



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS
on the occasion of
WORLD WATER DAY
22 MARCH 2016**

“Water and jobs”

Water is our most valuable natural asset and is at the core of sustainable development. Life could not exist on Earth without water. Water resources, and the range of services they provide, also underpin poverty eradication, economic growth and environmental sustainability. From food and energy security to human and environmental health, water contributes to improvements in social well-being and inclusive growth, affecting the livelihoods of billions.

Today, almost half of the world's workers, some 1.5 billion people, work in water related sectors. In fact, estimates suggest that 95 per cent of jobs in the agriculture sector, 60 per cent of jobs in the industry sector and 30 per cent of jobs in the services sector are dependent on water. Countries are also finding innovative ways to mix protection of the environment with job creation. Since its inception in 1995, South Africa's Working for Water program, the largest public-funded project to eradicate invasive alien plants and improve availability to water resources through enhanced ecosystem infrastructure in the world, has created over 180 000 full-time jobs over the past two decades.

The world's population is growing by about 80 million people a year, implying increased freshwater demand of about 64 billion cubic metres a year. Competition for water exists at all levels and is forecast to increase with demands for water in almost all countries. Because water directly influences our future, we need to change the way we assess, manage and use this resource in the face of ever-rising demand and the over exploitation of our groundwater reserves. Biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides lie at the heart of the global water cycle. Sustainable water management encompasses ecosystems protection and restoration, integrated water resources management as well as infrastructure development, operation and maintenance.

Access to a safe, reliable and affordable supply of water and adequate sanitation services, creates an enabling environment for long-term employment opportunities, as well as development and growth across different economic sectors. This is especially important when we factor in the important role water quality and water quantity play. For example, in the irrigated agriculture sector, which represents 70 per



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cent of freshwater withdrawals globally, a farmer's job depends on their ability to manage the available freshwater while at the same time facing challenges such as groundwater depletion, climate change and water scarcity. In the majority of Least Developed Countries, agriculture accounts for more than 90 per cent of freshwater withdrawals. Without improved efficiency measures, agricultural water consumption is expected to increase by about 20 per cent globally by 2050. In the forestry sector, it is often necessary to reduce deforestation to avoid water shortages or excess water flows with negative impacts on a region, resulting in lay-offs in the industry.

All freshwater ultimately depends on the continued healthy functioning of ecosystems, and recognizing the water cycle as a biophysical process is essential to achieving sustainable water management. As a way of ensuring sustainability, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity has been actively working to mainstream biodiversity and ecosystems into development. With regards to the newly adopted *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, where we are pleased to have contributed together with the Ramsar Convention to the recognition that the protection and restoration of ecosystems is an essential requirement to achieve its Goal 6 (*Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all*). This is reflected in Target 6.6 (*By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes*) which is derived originally from the Convention's Aichi Biodiversity Target 14. Meeting Goal 6 would go a long way towards achieving much of the 2030 Agenda.

Fundamental to human well-being, water resources can help create paid and decent jobs. But water is a finite and irreplaceable resource. It is only renewable if well managed. Managed efficiently and equitably, water can play a key enabling role in strengthening the resilience of social, economic and environmental systems in the light of rapid and unpredictable changes, and pave the way for broader social and economic advancements. Ensuring a clean, healthy and sustainable water supply is one of the highest of natural resources management issues and is critically important for ensuring human well-being and human livelihoods, and for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
