



## PRESS RELEASE

### Governments set stage to take ambitious actions for nature and people UN Biodiversity Conference opens in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt

- *2018 UN Biodiversity Conference opened with the participation of the President of Egypt and other international dignitaries*
- *Conference expected to renew ambition to achieve global biodiversity targets by 2020*
- *Parties will begin roadmap for negotiations of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework*
- *Convention celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and aims to fulfill its 2050 Vision of "Living in Harmony with Nature"*
- *Over eight thousand delegates expected to attend the two-week global meeting. Attendees include delegates from the Convention's 196 Parties as well as representatives from civil society, private sector, sub-national governments, indigenous peoples and local communities and youth*
- *Video messages welcoming delegates and expressing support for the Convention received from UN General Assembly President María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés and UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed, along with Sir Paul McCartney.*

**18 November 2018** – The 2018 UN Biodiversity Conference<sup>1</sup> opened yesterday in the seaside town of Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt with an opening ceremony that included an address from President of Egypt, H.E. Abdel Fattah Saeed Hussein Khalil el-Sisi, who emphasized the crucial importance of the meeting for Egypt, and for global efforts for sustainable development.

Only two years remain in the commitment period for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. Over the next two weeks, governments will be urged to ramp up their ambitions and actions to achieve action on the 20 targets they established in Nagoya, Japan in 2010.

<sup>1</sup> Fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity; Ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety; Third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing; 17-29 November 2018

At this year's conference, national governments, regional organizations, and other key stakeholders from around the world will engage in intense discussions with the goal of making a final push to achieve agreed upon global biodiversity targets for 2020 and to start the momentum for an ambitious and achievable post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

Dr. Cristiana Pașca Palmer, Executive Secretary of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, emphasized the critical urgency for the international community to work together to preserve global biodiversity now. "If we do not act we soon may reach tipping points that may cause irreversible destruction to nature and ultimately to humankind".

The meeting convenes in the 25<sup>th</sup> year of entry into force of the Convention. During those years, decisions taken by governments have resulted in a global network of protected areas, 15 per cent for land and close to six per cent of the global oceans, and the development of important policy guidance and legislation for natural resource conservation and sustainable use regulation.

Despite these successes, strong evidence suggests that there is insufficient action taking place. Regional reports and other assessments from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), released in March, showed that in every region, with the exception of a number of positive examples where lessons can be learned, biodiversity and nature's capacity to contribute to people are being degraded, reduced and lost due to a number of common pressures – habitat stress; overexploitation and unsustainable use of natural resources; air, land and water pollution; increasing numbers and impact of invasive alien species and climate change, among others.

The *Living Planet Report 2018* by WWF also found that worldwide vertebrate populations are currently set to decline by 60 per cent from their 1970 levels by 2020.

Egypt takes the helm of the Convention for the pivotal next two years, following on the work of Mexico which held the presidency from 2016 until now. This year's meeting of the Conference of Parties is being chaired by H.E. Yasmine Fouad, Minister of Environment of Egypt.

H.E. Yasmine Fouad said: "Nature and humanity are not separate entities, and Africa is leading the way on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework."

Delegates to the meetings plenary also heard messages from United Nations officials including the President of the United Nations General Assembly, María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, and the Deputy Secretary-General, Amina J. Mohammed. Both stressed the importance of biodiversity protection for achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the need for a robust follow-up to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity.

Discussions in Sharm el Sheikh will also seek to expand coalition of actors to explore innovative approaches and find ways to scale and accelerate initiatives to protect nature. The Governments of Egypt and China, along with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity have announced the Sharm el Sheikh to Beijing Action Agenda for Nature and People to collect, coordinate, and celebrate actions taken by an array of stakeholders to protect biodiversity: ([www.cbd.int/cop/cop-14/annoucement/nature-action-agenda-egypt-to-china-en.pdf](http://www.cbd.int/cop/cop-14/annoucement/nature-action-agenda-egypt-to-china-en.pdf)).

Governments will present plans to bring biodiversity and nature into the heart of decision-making in the crucial economic sectors of mining and energy, infrastructure, processing and manufacturing and health. H.E. José Octavio Tripp Villanueva, Ambassador of Mexico to Egypt, and representing the COP 13

Presidency, said: "From Cancun to Sharm el Sheikh, the mainstreaming of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into productive sectors has gained momentum, giving testimony to the power of positive and inclusive unilateralism."

The conference also includes discussions on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, on the labeling, transport and handling of GMOs, and the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization.

In addition, Sir Paul McCartney delivered a message on the importance of reducing meat consumption and thanked the conference for committing to two "Meatless Mondays" – days where meat would not be served on the site.

National Geographic and WWF International also provided videos to the plenary, with WWF International underscoring the need for delegates to seek an ambitious global framework to combat nature loss.

### **Nature and 21<sup>st</sup> century technologies**

Governments will look at the impacts on nature of new biotechnologies such as synthetic biology, including so-called gene drive technologies. The potential of these to protect biodiversity as well as to cause unintended harmful effects will be discussed, as will the suitability of existing regulatory frameworks. The potential implications of digital sequence information on the conservation, sustainable use and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources will also be discussed.

### **New and novel protected area systems**

The need to increase protection of the ecosystems of the world in a way that is extensive, effective as well as inclusive and involves indigenous peoples and local communities will be under consideration. The meeting will also look at other effective area based conservation measures (OECMs) that extend models of conservation and sustainable use beyond traditional models of protected areas.

### **Oceans of the world**

This year, the process under the Convention on Biological Diversity to describe ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) celebrates its tenth anniversary. The Conference in Egypt will be a crucial milestone in the CBD's work on EBSAs, as it will discuss important aspects of the future of the EBSA process options for modifying the existing EBSA descriptions, for describing new EBSAs, and for ensuring that the best available scientific and technical information, including traditional knowledge, are used in the EBSA process.

### **Parallel Forums on key issues**

*The Rio Conventions Pavilion* will run from 17 to 29 November and will profile numerous events on thematic issues underscoring synergies on sustainable development, biodiversity, climate change, and combating desertification and land degradation. [www.riopavilion.org/cbd-cop14-egypt/](http://www.riopavilion.org/cbd-cop14-egypt/)

*The Biodiversity Innovations and Solutions Fair* opens on 17 November and continues until 29 November, showcasing innovations, technologies, and solutions for the conservation of biodiversity.

[www.cbd.int/conferences/2018/parallel-meetings/innovation-fair](http://www.cbd.int/conferences/2018/parallel-meetings/innovation-fair)

*The Fair on Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) from 17 to 29 November, provides an opportunity for Parties and Organizations to highlight their communications and awareness work related to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity.* [www.cbd.int/cepa/fair/2018/](http://www.cbd.int/cepa/fair/2018/)

*The 2nd Wildlife Forum will be held 21 November under the central theme “Sustainable Use for Conservation and Livelihoods.” The Forum will share experiences and seek creative solutions to issues associated with the health and security of people and wildlife, the wild meat crisis, and unsustainable use of wildlife.* [www.wildlife-forum.com/](http://www.wildlife-forum.com/)

*The Nature and Culture Summit “Biological and Cultural Diversity for Biodiversity and Human Resilience - Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement” will be held on- 23-24 November 2018. At the summit, governments, stakeholders, and specialized agencies will reflect on the achievements made over the last decade on finding synergies between biological and cultural diversity, between science and indigenous knowledge systems.* [www.cbd.int/tk/nature/programme.shtml](http://www.cbd.int/tk/nature/programme.shtml)

**Notes to Editors:**

The UN Biodiversity Conference takes place at Sharm el Sheikh from 17 to 29 November 2018, with its High Level Segment taking place on 14 and 15 November 2018.

All information relating to the conference can be found at: [www.cbd.int/conferences/2018](http://www.cbd.int/conferences/2018)

An online press kit, including press briefs on the main issues to be addressed at the meeting, accreditation instructions, and the schedule of press conferences can be found at:

[www.cbd.int/conferences/2018/information/media](http://www.cbd.int/conferences/2018/information/media)

Live and on demand webcasts of negotiations, press conferences and selected side events are available at: [www.cbd.int/webcast/](http://www.cbd.int/webcast/)

Press Briefings: To be held every morning of the Conference at 9:15. All press briefings are webcast.

UN Biodiversity Conference media list – if you wish to be added to the Conference media list and receive media advisories, updates, press releases and various alerts on conference activities, please email: johan.hedlund@cbd.int

Social media for the Conference can be found on:

[www.facebook.com/UNBiodiversity](http://www.facebook.com/UNBiodiversity)

twitter.com/unbiodiversity

[www.instagram.com/unbiodiversity](http://www.instagram.com/unbiodiversity)

[www.linkedin.com/company/unbiodiversity](http://www.linkedin.com/company/unbiodiversity)

Hashtags for the meeting include:

#UNBiodiversityConference

#COP14

#EgyptCOP14

#InvestInBiodiversity

#PeopleAndPlanet

**Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and entering into force in December 1993, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. With 196 Parties, the Convention has near universal participation among countries. The Convention seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing are supplementary agreements to the Convention. The Cartagena Protocol, which entered into force on 11 September 2003, seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. To date, 171 Parties have ratified the Cartagena Protocol. The Nagoya Protocol aims at sharing the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources in a fair and equitable way, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies. It entered into force on 12 October 2014 and to date has been ratified by 114 Parties. For more information visit: [www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int). For additional information, please contact: David Ainsworth on +1 514 561 2720 or at [david.ainsworth@cbd.int](mailto:david.ainsworth@cbd.int); or Johan Hedlund on +1 514 287 6670 or at [johan.hedlund@cbd.int](mailto:johan.hedlund@cbd.int)

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