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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,

Director-General of UNESCO

**on the occasion of the International Day for the Conservation of the
Mangrove Ecosystem**

26 July 2019

Mangroves are versatile ecosystems, located in tropical estuaries, providing habitats to numerous amphibious and marine species, serving essential functions to surrounding human communities, and preserving the environment and biodiversity.

They contribute to the stability of coastlines, protecting coral reefs, and preventing erosion from waves and storms. Their complex root systems trap sediments, slow water flow, and store coastal blue carbon from the atmosphere and ocean, mitigating the effects of climate change and extreme weather events. These intricate and vital ecological sites present fitting conditions to promote and pursue education for climate and biodiversity action, in line with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

UNESCO is actively engaged in the conservation of mangroves, while also advancing sustainable development in the communities that depend on them. Recognition of mangrove sites such as La Hotte Biosphere Reserve in Haiti, and the Langkawi UNESCO Global Geopark in Malaysia, as well as the World Heritage site Sundarbans in the Ganges delta, contributes to conservation efforts of these biodiversity hotspots and enables support and protection for the surrounding communities.

Protecting mangrove forests requires innovative scientific solutions and a multidisciplinary approach, encompassing water and environmental sciences, geosciences, oceanography and Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems, all present in UNESCO.

Gender equity is also key to the sustainability of mangrove ecosystems. Indeed, women play a fundamental role in contributing to local and community development,

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in the construction and defence of territories, and in the protection and transmission of knowledge essential to mitigate the loss of mangroves. Integrating a gender-responsive approach into our collective conservation efforts is key to mangrove restoration.

Finally, mangroves also carry significant social value in many regions of the world. They provide a space for the practice of the cultures and traditions of coastal peoples. They are therefore excellent sites for celebrating the International Year of Indigenous Languages (2019) and the Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024).

The International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem signifies the value of Mangroves as the foundation for coastal life and advocates for support and awareness of the communities dependent on their conservation. The Day also serves as an opportunity to reflect on our personal commitment to climate and biodiversity conservation, and promotes global action by all for a sustainable future.