



29 June 2017 - The tropics account for [40%](#) of the total land area of the world, are host to [80% of the world's biodiversity](#) and predicted to be the home of more than 50% of the global population by 2050. Today we celebrate the [International Day of the Tropics](#), and highlight both the great challenges and the immense potential of this region.

The Tropics are characterized by having a warm climate with largely unchanging temperatures regardless of what season it is, which makes it an ideal place for a range of plant and animal species. Unfortunately, the high level of biodiversity is accompanied by an equally high proportion of endangered lifeforms, including coral reefs, which 275 million people directly depend on for their livelihoods and sustenance. UNESCO [recently warned](#) that World Heritage coral reefs are likely to disappear by 2100 unless CO2 emissions are drastically reduced. Such a disaster could be detrimental to the millions of people depending on them.

The region is already host to [two-thirds of the world's poorest people](#) and has the highest rates of people living in slum areas in the world. Consistent with the higher levels of

poverty, more people experience undernourishment in the Tropics than in the rest of the world.

The region also faces water scarcity, in spite of the fact that 54% of all renewable water sources are found in this region. The World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) estimates that more than 660 million people globally continue to drink water from “unimproved” sources, such as surface water, which puts them at risk of diseases.



However, there is also a sunny side to the Tropics. For example, in April 2017 WHO [announced](#) that the progress against [neglected tropical diseases](#) (NTDs) has been [unprecedented](#). In 2015 alone 1 billion people received treatment for these diseases. This is a result of a partnership launched in 2007 against NTDs which resulted in a variety of local and international partners working alongside ministries of health to combat the diseases.

“WHO has observed record-breaking progress towards bringing ancient scourges like sleeping sickness and elephantiasis to their knees,” [said](#) WHO Director-General, Dr. Margaret Chan. “Over the past 10 years, millions of people have been rescued from disability and poverty, thanks to one of the most effective global partnerships in modern public health”.

Dr. Dirk Engels, Director of the Department of Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases, highlighted the importance of seeing the fight against NTDs in a greater context and [underlined](#) that “further gains in the fight against neglected tropical diseases will depend on wider progress towards [the Sustainable Development Goals](#).” Among others, meeting the global standards for water and sanitation will be key to solving health problems, and this can in turn lift people out of poverty. Luckily, this progress is already well underway.

The tropical world’s economy is [growing 20% faster](#) than the rest of the world, and many tropical nations are important contributors to world trade, politics and innovation.

[Advances in technology](#) are providing a platform for expanding business opportunities, enhancing prospects to reduce poverty, and improving education and health outcomes. Incomes are higher, infrastructure is more accessible and life expectancy is the highest it has ever been, and this is only the tip of the iceberg.

The Tropics is a region with immense potential. Join us today to celebrate and support a region that is taking steps towards a brighter tomorrow. [#WeAreTheTropics](#) [#TropicsDay](#)

Additional links:

More information:

[State of the Tropics Report](#)

[WHO's Factsheets on Neglected Tropical Diseases](#)

Relevant UNRIC Backgrounders:

[Biodiversity](#)

[Climate Change](#)

[Oceans](#)

[Sustainable Development Goals](#)