

## Media Release

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### ***Wetlands Are Critical to the Success of the SDGs***

**Bonn (IPBES News)** – Marshes, bogs, swamps and fens are not often the focus of positive publicity, but healthy wetlands are absolutely critical to the success of the Sustainable Development Goals. This was the message for World Wetlands Day, being celebrated on Thursday, from the global body tasked by Governments with collecting the best science to help make better decisions about nature.

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is coordinating the production of an assessment by more than 90 experts, from 43 countries, of available scientific knowledge on land degradation and restoration around the world.

Dr. Luca Montanarella, Co-Chair of this multi-year IPBES assessment, said: “Wetlands are a major pool of biodiversity and play a vital role for water and our climate – which makes them ‘ground-zero’ for delivery on the SDGs. As the risks of extreme weather events and natural disasters, like floods and droughts, continue to rise, the buffering role of wetlands becomes even more important for the safety and wellbeing of people – especially in our poorest and most vulnerable communities. Wetlands also help to regulate levels of greenhouse gases through the storage of organic carbon as undecomposed plant material.”

“One of the key findings of the landmark 2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment was that wetlands were being degraded and lost more rapidly than any other kind of ecosystem,” said Dr. Anne Larigauderie, Executive Secretary of IPBES. “That is one reason why the IPBES assessment on land degradation, due to be finalized early next year, is so important. It will be the first-ever comprehensive scientific assessment of ongoing land degradation and restoration processes – looking at all continents and feeding into our regional and global assessments that are also currently underway.”

“Among the most dramatic land degradation processes today are the extensive deforestation and drainage activities in South-East Asia – driven by the rapid expansion of monocultures like palm oil plantations,” said Dr. Montanarella. These are the kinds of trends that will be presented in the IPBES assessment, along with the range of direct policy responses that can mitigate or even reverse degradation – such as re-wetting of drained wetlands. Even more important are the indirect responses such as regulations and alternative economic land uses.”

“Wetlands for Disaster Risk Reduction is the theme of World Wetlands Day this year,” said Dr. Larigauderie. “This is a timely reminder of how closely the interests of people and nature are intertwined – and why it is so important for Governments, scientists, businesses and local communities to follow and contribute their expertise to our assessment on land degradation and restoration – especially in the external review phase of the report which will begin on 1 May this year. By generating the widest-possible expert dialogue about the impacts of land degradation on vital ecosystems, like wetlands, we will make a key contribution to the successes of the SDGs.”

**Note to Editors:**

IPBES is an independent intergovernmental body, established by member States in 2012. It provides policymakers with objective scientific assessments about the state of knowledge regarding the planet’s biodiversity, ecosystems and the benefits they provide to people, as well as the tools and methods to protect and sustainably use these vital natural assets. To some extent IPBES does for biodiversity what the IPCC does for climate change. For more information about IPBES and its assessments visit [www.ipbes.net](http://www.ipbes.net)

Thursday, 2 February is World Wetlands Day. For more information, visit: <http://www.worldwetlandsday.org/>

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