

## ***Opening speech***

### ***Regional Consultation on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework for the Western European and Others Group and other members of the European Union, 19-21.03.2019, Bonn***

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Dear colleagues,

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you in Bonn and open this regional consultation workshop on the *post 2020 global biodiversity framework*.

I am especially grateful that many of you travelled a long way to attend this important meeting, including all the participants

- from the EU and WEOG member states,
- from international organizations and NGOs,
- and all representatives from IPLCs.

I would like to especially welcome Mr. Basile van Havre and Mr. Francis Ogwal, the two Co-Chairs of the Open-Ended Working Group on the post 2020 global biodiversity framework.

Lastly, I would like to sincerely thank our colleagues from the CBD Secretariat who put in a lot of hard work to prepare this workshop.

Even though this meeting is an important step for our future challenge - the development of a post 2020 global biodiversity framework – I start with a look at the past.

Around eleven years ago, the CBD COP 9 was held not far from here. Back then, we were preparing for a post 2010 global biodiversity framework.

It is both amusing and frightening that I would be able to read out the opening speech of COP 9 from our former Environment Minister Sigmar

Gabriel without anyone realising that this speech is eleven years old. I would only have to change the year from 2010 to 2020 – but the content of the speech would still be valid.

Let me give you an example:

*"In view of the jointly agreed 2010 target, the remaining time should be used to demonstrate that we are serious about implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity. The truth in 2008 is that we are still a long way from our 2010 goal."*

Or

*"From my point of view, it is our duty to use the momentum - that has fortunately now entered the public debate - to increasingly place biodiversity on all relevant political agendas. This must be one of the key messages!"*

Now, eleven years later, the global status of biodiversity is still in a very poor condition. Of course, many things have changed for the better since 2008. But the implementation of the Strategic Plan to achieve our targets is still a huge challenge.

However, we see progress when it comes to public awareness. Every two years, our nature awareness study confirms how important nature and biological diversity are to people in Germany. Even if there are still misunderstandings and knowledge gaps regarding the definition and the status of biodiversity. And those who claim to be familiar with the term mainly understand only one dimension of the concept, which is the diversity of animal and plant species.

Nevertheless, the percentage of those who are "very convinced" of decline in biological diversity has increased by ten percent: from 26 percent in 2015 to 36 percent in 2017.

And the approval rates for the protection of biological diversity remain high. For 71 percent of the German population, nature conservation is an important societal task. And 53 percent of respondents claim that they feel personally responsible for the preservation of biological diversity.

However, it is also a sad truth that the positive attitudes expressed are often not in line with actual action. Not only regarding the public, but also regarding political priorities.

We therefore need to raise awareness on all ends: high political momentum for biodiversity and a stronger outreach to other sectors and the general public. Only then we will be able to develop an ambitious global biodiversity framework for the time after 2020 that receives sufficient support from all stakeholders.

But learning from the current Strategic Plan of the CBD, we can see that ambitious targets alone do not help to protect biodiversity. Almost all Aichi Biodiversity Targets will not be reached by 2020. This is why I am stressing the need a much stronger focus on implementation.

We welcome the voluntary biodiversity commitments as a new instrument that inspires action. But they should come on top of existing processes. We should not forget about our current implementation tools such as the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans. They are vital to address a wider range of issues related to biodiversity conservation.

So the question is: how can we strengthen our tools and instruments?

Mainstreaming was an important topic at the High-level segment of CBD COP 14, but it has not gotten enough attention during the negotiations. Biological diversity is the economic basis for so many industries and a role model for technical innovation. Entire sectors of the economy, such as agriculture and forestry, but also infrastructure and other industries depend directly on an intact and diverse nature.

If we are serious about implementation, we need to address mainstreaming more consequentially.

We highly welcome that this years' Trondheim Conference also focuses on this issue and invites representatives from other sectors: this is what we need. We cannot always stay within our biodiversity bubble but need to reach out to other political and economic sectors.

I do not want to preclude our discussions that will follow in the next two days, but I would like to make sure our scope is wide enough.

Let me close by once more quoting Minister Gabriel:

*"I believe that many environmental ministers in the world often go to bed with many thoughts in their heads on how to overcome the completely obvious gap between what needs to be done and what is being done. And it is indeed a Herculean task to bring the world community as a whole, but also every single country, on the right path to sustainability."*

I wish us all a successful Working Group Meeting that enables us to think outside the box to create new ideas that we so urgently need to overcome the gap between words and action.

Thank you!