



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY  
BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS  
on the occasion of the  
WORLD TOURISM DAY  
27 September 2013**

*“Tourism and Water: Protecting our Common Future”*

In spite of lingering economic challenges, tourism continues to be one of the world's fastest growing industries as well as a major source of foreign exchange and employment for many developing countries. Increasingly, the tourism industry is also focusing on its role as a steward of the natural environments that are one of its main assets; and as a unique awareness-raising and education tool for travellers and hosts alike. However, tourism is a double-edged activity. It has the potential to contribute in a positive manner to socio-economic development but, at the same time, fast and sometimes uncontrolled growth can be a major cause of biodiversity loss and the loss of local identity and traditional cultures.

Sustainable tourism is in everybody's interest. Given that a high percentage of tourism involves visits to naturally and culturally distinguished sites, generating large amounts of revenue, there are clearly major opportunities for investing in the maintenance and sustainable use of biological resources – particularly protected areas, where visitation and tourism concession revenues represent an essential complementary market-based financing mechanism. Along with the efforts to maximize benefits, efforts must be made to minimize the adverse impacts of the tourism industry on biological diversity.

This year, World Tourism Day focuses on the theme of water and tourism, in keeping with the global theme of International Water Cooperation already proposed for this year's International Day for Biological Diversity (see [www.cbd.int/idb/2013/](http://www.cbd.int/idb/2013/))

We know that tourism is a water-intensive activity with a large production of waste. The excessive extraction of groundwater by some tourism activities can ultimately result in loss of ecosystems and biological diversity. Moreover, the disposal of untreated effluents into surrounding rivers and seas can cause pollution and health problems. Disposal of solid waste produced by the tourism industry may also cause major environmental problems.

We also know that wetlands and rivers and lakes, and the biodiversity that resides in these, are important tourist attractions. Migratory animals and particularly bird species that reside in these ecosystems are the draw for many keen visitors, especially birders. Therefore, sustainable tourism that is sensitive to water issues, as well as to the preservation of these ecosystems, their flora and fauna, will ensure the continuity of this industry.



**Convention on  
Biological Diversity**

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In support of this, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) works with several partners. First and foremost, the Secretariat of the CBD is proud of its productive and ever closer cooperation with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), together with other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA) Secretariats, through the “*Destination Flyways: Developing a network of sustainable and resilient destinations for migratory waterbirds, local communities and tourists*” project. The project is an excellent example of addressing a number of issues elegantly in one project. By building the capacity of Parties to support their subnational and local authorities to manage wetlands and protected areas, the project involves World Heritage and Ramsar sites, used by migrating birds and other charismatic species, and seeks to promote sustainable use both from the point of view of water security/supply as well as for their tourism/visitation value.

This project demonstrates the overall global commitment to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, as well as support to, in particular, Aichi Target 11, on protected areas, and Aichi Target 14, which seeks to safeguard and restore ecosystems with an eye to ensuring ecosystem services crucial for livelihoods.

On this World Tourism Day, let us work together to protect biodiversity, build water security, and in so doing, promote sustainable tourism as a means for building wealth and decent livelihoods from nature throughout the world.

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