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**REPORT ON ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY IN
SUPPORT OF DECISION XIII/22, ON THE FRAMEWORK FOR A GLOBAL
COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In decision XIII/22, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity welcomed the framework for a global communications strategy. It invited Parties, United Nations agencies and multilateral funds to use the framework. The Executive Secretary was asked to work to further implement the framework and to report on the results to the Conference of the Parties at its next meeting.
2. The tasks requested of the Executive Secretary were the following: to play a role in establishing the framework for communications, to keep the status of communications under review, to coordinate and advise other actors, and to advise on umbrella messaging. The present document represents a report on the activities carried out by the Executive Secretary in the context of this decision. The document concludes with recommendations on directions for future work.

II. SECRETARIAT-LED WORK

A. The Bogis-Bossey dialogues

3. In the fall of 2017 and the winter of 2018, with the financial assistance of the Government of Switzerland, the Executive Secretary convened a series of dialogues on the strategic direction of the Convention. Communication and awareness-raising issues were included in the dialogue sessions. These represented an important opportunity to frame the key elements needed for a global communications strategy. Four critical dimensions emerged from the discussions:

- (a) *Audience*: there is more than one audience to communicate with in order to change the trajectory of biodiversity loss. For each audience, tailored messages are needed to meet each where they are and not where we want them to be;
- (b) *Message*: messaging around biodiversity conservation must make the topic simple and personally relevant, and must offer meaningful strategies to activate different individuals based on their skills and capacities;
- (c) *Tone*: messages need to connect to people's hearts by branding through a narrative of optimism, such as by showcasing local solutions and avoiding "doom and gloom" communications;

* CBD/COP/14/1.

(d) *Rigour*: communication campaigns should be designed with the same rigour that a national park is designed with. Communication campaigns can no longer be accomplished by single actors. They must leverage partnerships to increase their reach.

4. Participants in the dialogues stressed the need for both a unified, catchy, top-line message and targeted communications strategies that can bring this message to segmented, specialized audiences. It was suggested that different tools and strategies need to be employed to mobilize the public, the private sector, and government in different cultural contexts, drawing on the unique profile of each of these actors.

5. Central to a communication strategy for each actor will be designing campaigns that not only raise awareness but that also encourage behavioural change. Different mechanisms are available, but the open source communication campaign model used in the Global People's Climate March and Earth Hour, which enables stakeholders to mobilize around issues relevant to them and adapt them to the local context, was highlighted as effective. Participants noted differences in using negative messaging around fear of biodiversity loss and positive messaging. Participants also emphasized that most target audiences do not understand the term "biodiversity", and that communication efforts may consider using "nature" as an alternative.

6. The results of the dialogues informed the Cambridge Conservation Initiative activities held in the spring of 2018, which are reported on below (see sect. III, C).

B. United Nations Environment Management Group Nexus Dialogue on Biodiversity

7. The Secretariat was a key co-organizer of the Nexus Dialogue on Biodiversity, organized by the United Nations Environment Management Group and held in Geneva on 2 and 3 May 2018. The dialogue explored the vital role of biodiversity in the context of human security and well-being. A session on positive communication and targeted messaging, organized and moderated by the Secretariat, provided important messages:

(a) It is important to communicate the urgency to act against biodiversity loss, which is undermining other agendas and threatening human security;

(b) Still, there is also need for simple and positive communication strategies to resonate with all stakeholders;

(c) Getting through to the public, sharing the message that biodiversity and nature conservation is one of the main challenges that we are currently faced with, and raising awareness on the vital need to halt biodiversity loss can be a challenge;

(d) We should aim for simplicity and clarity without losing the nuanced complexities that are an indivisible characteristic of biodiversity;

(e) Positive messaging and focus on solutions can achieve such communication. However, there was debate over whether we need a specific goal, such as the 2-degree target used by the climate change community;

(f) What could be a simple representation to communicate biodiversity loss? It is also important to recognize that not all stakeholders are receptive to the same narrative and when dealing with various groups of stakeholders it could be beneficial to use targeted messaging and develop different communication strategies depending on our audience.

8. The breakout groups in the communications session suggested the use of superhero-like narratives to fight biodiversity loss, but there was a difference in opinion in pondering whether a villain-like concept or character should be introduced in the "story" and, if so, who or what should embody such a villain.

C. International Day for Biodiversity 2017 and 2018

9. The celebrations of the International Day for Biodiversity represent an important opportunity to develop linkages between different partners and global agendas. Activities carried out represent a part of the global communications framework for the Convention.

1. Theme for 2017: Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism

10. The theme was chosen to coincide with the observance of 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, as proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 70/193 and for which the World Tourism Organization provided leadership.

11. Celebrations were held in at least 95 countries: Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Ecuador, Ethiopia, European Union, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Holy See, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lithuania, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ukraine, United States of America, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), and Viet Nam.

12. The official celebration took place in Parque Nacional El Chico, Hidalgo, Mexico, with the participation of President Enrique Peña Nieto.

13. Messages were received from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment), the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

14. The IDB2017 logo was designed by the pedagogical staff members of the Environmental Education Center (E.E.C.) of Kastoria, Greece. They composed a visual representation of the importance of rich biodiversity and attractive landscapes for tourism, as well as the need for appropriate tourism development that would protect and sustainably manage biodiversity. The logo was made available in the six United Nations languages at <https://www.cbd.int/idb/2017/logo/>, and was also translated by Parties and others into 19 other languages: Albanian, Bengali, Farsi, Georgian, Greek, Gujarati, Hangul, Hindi, Japanese, Konkani, Malayalam, Marathi, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Tamil, Telugu, Thai and Urdu.

2. Theme for 2018: Celebrating 25 Years of Action for Biodiversity

15. The theme was chosen to mark the 25th anniversary and to highlight progress made in the achievement of its objectives at the national and global levels.

16. Celebrations were held in at least 91 countries: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, European Union, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Liberia, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and Viet Nam.

17. The official celebration took place on 22 May 2018 in Mount Royal Park, Montreal, Canada. The Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity opened the event by welcoming senior officials from the Government of Canada, the Province of Quebec, the City of Montreal, representatives of the diplomatic corps and dignitaries from around the world. A video recording of the event is available online in its entirety at: <https://www.facebook.com/UNBiodiversity/videos/1696147693796589/>.

18. Messages and statements were received from Burkina Faso; Canada; the Caribbean Community (CARICOM); Congo; Côte d'Ivoire, European Commission; Finland; Ontario (Canada); United Nations Headquarters; the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA); the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES); the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS); the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); ICIMOD; the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN); Ramsar Convention; UNESCO; UN Environment; the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); and UN-Habitat.

19. The IDB2018 logo was also the 25th anniversary logo of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The logo was made available in the six United Nations languages at <https://www.cbd.int/idb/2018/logo/>, and was also translated by Parties and others into 13 other languages: Bulgarian, Farsi, Greek, Hangul, Hindi, Japanese, Kannada, Marathi, Mongolian, Polish, Portuguese, Tamil and Urdu.

III. WORK WITH PARTNERS

20. An important element of the strategy was the work that was conducted with partners to multiply activities. Key partners during the biennium included WWF International, the Commission on Education and Communication of IUCN, and the Cambridge Conservation Initiative, among others.

A. Activities with WWF International

21. The Secretariat concluded a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with WWF International in 2017, which provided a framework for activities and mutual support for the global strategy as well as in support of the implementation of Aichi Biodiversity Target 1.¹ WWF International, as its commitment under the MOU, has crafted a global communications campaign that supports the target, and directs some of the flagship products of the organization, in support of the work of the Convention.

1. Results of the "Connect2Earth" campaign in 2018

22. In the context of the MOU, WWF and focal points to the Convention carried out a number of activities that represent part of the "Connect2Earth" campaign for raising biodiversity awareness between today and 2020. The strategy for the campaign is to encourage people to act to use the reach of civil society organizations to help synergize biodiversity policy.

23. The campaign is based on the notion of enabling the work of actors who can act as multipliers. The campaign is developed around the notion of "open source" - by setting up umbrella messages and allowing partners to adapt their work, the campaign works going forward. The concept of multipliers has been successful in bringing biodiversity concepts into broader community by using events organized across the biodiversity community as opportunities to mobilize the message. Therefore, the International Day for Biodiversity of the Convention, World Environment Day of UN Environment, Earth Day, Earth Hour, and the World Scouting movement have all provided opportunities. The results:

- A total of 188 countries executed activities in support of Earth Hour. Given that WWF was active only in 90 countries, this demonstrated the multiplication power of the open source content. The variety of groups using the concept and creating their own momentum is another sign of the power of the concept.
- The campaign generated over 3.5 billion impressions of #EarthHour, #connect2earth and related hashtags.
- The campaign became the dominant social media trend in nine countries. This is a significant sign of the impact of the campaign.
- The campaign captured the participation of the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

¹ Target 1: "By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably."

- As part of the campaign, WWF developed a partnership with the Scouts – which involves some 50 million people; an estimated 20 million Scouts worked on connect2earth.

2. *WWF survey on biodiversity awareness*

24. In partnership with several global partners in awareness-raising and market research, WWF International carried out a survey of public awareness on biodiversity, environment and sustainability in ten countries (Brazil, China, Colombia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Peru, South Africa, Viet Nam). The survey suggested the following with regard to biodiversity knowledge:

- The majority of people did not have a good comprehension of the term;
- Respondents across 10 countries claimed they did understand or were familiar with biodiversity;
- Four per cent of people were able to explain that it meant animals and habitats; a good portion of people have a basic comprehension of living organisms, but still don't connect it with habitats;
- Half of the respondents did not believe that biodiversity was on the decline;
- Only one third of people realized how the source of food and fresh air and water comes from biodiversity;
- The majority say that they felt personally responsible, while a smaller percentage believed they could not do anything;
- Overall, people agreed about the loss of biodiversity and their responsibility, but were unwilling or unsuccessful at making the necessary habit changes;
- The majority of people want to protect the basis of life, while only 40 per cent see biodiversity as a source of raw materials;
- Steps taken include turning off lights, reducing food and water waste, recycling when possible, and energy efficient appliances.

25. The research suggested that more education is needed. A lack of comprehension exists. Easy everyday lifestyle changes can be made to conserve biodiversity and a majority of people are willing to do this. We need to broaden the understanding of biodiversity in relation to habitats and resources. Respondents can do not connect biodiversity as a source of life, but they relate biodiversity to nature.

26. WWF will present the findings at the CEPA fair during the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention (Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, November 2018), and the results will be used to inform future work.

3. *Global Biodiversity Communication Forum*

27. WWF and the Secretariat of the Convention will convene the first Global Biodiversity Communication Forum at the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, on 18 November 2018. Communication experts will discuss ways and means to scale up biodiversity communication to achieve Aichi Biodiversity Target 1 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. Strategic and thematic campaigns are the thematic focus of the first global forum. The specific objectives are:

- To present different campaigns which aim to raise awareness for biodiversity and nature;
- To discuss best practice examples of campaigns from various organizations;
- To exchange views on most suitable formats for communication campaigns;
- To discuss performance of campaigns and tracking of outreach and impact.

B. Activities with the Commission for Education and Communication of IUCN

28. The Commission for Education and Communication (CEC) has been a long-standing supporter of the programme of work on communication, education and public awareness (CEPA), providing support to the production of the CEPA toolkit, and to the development of the “Love not Loss” storyline at the beginning of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity.

1. #NatureForAll

29. The movement was formally launched at the 2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress in Hawai’i (<http://natureforall.global/>). The #NatureForAll movement is driven by a growing IUCN-led global coalition of partners who represent a variety of sectors. It aims to build support and action for nature conservation among people from all walks of life by raising awareness and facilitating experiences and connections with the natural world.

2. Research on awareness, nature engagement and behavioural change

30. As is noted in the description of Aichi Biodiversity Target 1, addressing the direct and underlying drivers of biodiversity loss will ultimately require behavioural change by individuals, organizations and governments. Understanding, awareness and appreciation of the diverse values of biodiversity underpin the willingness of individuals to make the necessary changes and actions and to create the “political will” for governments to act.

31. A new synthesis of factors that influence conservation and pro-environment behaviour has been developed by the Children & Nature Network as part of the work between the Secretariat and the CEC of IUCN and its #NatureForAll initiative. The results of this work are being made available to the Conference of the Parties in CBD/COP/14/INF/20.

32. This growing body of evidence consistently demonstrates that, in addition to awareness, meaningful experiences and connection with nature are key to engendering stronger valuation, support, and action for biodiversity conservation across generations, sectors, and societies. Increased attention to the importance of public engagement and connection with nature will be important for achieving behavioural change and creating and maintaining the political will for governments to implement the Convention. While they remain critically important, efforts to increase awareness and understanding of biodiversity and its values, and of actions that can be taken, are not enough.

33. The report suggests that national and subnational governments and stakeholders have the opportunity to implement sector-specific policies to enhance action on connecting people with nature as a key strategy for achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity post-2020. Such policies include the following:

- Education and child care policies that enable time outdoors in nature and experiential learning about nature in early childhood and throughout life;
- Health and elder care policies that embrace contact with nature as a mechanism for delivering physical and mental health benefits for all people of all ages;
- Community planning and urban development policies to create nature-rich cities that include parks and protected areas tailored to maximize the co-benefits for people and nature;
- Parks, outdoor recreation, and tourism policies that encourage family-friendly experiences; interpretive programmes; and outdoor, nature-based and experiential education;
- Arts and culture policies that promote the integration of culture and nature to develop a sense of oneness with nature while celebrating stories of connection and healing;
- Policies that encourage private-sector investment in environmentally sustainable programming, infrastructure, and innovative solutions for connecting people with nature;

- Policies that call for biodiversity conservation organizations to work across sectors so that all people, equitably and inclusively, experience the diverse benefits of connectedness with nature.

34. This research will continually inform and support the work of the communications strategy.

C. Activities with the Cambridge Conservation Initiative

35. The first “Many Voices – One Nature” dialogue was held on 13 April 2018. It brought together numerous organizations to converge on a shared understanding of what biodiversity means and its connections with broader development objectives, and to pitch key connections so it resonates with, and is meaningful to, the average person. The dialogue was organized around several key questions:

- What simple messages are most effective in sparking behavioural change for biodiversity?
- What narratives will get the buy-in of Heads of State, non-environment members of cabinets, other government sectors and sectors of the economy?
- What elements are necessary for a game change in biodiversity communication and outreach?
- Is biodiversity the right concept to communicate? Should we need rebranding, what elements need to be considered?

36. Key points from the dialogue were the following:

- There is a narrow window of opportunity leading up to 2020 to change public perceptions of biodiversity and to spark a transformation. Communication efforts must go beyond awareness-raising to enable behavioural change or “enhancements”. The key is to communicate the impact of individuals’ daily lives and choices on nature.
- A narrative change, utilizing the power of storytelling, is needed to inspire the hearts and minds of individuals – the focus should be on communicating solutions for concrete actions.
- It is important to create a global movement engaging diverse groups of stakeholders (conservation, academia, media, business, finance, etc.) to break down silos and bridge gaps between biodiversity conservation, sustainable development and other concepts.
- A “flotilla” of partners is needed to communicate a coherent message that inspires a sense of urgency, builds on individual organizational strengths and networks and makes use of complementarity. Common biodiversity messaging must be at the heart of this mandate.
- Elements for a successful campaign – contains a clear, overarching objective; identifies decision makers and the causes they care about; prepares a timeline of political moments and a target date; provides messaging for those political moments and audiences; and “tactics” for concrete actions.
- Social media is a key tool for mass communication – build awareness through visual campaigns and provide targeted storytelling and science. Extraordinary rates of social media engagement on nature reflect the power of storytelling and demonstrate that people do care about nature.
- Communicating the science – there is a lack of understanding of biodiversity among the public. The science, however, provides a clear link between human activity and biodiversity and identifies key areas for action (e.g. biodiversity management provides 30 per cent of the climate change solution).
- Communicating to the private-sector – businesses act in support of nature when it impacts their bottom line and supports the achievement of business goals. New appealing narratives that make transformation possible in all sectors are needed.
- Communicating to political decision makers – requires a pragmatic approach to build a political movement that identifies key moments in time for organized actions with partners

and political leaders around the world. A new communication language aligns political tasks with actions that support the mainstream media in reporting on the movement.

37. Participants highlighted the need for organizing future dialogues to explore specific narratives and tailored messages and to engage various groups of stakeholders that can inspire bold action and scale up awareness for communicating biodiversity. It was also accepted that common messaging in the lead-up to the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 2020 is essential to bring biodiversity awareness into mainstream media.

38. Subsequent dialogues will seek to raise awareness on the urgency of scaling up communications on biodiversity, as well as on its interlinkages with global environmental and sustainable development goals. The overall objective of the dialogues will be to mobilize key players to support the biodiversity agenda, ensure common messaging and align activities as momentum builds towards a global biodiversity movement in the lead-up to 2020 and the adoption of the new nature action agenda.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

A. Messaging

39. Biodiversity messaging needs to find elegant and straightforward narratives that harness the variety of life as a storytelling feature and not a complexity that has to be explained. The findings from a variety of discussions on communication suggest the value of using the term nature for messaging in instances where the term biodiversity is typically used. It is also clear that narratives need to connect biodiversity and its benefits to the values of specific audiences to resonate and lead to action.

40. The notion of “open source” messaging has a great deal of power for campaigns that encompass a lot of different groups. So, while there is value in taking the time to develop narratives for specific audiences, they can all be unified under one common thread and slogan that has flexibility in its interpretation. Campaign slogans will need to be developed in early 2019 to harness this.

B. Partnerships

41. Existing partners, mentioned in this document can be further mobilized in support of the agenda. But important groups need to be mobilized further and more consistently. These include:

- The communication resources of the Biodiversity Liaison Group;
- The United Nations Department of Public Information;
- The communications division of FAO;
- The World Economic Forum;
- Business groups engaged in sustainable development;
- Media groups and consortia.

C. Secretariat communication resources

42. The work during the biennium was an important start to developing partnerships and momentum in communication, but considerable additional work is required. This will require additional resources, including at the level of staffing at the Secretariat. As a first step towards accomplishing this, the Communications and Awareness Unit was integrated into the Office of the Executive Secretary. The Unit will support the Office’s strategic vision and goal to increase the visibility of the Convention’s work within the United Nations system, and also with non-United Nations organizations, and the general public, by leading the planning and design of activities and initiatives for common communications, advocacy and outreach initiatives. The Unit will also be improving the identification and development of storylines for publications and substantive articles to be published on the web and in other media channels. Finally, more human resources are needed in the unit to further develop strategic communication.