



Statement by Martha Rojas Urrego, Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands on International Day for Biological Diversity

20 May 2020



22 MAY 2020
INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
Our solutions are in nature

In light of the challenges we are facing from the current pandemic there is shared agreement that we need to step into ever-stronger collaboration and alignment in our work to build a sustainable future. While we need to focus on addressing human suffering as a matter of priority, we need to ensure that recovery efforts are sustainable and address future risks through a sound environmental response.

The rate of species extinction is accelerating, with one million species currently at risk of being lost completely within decades. This biodiversity loss denotes the unprecedented disappearance, degradation and unsustainable use of the ecosystems on which we - and all other living things - depend on to survive and thrive. Safeguarding biodiversity in all its forms is now as urgent as mitigating climate change. Without biodiversity, our ambitions for a prosperous and healthy world will not be realized.

In this context, wetland biodiversity is vital. Healthy and diverse ecosystems, especially wetlands, are our life support. Forty percent of the world's species live or breed in wetlands. Wetlands provide our water, food and underpin economies. Peatlands and mangroves are the most effective carbon sinks and therefore pivotal to mitigate the climate change. Wetlands offer powerful solutions for health, poverty and sustainable development as a whole.

Yet, astonishingly, wetlands are vanishing faster than any other ecosystem today. More than 35% have been lost in under 50 years. 25% of inland wetland-dependent species and 23% in coastal and marine wetlands are globally threatened. It is time to acknowledge wetlands' critical role for biodiversity - and the solutions they provide on climate change and sustainable development.

Year 2020 marks a watershed for action on biodiversity. Our past efforts have not been enough. The global post-2020 road map for biodiversity currently being negotiated must be the impetus for new thinking and unprecedented action.

Wetlands must be at the heart of national and global biodiversity discussions, decisions and actions in 2020 - and beyond.

The post-2020 framework represents a unique opportunity to approach biodiversity in a cooperative manner and mobilize the needed actions across all sectors to achieve the level of ambition needed to reverse the unprecedented loss of nature. The biodiversity-related conventions have a critical role to play, by contributing to the achievement of specific goals and targets within their mandates.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is actively engaged in the development of this roadmap, the Convention's strategic plan is fully aligned with the current biodiversity targets and the Sustainable Development Goals. Parties to the Convention are also currently working to ensure alignment with the new post-2020 framework.

Only by working together, can we make the best choices, make the right policy shifts and implement solutions at a scale proportional with the challenge in front of us. We can determine a positive future for life on earth. We have only one path before us - it is to work in unity and not lose the sight that people and nature are connected, and that our wellbeing and prosperity depends on this harmonious relationship.

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