

## Opening remarks by the representative of the COP President

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all, and to declare open this second joint Special Virtual Session of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice and the Subsidiary Body on Implementation. I would like to thank you all for your participation today. And I thank you for your patience as we had to delay the start of our meeting to ensure everyone was properly connected.

I would also like to once again thank the Executive Secretary and her staff for the preparations made for this meeting, and my fellow members of the COP Bureau for their support.

To set the stage for our discussion, I would like to offer a few words.

*Ladies and Gentleman,*

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has affected us all in many ways. I would like to express my solidarity with all Parties and observers and especially with those who have lost loved ones or suffered special hardship from the impacts of the pandemic.

As we all know, the work of the Convention and other multilateral bodies has been interrupted or delayed. This special session, like the ones we held in September, is being convened with a view to maintain momentum towards COP 15 and also to facilitate preparations for the twenty-fourth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 24) and the third meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI 3), which have been postponed to 2021. I hope that it will also allow Parties and observers to gain further familiarity with the online platform and with the procedures for conducting meetings virtually.

The pandemic also highlights the importance of the relationship between people and nature. The COP President, HE Dr Yasmine Fouad hosted an international webinar on this topic in September. Heads of State and Government at the UN Summit on Biodiversity also emphasised this link and many called for increased efforts to conserve biodiversity to reduce the risks of future pandemics. Currently, many countries are developing and implementing economic stimulus and recovery packages to allow their countries to build back from the impacts of the pandemic.

Today and tomorrow we have an opportunity to further examine the links between links between biodiversity and health, including the links between biodiversity loss and the emergence of zoonotic diseases, and consider how these can be taken into account in all our efforts to “build back better”.

I look forward to our discussions that will lay the ground for further consideration of these issues at the meetings of SBSTTA and SBI next year and as we further develop the post 2020 global biodiversity framework.

Distinguished Delegates, we are very pleased to have with us the Chair of the SBSTTA, Mr. Hesiquio Benítez Díaz of Mexico and the Chair of the SBI, Ms. Charlotta Sörqvist of Sweden.

I now hand over the chairing of this joint session to you both.