

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Botanists of the twenty-first century: Roles, challenges and opportunities

UNESCO HQs and National Museum of Natural History
Paris, France
from 22 to 25 September 2014

FINAL DECLARATION



1. **We, the 300 participants from 60 countries** who have attended the International Conference “Botanists of the twenty-first century: Roles, challenges and opportunities” at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris,
2. **Recalling** the role of plants in creating a habitable biosphere and the absolute dependence of humanity on plants,
3. **Mindful** of the importance of plant diversity for the maintenance of ecosystem services, functioning and resilience, which are crucial to human well-being, health, food security, livelihoods, sustainable development and poverty reduction,
4. **Recognizing** that botany and the plant sciences more broadly are central to understanding and addressing many issues related to sustainable development,
5. **Concerned** that tens of thousands of plant species face extinction in the wild during the twenty-first century as a result of habitat loss and degradation, climate change and multiple other factors, threatening their future basis as a source of genetic resources to meet the needs of present and future generations, and to continue to provide humanity with a wide range of ecosystem services,
6. **Mindful** of the human role in the cause and solution to these factors of extinction,
7. **Conscious** also of the key roles botanists and plant diversity must play in defining and achieving the Post-2015 Development Agenda and its eventual goals,
8. **Aware** that the UN system-wide Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (SPB) and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets provide a common strategy framework of activity and reference for the botanical community,
9. **Welcoming** the current implementation of international initiatives to document and safeguard plant diversity, most notably the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC) and the Global Taxonomy Initiative, agreed under the auspices of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and implemented within the broader context of the SPB,
10. **Acknowledging** the need, in a world undergoing profound changes, and in particular the decline of plant diversity, for botanists to expand their endeavours beyond pure science, including by increasing their engagement with the public, the private sector and in policy processes,
11. **Having** assessed the status of current knowledge and expertise related to plants, including scientific as well as indigenous and local knowledge, and having considered the current contribution of men and women botanists to meeting economic, environmental and educational and social challenges of the twenty-first century, and
12. **Recognizing** the magnitude and clear importance of a task that represents nothing less than a moral imperative for humanity,

Agree to the following

We call on the community of botanists and plant scientists in general, and on the organizations for which they work :

13. **to increase** their efforts to achieve the objectives and targets of the GSPC, especially those primarily undertaken by botanists, including the successful completion of a World Flora Online by 2020 to provide an essential baseline of knowledge about plants of the world,
14. **to ensure** that botany, which has successfully become an international, multidisciplinary, intergenerational and participative science that engages citizen scientists and local communities, is strengthened and expanded so that the unique contributions of the discipline will continue to support sustainability in coming centuries,
15. **to recognize** that the twenty-first century botanist needs to broaden their skills and strengthen partnership in conservation, protected area management, horticulture, restoration ecology, forestry, agriculture, education, advocacy, entrepreneurship, social sciences and communication,
16. **to further recognize** that in order to address the urgent need for reliable and rapidly-accessible free access information and knowledge on plant diversity and uses, new tools such as molecular methodologies (including DNA barcoding), remote sensing, and information and communication technologies (including internet facilities) have proven to be an indispensable complement to methods and disciplines of well-established value, such as taxonomy, anatomy, ecology, ethnobotany, phylogeny and genetics, inter alia,
17. **to continue** collaborating with indigenous peoples and local communities and participating in relevant botany programmes to conserve and valorise indigenous, traditional and local knowledge for the benefit of humanity in full compliance with the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS),
18. **to contribute** to the success of the SPB and to the Post-2015 Development Agenda and its planned Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular to planned SDGs on food security and sustainable agriculture; health; energy; cities; global climate change; the ocean; and ecosystems, forests, and biodiversity, recognizing the essential contributions of botany to their achievement, and
19. In this context we call upon botanists, plant scientists and other relevant experts to participate in and contribute to current and future assessments being undertaken by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, and we further call upon the institutions and organizations for which these experts work to encourage, facilitate and promote this process.

Furthermore, we call upon governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, academia, educational and research institutions, civil society, the private sector, indigenous peoples and local communities:

20. **to mainstream** the sustainable use of plant resources and plant conservation into national and local sustainable development strategies and plans,
21. **to make** available the necessary resources to maintain and strengthen botanical gardens, natural history museums, plant collections (herbaria, xylaria, etc.) and other relevant bodies and institutions, to ensure that they can continue as important centres for scientific research, knowledge and education and as vital repositories and sources of information for present day and future needs in achieving sustainability,

22. **to encourage** without impediment the continued use, storage and sharing of plants and plant materials, including varieties held by indigenous peoples and local communities, in compliance with all applicable international, regional, national and local laws and regulations and with FPIC and following ABS principles,
23. **to support** technically and financially, the development and implementation of botany-related programmes to build and strengthen institutional and individual capacity, particularly to meet needs for research and education on plant diversity in developing and least developed countries that are rich in biodiversity,
24. **to invite** the private and development sectors to increase its support for capacity building programmes in botany at all educational levels in developing and least developed countries in coordination with UNESCO and in the context of multinational scientific, education and development assistance programmes and activities,
25. **to further invite** the private sector to recognize the mutual benefits to be gained by collaboration with botanists, particularly in view of ensuring the sustainability of new ventures and promotion of the green economy,
26. **to strongly encourage** building bridges between botanists and society, through a wide range of organisations, institutions and initiatives, including Botanic Gardens Conservation International, and biosphere reserves under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme; natural, cultural and mixed sites under the World Heritage Convention; and other nationally and internationally-recognized protected areas for, *inter alia*, *in* and *ex situ* plant conservation and restoration,
27. **to invite** UNESCO, other international organisations, and the broader botanical and conservation communities to help organise and host future meetings to produce and share knowledge relevant to plant diversity conservation and sustainable use, including on such subjects as ecological restoration and on the conservation of indigenous and local knowledge about plants and their uses, and
28. **to invite** the CBD and UNESCO in collaboration with relevant biodiversity-related conventions and UN agencies to launch a campaign in 2016 on plant diversity and botany in the twenty-first century with a view for CBD to submit a proposal to the United Nations General Assembly to declare 2017 as the "International Year of Plants for Life" and for UNESCO to declare the theme of 2017 World Science Day as "Botany and the plant sciences for sustainable development".

Paris, 24th September 2014

The Participants