Statement by Martha Rojas Urrego, Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands on World Wetlands Day 2 February 2020

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Wetland biodiversity matters for life to thrive

We are at a crossroads for life on earth.

An estimated one million species face extinction.

Their predicted disappearance is not a headline statistic with little relevance to our daily lives or our natural world.

Biodiversity loss is, in fact, a deeply personal matter for every individual.

Without biodiversity, our ambitions for a better world for all will not be realized.

Without biodiversity, we certainly face an uncertain future.

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.

Healthy and diverse ecosystems, especially wetlands, are our life support. They provide our water, food and underpin economies. They offer powerful solutions for health, poverty, climate change and sustainable development as a whole.

Safeguarding biodiversity in all its forms is now as urgent as tackling climate change.

2020 marks a watershed for action on biodiversity.

Our past efforts have not been enough. Decisions taken this year on a global road map for biodiversity must be the impetus for new thinking and unprecedented action.

But we cannot wait. Transformation can begin today, World Wetlands Day.

There must be no further loss of our wetlands – the most biodiverse and valuable ecosystem we have. And we must restore those we’ve lost.

Wetlands range from rivers, lakes, marshes and peatlands to saltwater mangroves, coral reefs and estuaries. It’s why 40% of the world’s species live or breed in wetlands.
The source of our clean water, the rice that feeds 3.5 billion people daily and much of our fish, wetlands provide one in seven people with a living.

Peatlands and mangroves are effective carbon sinks and therefore pivotal to tackling a climate emergency that is fueling biodiversity decline. Wetland services are priceless and irreplaceable.

Yet, astonishingly, wetlands are vanishing faster than any other ecosystem today.

More than 35% have been lost in under 50 years. 25% of wetland-dependent species, in inland wetlands, and 23% in coastal and marine wetlands are globally threatened.

It’s not too late to avert a mass extinction. And secure our future well-being.

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

Crucially, it is time to acknowledge wetlands’ critical role for biodiversity - and the solutions they provide on climate change and sustainable development. It is time to fulfil commitments to stop the loss of the world’s wetlands.

We can determine a positive future for life on earth. We have only one path before us. Let’s take it!

Visit the website: https://www.worldwetlandsday.org/

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