



World Migratory Bird Day 2013

“Networking for migratory birds”

Statement from Ms. Christiana Figueres

Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)



Hailing from Costa Rica, the winter home of more than 300 species of birds from North America, I understand the importance of migratory birds and protecting their habitat. These birds, although only part-time residents, play a key role in the biodiversity that constitutes a healthy ecosystem. Interconnected and thriving natural systems serve as a foundation for all life on earth, including our own, and bird migration is one of many ways the natural systems of our planet connect and reconnect.

One of the truths about climate change is that no one species or habitat is immune from its effects. Therefore, the effort to meet the climate challenge and the effort to protect bird migration are deeply intertwined. Altered timeframes for migration (as temperatures rise), changed flight patterns (due to changing ecosystems) and reduced bird populations (due to extreme weather and drought) all provide ample evidence that the changing climate is already affecting migratory birds.

Today we stand at a crossroads in human development, where we choose how to develop from here. This choice has profound and long-lasting effects on the natural environment and how humanity interacts with that environment. We must choose low-carbon development, because it protects the future of humanity, the future of animal species on (or above!) land and in the seas, and the future of migratory birds.

It is in our best interest to protect birds and their habitats and ensure high levels of biodiversity. By preserving diverse ecosystems, we gain advantages in medicine production, we improve crop hardiness and resistance to disease, and we recycle nutrients

in the soil and purify our water. We boost the trend of tourists traveling to birdwatch, to see wild places of natural beauty and enjoy pristine outdoor experiences. And, we can more easily protect these resources if we strengthen our response to climate change.

On World Migratory Bird Day 2013, I gladly join the effort to raise awareness and protect migratory birds and their habitats. This effort is complementary and integral to responding to climate change. I hope you join me in working towards sustainable, low-carbon development that protects our natural habitats and encourages harmonious human interaction with our surrounding environments.

Ms. Christiana Figueres

Executive Secretary of the
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)