

UN marks first ever Day of the Tropics with focus on region's vulnerability

29 June 2017 – The majority of the world's most vulnerable communities are in the Tropics, and will be most affected by environmental threats, the United Nations today said, marking the first ever observance of the International Day of the Tropics.

[“Loss of biodiversity is greater](#) in the Tropics than in the rest of the world,” according to the Day's official website, which noted that the region hosts some 80 per cent of the world's biodiversity and much of its language and cultural diversity.

The UN has projected that by 2050, the region will host most of the world's people and two-thirds of its children.

The Day “celebrates the extraordinary diversity of the tropics while highlighting unique challenges and opportunities nations of the Tropics face,” according to the website.

For example, nearly 95 per cent of the world's mangrove forests by area are in the Tropics.

Mangroves – ecosystems located on the interface of land and sea in tropical regions – can play an important role in reducing vulnerability to natural hazards and increasing resilience to climate change impacts, by acting as a form of natural coastal defence.

However, mangroves are disappearing three to five times faster than overall global forest losses, with serious ecological and socio-economic impacts, according to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)).

Today's focus on the Tropics is meant to provide “an opportunity to take stock of progress across the Tropics, to share tropical stories and expertise and to acknowledge the diversity and potential of the region,” according to the Day's website.

Thousands of people have tweeted photos and shared stories under the official hashtags of [#WeAreTheTropics](#) and [#TropicsDay](#).

The Tropics stretch from the tropic of Cancer – which runs north of the Equator through Mexico, northern Africa and the Middle East, South and South-East Asia – to the circle of latitude known as the tropic of Capricorn, which runs through South America, the southern part of Africa and Australia.

One of the key characteristics of the region is the prevalence of rain – which is highly affected by climate change.

The Tropics have just over half of the world's renewable water resources,

roughly 54 per cent, the UN said, yet almost half their population is considered vulnerable to water stress.