



For Immediate Release

CANARI joins global call for stronger action to protect biodiversity

Port of Spain, September 29, 2020 – The [United Nations Summit on Biodiversity](#) is being held on September 30, 2020 under the theme of ‘Urgent action on biodiversity for sustainable development’ and will be attended by Heads of State and Government. The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) commends the leadership shown by Belize and is calling on other Caribbean Governments to galvanise political commitment to invest in the health of our planet as an investment in our own future. The Caribbean is one of the 36 biodiversity hotspots in the world and nature continues to be key for the region’s approximately 44 million people.

Belize is the only country from the region which has so far signed the global ‘[Leaders Pledge for Nature](#)’ where 70 governments have committed to reversing biodiversity loss by 2030. This sends a united signal to step up global ambition and encourages others to match their collective ambition for nature, climate and people with the scale of the crisis at hand. “Issues such as food, water, energy security and human health and welfare are inextricably linked to biodiversity,” noted His Excellency Mr Wilfred Elrington, Attorney General and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belize. “The biodiversity loss projected to occur warns of an impending planetary emergency which demands urgent action.”

CANARI’s Executive Director, Nicole Leotaud, said, “Protecting nature must be at the heart of Caribbean COVID-19 recovery and climate resilience and we need strong leadership to prioritise biodiversity conservation as a central pillar in Caribbean development. There is strong commitment and action by civil society and local communities to protect biodiversity and nature-based livelihoods, but more needs to be done at the political level.”

CANARI recently provided technical support to the CARICOM Secretariat and the OECS Commission to develop regional and sub-regional biodiversity strategies which recognise that the Caribbean’s rich biodiversity and natural heritage must be conserved and used sustainably, to support economic development and sustainable livelihoods for the well-being and benefit of Caribbean people. Adoption and implementation of these strategies will support a whole-of-society approach in the Caribbean to addressing the global biodiversity crisis.

CANARI has been working over the past 30 years to enhance stewardship of natural resources. Over the past five years alone, CANARI worked with Caribbean stakeholders to implement 39 projects worth over US\$7.3 million in more than 20 countries and territories across the Caribbean. CANARI’s work has ranged from facilitating participatory development of national and sectoral policies and plans, to supporting on the ground conservation by civil society and community groups, and nature-based community microenterprises.

The United Nations Summit on Biodiversity focuses on raising ambition for the new global biodiversity framework being developed, recognising the very disappointing progress made at the end of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity 2011-2020. The recently published [Global Biodiversity Outlook 5](#) noted that the world has failed to meet a single target to stem the continuing destruction of life-sustaining ecosystems and biodiversity. Six of the 20 targets have been partially achieved, with progress being made, for example, in developing policies to support biodiversity conservation, designating protected areas and eradicating invasive alien species from islands. However, the report notes that areas “relating to the drivers of biodiversity loss, and to the current state of biodiversity itself, mostly show significantly worsening trends.” There are an estimated one million threatened species, and on average species continue to move closer to extinction. Most ecosystem services (nature’s contribution to people) are in decline.

This gloomy picture is mirrored in the Caribbean where biodiversity is the foundation of key economic sectors such as tourism, supports agriculture and fisheries for food security, facilitates water security, builds resilience to the impacts of climate change and storms, and supports livelihoods of the poor and vulnerable.

Worryingly, the report notes that, “The projected decline in biodiversity will affect all people, but it will have a particularly detrimental effect on indigenous peoples and local communities, and the world’s poor and vulnerable, given their reliance on biodiversity for their wellbeing.”

CANARI reaffirms its commitment to supporting vulnerable local communities in the Caribbean who depend on nature for their livelihoods and calls on political leaders to increase their ambition to address the biodiversity crisis, alongside the climate and COVID-19 crises, to protect these communities who are most at risk.

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About CANARI: The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) is a regional technical non-profit institute which has been working across the islands of the Caribbean for 30 years. Our mission is to promote and facilitate stakeholder participation in the stewardship of natural resources in the Caribbean. Our work focuses on Equity, Ecosystems and Biodiversity, Resilience, and Participatory Governance. See here for more information on CANARI: <http://www.canari.org/>.

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