



CBD COP15 Part 1 - Opening Statement

Global Youth Biodiversity Network

11 October 2021

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Thank you **Mr/Madam** Chair.

I am speaking on behalf of the Global Youth Biodiversity Network.

The opening of the COP 15 discussions that will lead to the further discussion and negotiations of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework is a moment we have been looking forward to for a long time. But amidst this, we have been faced by a global pandemic that has taken the lives of many, that has impacted health and livelihoods, that is exacerbating inequalities among and within countries, and that is nowhere near over. It's a pandemic that we must learn hard lessons from as we forge a new global biodiversity agenda.

We really hope that we have learned from this pandemic. The pandemic is showing us that shallow quick fixes don't work to fix the deep systemic problems at the root of biodiversity loss. It tells us that our economic status quo is not only failing, but has been a big part of the cause of this crisis. It exhibits that diverse local solutions are key to resilient communities. And it teaches us that everything is connected to everything else.

After rallying youth voices from all around the world and envisioning our future within biodiversity, there's a future we still hope we can have. We dream of a world where we can forge a path of reconnection and reconciliation with nature for a just and sustainable future. A world where the integrity of our life support system is prioritized over profit, where diverse societies co-exist respectfully with all life, and where justice and equity for nature and people are at the center of our actions.

The upcoming global biodiversity framework must ensure that bold actions take place towards the vision of a life in harmony with nature. As the IPBES Global Assessment clearly states, transformative change is still possible if we address the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss.

As we, the youth, have been saying together throughout this process: this framework must go beyond generational silos and integrate intergenerational equity and the full and effective participation of children and youth, Indigenous peoples, local communities, and women. It must

leverage non-formal, informal and formal education as a key way forward for deep-rooted change. And it must contribute to the realization of the right to a clean, safe, healthy and sustainable environment for all, which was finally recognized by the UN in a landmark resolution last Friday. We hope that Parties can champion these elements in the process ahead, solidifying them in our collective goals and targets for the coming decades.

Today we know of civilizations that have caused wide destruction to others' environmental underpinnings, and others who until today, continue to be stewards of our biological and cultural diversity. We still have the chance to choose the better path. If we want to build a resilient, ecological civilization, we will need to heal connections with nature where they have been lost, and learn from the ways in which Indigenous peoples and local communities around the world thrive in harmony with biodiversity. We need to be fair and respectful of one another and of mother earth. We owe this to the generations to come, and to all the living beings that we share this planet with.

Thank you **Mr/Madam** Chair.