



UN World Wildlife Day 2019

Concept Note

In the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations, the world’s governments recognized “that social and economic development depends on the sustainable management of our planet’s natural resources” and stated their determination to “conserve and sustainably use oceans and seas”. This was further captured in goal 14 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG14) which aims to to “conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”.

While the UN Ocean Conference and World Oceans Day provide space for governments, the UN system and stakeholders to mobilize action for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources in general, there is a great opportunity in doing the same in a more focused manner for marine wildlife through the observance of UN World Wildlife Day. The theme of World Wildlife Day 2019 is: “Life Below Water: For people and planet” which closely aligns with SDG 14, with a specific focus on the conservation and sustainable use of marine wildlife.

The ocean contains nearly 200,000 identified species, but actual numbers may be in the millions. Over three billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity for their livelihoods. Marine wildlife has sustained human civilization and development for millennia, from providing food and nourishment, to material for handicraft and construction. It has also enriched our lives culturally, spiritually, and recreationally in different ways.

The capacity of life below water to provide these services is severely impacted, as our planet’s oceans and the species that live within it are under assault from an onslaught of threats. These include the most significant and direct threat of overexploitation particularly unsustainable fishing and other marine species extraction practices but also important threats such as climate change, marine pollution and habitat destruction. These threats have a strong impact on the lives and livelihoods of those who depend on marine ecosystem services, particularly women and men in coastal communities.

The sustainable use of marine species will be the focus of World Wildlife Day 2019 and the main topic for discussions at various events around the world.

The Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and other UN system organizations, Member States and civil society, are unrolling a series of global and national events and social media activities around World Wildlife Day in 2019, including a high-level event in New York at the United Nations Headquarters on 1 March (Friday) at 10 am in Trusteeship Council Chamber.

The CITES Secretariat and UNDP will work together to develop promotional materials for WWD2019 and update the WWD website to be used by any interested parties.

The CITES Secretariat and UNDP are also collaborating with the Jackson Hole WILD to organize a World Wildlife Day Living Oceans Film Showcase to galvanize the power of media and catalyze change for marine species conservation. The winning films will be highlighted during the WWD event at UN Headquarters.