.

With best wishes for a happy International Day for Biological Diversity.

David Molden  
Director General