

Declaration on biodiversity information for sustainable development in Africa

On this International Day for Biological Diversity in 2015, we the participants of the conference, Africa Rising: Mobilising Biodiversity Data for Sustainable Development, held in Cape Town, South Africa, from 19 to 22 May 2015, agree that the quality of decision-making relies on the quality of information considered and hereby declare our vision for 2030 as a world in which biodiversity information contributes fully to sustainable development in Africa. Specifically, we desire that:

- Governments subscribe to the principle of free and open access to biodiversity information;
- Policymakers are adequately informed to respond effectively to global environmental change;
- Countries are sufficiently capacitated to measure and track the status and trends of biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- Biodiversity considerations are mainstreamed into all planning decisions; and
- All sectors of society can contribute towards and benefit from a global pool of biodiversity knowledge derived from Earth observations.

Biodiversity is the bedrock of sustainable development. In Africa, biodiversity makes a profound contribution to human wellbeing and security, underpinning vital sectors including agriculture, fisheries, forestry, water, public health, tourism and energy. Next to our people, biodiversity is our greatest asset. If managed wisely, it could bring about a surge in green economic opportunities, strengthening the resilience of livelihoods and catalysing sustainable development across the continent.

Data is the currency of the information age. The global data revolution presents new opportunities for evidence-based decision-making, active citizenship, technology transfer, education and research.

Critical data-deficits impair decision-making. Achieving sustainable development in Africa will require relevant reliable biodiversity information as well as tailored products and services to be made available to researchers, natural resource managers and policymakers in consumable forms.

Regional cooperation can spur coordinated action. By working together we can pool resources, share expertise, enhance capacity and efficiently progress towards the following goals:

- Evidence-based decision-making supported by coordinated science-policy dialogue within and outside the biodiversity sector;
- Capacity building across the information value chain to empower stakeholders to produce and make accessible accurate biodiversity data for sustainable development;
- Mobilize and make openly accessible relevant biodiversity data to support education, research and decision-making for sustainable development;
- Leverage sustained funding.

Africa could lead the world in biodiversity information management. Our continent is bursting with human ingenuity and brimming with natural resource wealth. Let us unlock the potential of biodiversity information to help secure a sustainable future for all. It is our responsibility.