

Dear Colleagues!

Dear Friends!

On behalf of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus and on my own behalf, let me welcome you to the Celebratory Workshop dedicated to the 25th Anniversary of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Convention on Biological Diversity was signed at the Rio “Earth Summit” in 1992 and entered into force on 29 December 1993. The Convention is the *1st Global Agreement* covering all biodiversity-related aspects, including:

- Conservation of biological diversity
- Sustainable use of its components
- The fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources.

With a view of drawing people's attention to the problem of irretrievable disappearance of many animal and plant species on Earth, the United Nations proclaimed **22 May** as the **International Day of Biological Diversity**. In 2018, the International Day of Biological Diversity is dedicated to the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The choice of this theme was due to the need to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of entry into force of the Convention on Biological Diversity and emphasize the progress made in achieving the Convention goals at the national and global levels over a quarter of a century.

The conservation of biological diversity in the Republic of Belarus and ensuring its sustainable use are one of the priority directions of the state environmental policy. The mechanisms to achieve the Convention goals are as follows:

- Maintaining the Red Book of the Republic of Belarus
- Transferring the habitats of wild animals and plants listed in the Red Book of the Republic of Belarus under the protection of land plots and/or water bodies' users, including typical and rare landscapes and biotopes
- Maintaining and developing the system of specially protected natural areas
- Marking the natural areas subject to special protection
- Controlling the spread of invasive species, and etc.

At the level of Head of State and the Government, strategic and policy documents have been adopted and budget financing is allocated to implement them. The Interdepartmental Council for the Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity functions as a platform for elaborating state decisions and discussing biodiversity-related issues and the representatives of state bodies and the public are involved.

However, despite the success achieved, the reduction of biological diversity continues and this can lead to disastrous consequences for human life and health. Therefore, it is necessary to do our utmost to stop this process.

In Belarus, the main instrument for achieving the Convention objectives is the *National Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity* developed in accordance with Aichi Targets and it aims to:

- Prevent the reduction in the number and diversity of wild animal and plant species and ecological systems
- Restore the number of rare and endangered species of wild animals and plants, their populations and genetic diversity
- Maintain the biological diversity in quantities that ensure its stable existence, which in turn serves as the basis for providing ecosystem services essential for human well-being.

With a view of achieving the goals set, it is necessary to reduce the ecosystems' loads, integrate sustainable use of biological resources into practice, introduce political decisions based on reliable scientific data and a prudent approach.

I am sure that we, by pooling our efforts, will be able to achieve impressive success!

Dear Workshop Participants, please accept my heartiest congratulations on the 25th Anniversary of the Convention on Biological Diversity and let the workshop event be rewarding for you all.

Thank you for your attention!!!

Deputy Minister

A.N. Korbut

**Non-binding translation*