

**Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,
Director-General of UNESCO,
on the occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity**

22 May 2022

Each year, between the end of May and the beginning of June, three international days serve as a reminder of three vital and interdependent issues on which the future of our planet depends: biological diversity, the environment and the ocean.

And with each year comes an even greater need to understand the urgency of coming together and tackling the immense challenge of preserving nature and its living fabric and, through this, of preserving the beauty of our world.

We were informed of this urgency in 2019, when the report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services was presented at UNESCO. It was firmly reiterated in the sixth report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the last two parts of which were published early this year. The figures are clear: we have barely three years left to limit global warming to 1.5°C by the end of the century. Failure to do so would be a failure to preserve the habitability of our world and the diversity of species that inhabit it.

Our relationship with nature and with other living beings needs a radical rethink in order to address this issue - we need to design and create a truly shared world. This is the fundamental message of the International Day for Biological Diversity, a message that is strongly reflected in UNESCO's mandate and day-to-day work.

Through our biosphere reserves, geoparks and World Heritage sites, together covering 6% of the Earth's land mass, the equivalent of the surface of China, we have shown that it is possible to live in this world while also establishing a sustainable and harmonious relationship with nature.

It is essential that we continue and increase these efforts, which are at the heart of achieving the international community's shared target of preserving 30% of the planet in protected areas. But we must also extend our efforts beyond these protected areas. We must take inspiration from the solutions already implemented in these spaces to build genuinely sustainable development everywhere, with full respect for nature and for the living world.

These aims call for a new set of ethics for the living world, which will serve as a basis for lasting reconciliation between humans and all other species and forms of life. To this end, and in the context of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, which began last year, UNESCO brought together not only scientists and politicians, but also artists, indigenous and local communities and a wide range of other people in our societies in order to collaboratively design the new path that will lead humankind back towards nature.

On this International Day for Biological Diversity, we invite you to take this new path with us so as to protect life in all its richness.