



**STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, DR. CRISTIANA PAŞCA PALMER,
AT THE TWENTY-FIRST MEETING OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC,
TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE,
11-14 DECEMBER 2017, MONTREAL, CANADA**

Madame Chair,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the twenty-first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice. I am especially excited to welcome you today because this is my first meeting of the Subsidiary Body as Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. It is also my first time officially greeting all of you after the last meeting of the Conference of the Parties, held in Mexico, around this time last year. It was certainly warmer in Cancun, but please accept my “warmest” welcome to Montreal.

First of all, I would like to thank you, Madame Chair, and your colleagues in the Bureau of the Subsidiary Body, for your excellent leadership in shaping this meeting. I am particularly happy to see a female scientist in the Chair of the Subsidiary Body and look forward to your inspiration and guidance to see the Subsidiary Body do what it has done over the 25 years of the Convention’s existence – to continue to provide the essential driving force for evidence-based decision-making under the Convention.

Allow me to also thank the Governments of Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden as well as the European Commission for providing generous financial resources to support the participation of representatives of least developed countries and small island developing States as well as representatives of indigenous peoples and local communities. I also want to thank UN Environment for waiving the programme support costs on these donations. Only through the full participation of Parties and the inclusion of indigenous peoples and local communities and stakeholders can we collectively ensure the meaningful and unified advancement of the Convention’s three objectives. In this regard, I would appeal for continuous financial support from all donor countries, in particular for the future meetings of the Subsidiary Bodies and the Conference of the Parties.

It is with great pleasure that I announce that, on 5 December 2017, Japan became the fortieth country to deposit an instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession to the



Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress. This triggers the entry into force of the Supplementary Protocol on 5 March 2018. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all Parties that have already ratified the Supplementary Protocol and to urge all Parties to the Biosafety Protocol that have not yet done so to ratify the Supplementary Protocol as soon as possible. I also encourage countries to ramp up their efforts to implement this important instrument at the national level. With the support of donors, the Secretariat will continue to actively support Parties in this regard.

Distinguished delegates,

Let me share with you some reflections on the journey we are undertaking together. The first question I pondered when I started my role as the Head of the United Nations Biodiversity Convention was: Do we communicate enough with various stakeholders around the world, so that we can translate the all-important global biodiversity agenda into tangible and concrete actions? The answer, of course, is that we have to do more. While we in this room are fully aware of the importance of biodiversity as well as the threats that are undermining it, unfortunately, this message is not being heard strongly enough outside this room.

The good news is that we have many allies committed to helping us project this vision and these messages. In the past eight months, I have run an intense marathon of engaging with diverse leaders, thinkers, practitioners, and actors around the world. Our conversations revealed a common cause and a recognition of the value of action to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity as a solution to address the key challenges of our one and only planet. Simply put – biodiversity is essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Our collective efforts were witnessed at various high-level United Nations platforms and global forums of various sectors, among them the Climate Convention, the Convention to Combat Desertification, the UN-Ocean Conference, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Tourism Organization and the Convention on Migratory Species. In pursuing this vision, I have also been honoured to work closely with three Presidencies of the Conference of the Parties – present and future – Mexico, Egypt and China – to create high-level global attention on biodiversity, including exploring the organization of a global biodiversity summit prior to the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Egypt next year will be the last chance for us to agree on collective efforts needed to accelerate progress to achieve the 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets. It will also put us on a path towards the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, at which Parties are due to consider a post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

Allow me to touch upon some of the key elements of this meeting's agenda that will inform our discussions in Egypt.

Discussion on the scenarios for the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity will provide a longer-term context for the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

We know that the current trends of biodiversity loss will continue or worsen under “business-as-usual” scenarios, with major negative consequences for human well-being. Last week's update of the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species is a testimony to this alarming trend. However, scenarios also show that we do not have to accept this. We must not be fatalistic. If we look at the full range of plausible futures there is still sufficient space and there are multiple options for developing policy measures to achieve our 2050 Vision.

In fact, the scenarios set out in the fourth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook* demonstrate that we could halt biodiversity loss while also meeting food security and other development goals.

However, the pathways towards a sustainable future require transformational change, including changes in behaviour at the levels of producers and consumers, Governments and businesses. Further efforts will be needed to understand decision-making processes, institutional transformation and ways to facilitate change. Disruptive societal and technological developments are already under way at all levels. These disruptions could lead to transitions that may contribute to the development of a sustainable future or, alternatively, could put sustainable development at risk. This is an occasion to which the Convention needs to rise. I believe that we all need to challenge ourselves and identify how the Convention can face transitions head on and use our advantages to leverage action towards the positive changes needed to achieve the strategic vision of a world in harmony with nature.

It is in this context that I convened recently in Bogis-Bossey, Switzerland, a dialogue with experts in transitions, communication and finance, among others, to brainstorm on how we will respond to this challenge. I would like to thank Switzerland for hosting and financing this event. The report is being made available to you and we will organize further discussions with Parties next year.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This meeting of the Subsidiary Body continues our collective efforts to mainstream biodiversity in various sectors, building on the Cancun Declaration and the decision on this topic adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting, where we focused on four key sectors – agriculture, forests, fisheries and tourism – and on key cross-cutting policies. The decision called for the Convention’s work on mainstreaming of biodiversity to be extended to the sectors of energy and mining, infrastructure, and manufacturing and processing industry, as well as health.

All these sectors are highly relevant to our agenda and are also at the centre of discussions in other global frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals. The increased focus on this topic of mainstreaming is highly relevant for the discussions taking place in many other forums — at United Nations Headquarters, in the finance sector at the national and international levels, in the multilateral development banks, in the private sector, and among academics, scientists and stakeholders.

These sectors are projected to grow significantly through 2050. Estimates project that trillions of dollars will be poured each year into infrastructure alone in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Much of this investment will be aimed at the expansion of urban areas at an unprecedented pace. We must make sure that this is done in ways that do not destroy the natural foundations upon which our societies depend – and that the positive values and contribution of biodiversity are nourished and enhanced. The connections between biodiversity and health showcase the values of biodiversity in all its dimensions.

As you know, this meeting is being held back to back with the tenth meeting of the Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions, and, in this context, I would like to draw your attention to our agenda item on sustainable wildlife management. Our discussions on the technical guidance for sustainable wildlife management will also inform the Working Group with regard to customary sustainable use of biological resources.

Of course, the Subsidiary Body will also look at the preparation of the fifth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook*, the effectiveness of policymakers and the identification of any new and emerging issues. However, given the time constraint, I will not say more about these issues at this time.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Next year, we will celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention coming into force — 25 years of your efforts towards the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the sharing of benefits.

For 25 years, Parties have faithfully undertaken national implementation of a variety of activities to achieve the objectives of the Convention. Many partner organizations and institutions have supported your efforts and contributed to the successful outcome of these activities. In addition, civil society and private sector partners around the world have played a key role in advancing the work of the Convention.

All of us in this room must carry forward these efforts. We must demonstrate that the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity is not a burden but a key to delivering on other environmental and socio-economic objectives, including addressing the impacts of climate change. We must raise the profile of the global biodiversity agenda and expand our presence in political, social and environmental dialogues. We must shift the paradigm of biodiversity as a problem under threat and create momentum and a positive narrative around biodiversity and ecosystem services as a basis for resolving many of our problems. I invite you to join me in these efforts.

With this, I wish you successful deliberations, and I assure you the Secretariat is committed to successfully servicing this meeting as well as future meetings of this Subsidiary Body, the Subsidiary Body on Implementation and the Conference of the Parties.

Thank you.
