



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
OF THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS
on the occasion of the
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
9 August 2015**

“Post-2015 agenda: Ensuring indigenous peoples’ health and well-being”

More than two decades have passed since the nations of the world assembled in Rio de Janeiro and agreed to adopt a sustainable development agenda, promising to chart a development path that is equitable, environmentally just and economically rewarding for all. Part of that deal for sustainable development and a sustainable future was the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) as well as its sister Rio Conventions.

On 1 August 2015, United Nations Member States adopted an ambitious agenda to turn this promise into a reality in “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. This agenda together with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals will be formally adopted and launched at the special session of the United Nations General Assembly next September. We now stand at a crossroads looking for the right path towards the world we want. The challenges are huge. According to many studies conducted by research or policy bodies, including the fourth edition of the *Global Bioiversity Outlook*, countries are making some progress but still fall far short of what is required to sustain and enhance current levels of well-being. Negative environmental trends, dramatic loss of biodiversity, continue to be exacerbated by human activities — primarily led by a model of unsustainable and conspicuous consumption.

The unsustainable conversion of natural capital to support this growing consumer culture, while ignoring the ecological consequences for economies and other aspects of well-being, has become quite entrenched. In the light of the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, on this International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples, I wish to reflect upon its theme, *“Post-2015 agenda: Ensuring indigenous peoples’ health and well-being”*.

Nowhere are inequalities in humanity more evident than in human health and life expectancy. A comprehensive view of human health includes biological resources, knowledge and human resources, socio-cultural resources and related policy processes. Healthy ecosystems and biodiversity are sources of various services that nurture life and enhance human well-being. While the relevance of biodiversity to mainstream health is clear, as can be seen in the commercial development of biological and particularly



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genetic resources (often based on traditional knowledge) by pharmaceutical companies, the relevance of biodiversity in general to human health remains insufficiently understood. In this context, I wish to call everyone's attention to two recent reports which reviewed the many ways in which human health and well-being are dependent on the maintenance and restoration of healthy and biodiversity-rich ecosystems: the World Health Organization and CBD Secretariat's State of Knowledge Review entitled *Connecting Global Priorities: Biodiversity and Human Health*, which is available at: www.cbd.int/en/health/stateofknowledge, and the report of the Rockefeller Foundation–Lancet Commission on planetary health entitled “Safeguarding human health in the Anthropocene epoch”, available at: www.thelancet.com/commissions/planetary-health.

Ironically, many economically disadvantaged regions of the world are often rich in biological resources, resulting traditional medicines and related knowledge, but lack sufficient capital, capacity, public health-care infrastructure and personnel to break the cycle of poor health and poverty.

Given the recent attention to promoting physical and mental health and well-being, and to extending life expectancy in the post-2015 development agenda, there should be corresponding renewed interest in strengthening the potential of traditional medicine and traditional health practitioners to assist in achieving this. As the medical armamentarium for traditional knowledge primarily consists of biological resources, it is important to ensure both the respect for that knowledge as well as for the sustainable use of the resources on which it is based.

In relation to this, the preamble to the Convention on Biological Diversity acknowledges the close and traditional dependence of many indigenous peoples on biodiversity and the desirability of sharing equitably benefits arising from the use of their traditional knowledge. More recently, Parties to the Convention in 2010 adopted the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity, an international agreement which aims at sharing the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge in a fair and equitable way. The Protocol entered into force on 12 October 2014.

Additionally, in 2014, the Conference of the Parties adopted a global Plan of Action on Customary Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity and decided on advancing guidelines to protect and promote traditional knowledge, to assist governments, in the development of legislation or other mechanisms, including national action plans and *sui generis* systems, as appropriate, for effective implementation of Article 8(j) and related provisions (traditional knowledge and customary sustainable use), that recognize, safeguard and fully guarantee the rights of indigenous and local communities over their knowledge, innovations and practices, within the context of the Convention.

This overarching task includes developing guidelines to ensure that private and public institutions interested in using such traditional knowledge, obtain the prior informed consent or approval and involvement of indigenous peoples and local communities; guidelines to ensure that indigenous peoples and local communities obtain a fair and equitable share of benefits arising from the use and application of their knowledge, innovations and practices; and the development of standards and guidelines for the reporting and prevention of unlawful appropriation of traditional knowledge.

Parties to the Convention are requested to report on the implementation of the Plan of Action on Customary Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity at the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, in May 2016. Guidelines for the protection and promotion of traditional knowledge will be advanced at the ninth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity, being held in Montreal from 4 to 7 November 2015.

Indigenous peoples have enhanced participation mechanisms under the Convention, including a voluntary fund for the participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in meetings held under the

Convention. Indigenous representatives interested in participating in meetings held under the Convention are invited to consult the calendar of meetings at www.cbd.int/meetings/ and to complete an application form at www.cbd.int/traditional/fund.shtml. Please submit the completed application along with an official letter of nomination at least three months before the meetings you are applying for to secretariat@cbd.int.

In closing, I wish the indigenous peoples of the world lives filled with promise, opportunities and good health. The Convention on Biological Diversity remains your committed partner in advancing the world we want.
