



MESSAGE OF UNEP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MR. ACHIM STEINER ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY 2016

Biodiversity remains an uncommon term for many people, young and old. We are familiar with species that share our common spaces. We marvel at iconic species in other parts of the world and on our digital screens, such as elephants, tigers and pandas. Yet many of us are much less familiar with the sheer magnitude of diversity of plants and animals on this planet or the habitats that support them. Awareness about our current global challenge of biodiversity loss is also low – a challenge that will expand along with the sectors affecting biodiversity, such as agriculture or forestry.

At the same time, biodiversity provides us with the ecosystem services that are our foundations for life, everywhere on this planet, from fishermen depending on coastal waters, to farmers depending on crops, to tropical communities depending on forests.

For this reason, the theme for this year's International Day for Biological Diversity, held every year on May 22, is *Mainstreaming Biodiversity: Sustaining People and their Livelihoods*. Because we need to better integrate biodiversity into how we think and into everything that we do. And we all need to do more to prevent its loss.

At the global level, our international conventions and measures are making some progress in tackling the problem. For example, biodiversity is a key cross-cutting issue in Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

UNEP is contributing science, research and collective spaces for joint action. On May 22, we are hosting global celebrations to mark the International Biodiversity Day in Nairobi, Kenya. A few short days later, on May 25, UNEP, UNDP, UNODC and CITES are launching a global United Nations campaign against illegal trade in wildlife at the 2nd United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), also in Nairobi. UNEA represents a world Parliament for the environment, with the participation of most of the world's environment ministers. Its aim is to help set global policy on biodiversity and other critical environmental issues.

Reversing biodiversity loss, however, will require action by all sectors and stakeholders, including civil society, academia and business. Because we depend on biodiversity, and now biodiversity depends on us.
