

**Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,  
Director-General of UNESCO,  
on the occasion of World Environment Day**

**5 June 2022**

From mid-May to mid-June of each year, UNESCO celebrates three international and world days that are as central as they are complementary, as they allow us to reflect on all three of the systemic pillars of climate change: biological diversity, the environment and the ocean.

With each passing year, the environmental issue becomes yet more urgent: we have only one planet, and it is in danger. The alarming data published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in its Sixth Assessment Report leave no room for doubt in this regard.

We must therefore heed the call of the young people, citizens, associations and scientists urging us to take action, and radically change our relationship with the world and with living beings.

Making everyone aware of the urgency of this matter so as to collectively find solutions is precisely the aim of the World Environment Day celebrations we are holding today, under the theme “Only One Earth”, hosted by Sweden with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme.

These initiatives are a natural extension of the innovation, progress and change towards which UNESCO strives in all of its environmental action. This is the very action that leads us, for example, to protect outstanding areas, in UNESCO’s 218 natural World Heritage sites, or in the 177 UNESCO Global Geoparks – places that allow us to understand the history of humankind's relationship with their environment.

UNESCO’s environmental action can also be seen in the context of the Programme on Man and the Biosphere, which has been ongoing for over 50 years. In the more than 700 UNESCO biosphere reserves, a different relationship between humans and their environment is being created and put into practice on a daily basis – a relationship founded on ethics and respect, with a great emphasis on indigenous and local knowledge.

We want to make this wealth of experience available to the entire world between now and 2030, during which time two major themes will guide and drive the United Nations' efforts in environmental matters.

UNESCO is closely involved with the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, aiming to expand and extend the avenues that are being explored in our biosphere reserves.

Our Organization also plays a central role in the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

UNESCO and its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission will make the most of this Decade to gain a better understanding of the great climate regulator and significant reservoir of biodiversity that is the ocean; by doing so, we will be better able to protect it.

We are, however, well aware that in the long term, the fight against climate change will also, and above all, be won in our collective consciousness. This is why UNESCO has committed to putting the environment at the heart of the school curricula of its Member States by 2025.

This month, as we celebrate biological diversity, the environment and the ocean, let us hope that 2022 will be a pivotal year; one that will finally allow us to extend to our planet the concept of ubuntu: “I am because you are”.