



PRESS RELEASE

Arrangements for meetings of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity

- *Momentum for negotiations for post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework maintained in current public health context of COVID-19;*
- *Many meetings to be held virtually;*
- *CBD presently exploring alternative scenarios for SBSTTA-24 and SBI-3;*
- *Secretariat remains briefed by WHO and UNEP*

17 March 2020 – Due to the evolving nature of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has moved to hold many meetings virtually and has postponed others.

“In the current situation, where public health issues are at the top of the agenda, we should not forget other ongoing global challenges. We will do our best to maintain the momentum of the process to develop the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity” said Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, the Acting Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The CBD Secretariat is keeping the situation under review and will continue to apply all the science-based guidance and advice that is received from the World Health Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme and all relevant national authorities.

A number of critical and time-sensitive meetings are being organized virtually:

- Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Digital Sequence Information on Genetic Resources in Montreal, 17-20 March 2020.
- Meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Risk Assessment, 31 March-3 April 2020.
- Seventeenth meeting of the Compliance Committee under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, 15-17 April 2020.
- Fourteenth meeting of the Liaison Group on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, 20-23 April
- Third meeting of the Compliance Committee under the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing, 21-23 April 2020.

As of 13 March, and in consultation with the UN Environment Programme, the following meetings have been cancelled or postponed:

- Follow-up workshop of biodiversity related Conventions on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (Bern 2), originally scheduled for 25-27 March 2020, Bern, Switzerland.

- Thematic Consultation on Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, originally scheduled for 30 March-1 April 2020, Bern, Switzerland.
- The Global Taxonomy Initiative Forum, originally scheduled for 7-9 April 2020 in Berlin, Germany.

With regards to the twenty-fourth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-24), originally scheduled for 18-23 May 2020 in Montreal, and the third meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI-3), scheduled for 25-30 May in Montreal, the CBD Secretariat is currently exploring alternative scenarios with the COP (Conference of the Parties) Presidency, the Chairs of the SBSTTA and SBI meetings, Canadian authorities and the International Civil Aviation Organization.

The CBD Secretariat will provide further updates on new dates in due course.

“This pandemic reinforces the need for solidarity and respect for all people” said Ms Mrema. “Even if we are inconvenienced and delayed through the COVID-19 outbreak we should ensure that multilateral approaches to solving our global problems such as biodiversity loss are strengthened.”

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, 172 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 124 Parties.

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