



**Video message of the Executive Secretary
on the occasion of the International Day for Biodiversity
22 May 2017**

Video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MemfwY9yB0

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As the new Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, it is my great pleasure to share some thoughts with you for this year's International Day for Biodiversity. The theme this year is 'Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism'. We chose to look at tourism due to the positive, but also the potentially negative, impacts that tourism can have on biodiversity and ecosystems. The theme also links with the United Nations' International Year of Tourism for Sustainable Development.

Tourism represents one of the world's fastest growing industries. Over the last six years, 25 per cent more people traveled internationally. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, the tourism sector grew by 3.9 per cent in 2016. This means that 46 million more tourists traveled in 2016 than in 2015.

Tourism provides millions of jobs, and income for local communities. One in ten workers worldwide is employed in the tourism sector. Many tourist destinations are centered around places of natural beauty which are rich in biodiversity, such as mountains, beaches, forests, rivers and parks, where people can enjoy outdoor activities, or simply relax.

For example, about 40 million people are drawn every year to the Caribbean's beautiful beaches and marine life. This provides \$25 billion of revenue annually -- and nearly 50 per cent of the region's total income.

But as tourism grows, so does the risk of harming the environment. As tourism expands around the world, it will be important, therefore, that such developments do not undermine the very natural beauty that draws tourists there in the first place.

One successful tool that many countries have used is the creation of protected areas -- both on land and in the ocean. Protected areas, such as national parks, are popular tourist destinations that generate revenue and attract investment. For example, some 1.4 million people visit Australian parks annually to experience their natural landscapes and culture. This contributes \$23 billion to the economy.

Another growing business is that of ecotourism, which represents about five per cent of global tourism. Ecotourism promotes responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the



well-being of local people. Ecotourism can provide livelihoods for indigenous peoples and local communities, as they are often the stewards of biodiversity-rich areas.

Basecamp Explorer Kenya is one such example of an ecotourism project. The project enhances the welfare of the Maasai community and benefits local Maasai women, by giving them the opportunity to earn an income by selling handicrafts. In addition, a community conservancy provides income to over 500 Maasai landowners, and employs more than 300 local Maasai people.

Many conventional businesses, such as hotels and tourism operators, have also taken steps to insure that both their development and their day to day operations adhere to sustainable tourism principles and best practices.

And finally, many travellers are making choices on where to spend their hard-earned money by considering whether good practices are followed by the operators at their destinations.

The Secretariat of the Biodiversity Convention has been contributing to this work for many years. This includes working with governments on their tourism policies, with partners as they train protected area managers, as well as developing awareness-raising tools for tourists and tourism professionals.

Please join me, and let us all join together, in celebrating the International Day for Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism, thank you.

