

DRAFT Statement – Outcomes of the 9<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Education in Botanic Gardens

**The international network of botanic garden educators commits to building new bridges to mobilize community stewardship of global plant diversity and environmental sustainability**

More than 300 botanic garden educators from 43 countries convened at the Missouri Botanical Garden, St. Louis, Missouri from April 26-May 1, 2015 for the 9<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Education in Botanic Gardens, jointly hosted by and the Missouri Botanical Garden and Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI), the largest plant conservation network in the world.

This Congress, organized by BGCI every three years in different locations throughout the globe, provides an international forum for botanic garden educators worldwide to share experiences, set priorities and targets and review current trends and developments in environmental education. With the overarching theme of “Biodiversity for a Better World,” the 2015 congress challenged its participants to share successes and lessons, re-examine strategies, future directions and practices for broadening and deepening community impact, and to think critically about evaluating progress in raising awareness about the value of plants to humanity and the threats they face.

The Congress reviewed how best to motivate, equip, and support all citizens to take an increasingly active role in the environmental stewardship of their local communities. This was a unifying theme throughout the week’s series of keynote presentations, panel discussions, workshops, and other events.

The 2015 congress presented an important opportunity for this global network of educators to commit their collective expertise toward achieving a more sustainable future. Recognizing that botanic gardens worldwide receive one quarter of a billion visitors each year, the participants highlighted the need to:

1. Mobilize and support a growing number of audiences to become citizen scientists and environmental stewards conserving plants worldwide and in their own communities.
2. Develop the social role of botanic gardens by connecting with all sectors of society and engaging them beyond the gardens walls especially those that are currently marginalized. Botanic gardens will strive to help these communities develop meaningful relationships with nature, in order to establish a greater quality of life and more sustainable livelihoods;
3. Pursue a shared, multidisciplinary research and evaluation agenda and establish agreed measurable targets that contribute to and advance the field of conservation so that stewardship of biodiversity can be monitored and enhanced.
4. Create bridges among disciplines, within and across institutions, to harness the wisdom that can be created by blending multiple perspectives and in order to create greater impact.

Given the existing commitment of botanic gardens to the goals set out in the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation of the UN’s Convention on Biological Diversity, the delegates to the 9<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Education in Botanic Gardens enthusiastically pledged their support for this shared set of new priorities related to community stewardship.

The Missouri Botanical Garden and Botanic Gardens Conservation International jointly thank and recognize all of the delegates and their respective institutions for their participation in and support of the congress and their renewed commitment to collaboration for the benefit of plants, people and the planet.