



**Opening remarks at the Pre-COP 14 Meeting for the Pacific Countries  
24-26 September 2018, Apia, Samoa  
Cristiana Paşca Palmer, Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity**

Honourable Associate Minister for the Environment of Samoa,  
Director-General of SPREP, Mr. Latu,  
UNEP Director for the Pacific, Mr. Nawadra,  
Colleagues,

Good morning,

I would like to thank the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme for organizing this regional preparatory meeting. The timing provides an opportunity for the Pacific countries to further elaborate and coordinate on priority issues prior to the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in November in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt.

In particular, I encourage you to address the recommendations provided by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice at its twenty-first and twenty-second meetings, the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its second meeting and other intersessional events.

Colleagues, the upcoming meeting of the Conference of the Parties arrives at a critical juncture – one where the interconnections between societies, economies, and nature are better understood and valued, and where ambition to deliver on global commitments is strengthened. Therefore, I call on all governments to send a clear message at the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties that safeguarding biodiversity is fundamental to our survival and to the well-being of everybody, everywhere. I also invite you to examine how your countries are realizing the Convention’s 2050 Vision “Living in Harmony with Nature”. Your ambition and vision of success for a post-2020 global biodiversity framework will be critical in the discussions on the preparations for this process.

In addition, this meeting of the Conference of the Parties marks a quarter of a century of work under the Convention. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention is a symbolic milestone that I invite you to celebrate with us in Sharm El-Sheikh.

We therefore need to review the progress made through the two and a half decades, recognizing the achievements attained, the measures to scale up, and the additional approaches to be taken.

We need to be bold and engage actors that can help address the urgent, interconnected and growing challenges ahead: *biodiversity loss is continuing despite our efforts*. Threats to biodiversity, especially climate change, habitat loss, environmental pollution, and invasive alien species, to list a few, are increasing. If we continue business as usual, the scenarios will not be optimistic either for biodiversity or for humans.

Transformational change is needed if we wish to ensure the sustainability of our planet. Such transformation requires a whole-of-government approach for reinvigorating political will to safeguard the diversity of life. We also need to engage and inspire all actors to act responsibly for people and the planet. The example taken by the Government of Palau is a case in point.

In the stunningly beautiful Micronesian nation of Palau, tourists have been responsible for a wide range of environmental problems, from polluting and damaging the coral reefs to poaching the island’s tropical wildlife. It was a daunting problem distilled into one question: Can a nation continue to welcome tourists while simultaneously protecting itself from them?

The answer, created in partnership with an Australian advertising agency, was the “Palau Pledge,” which requires all the island nation’s visitors to sign—right in their passports—an agreement not to damage or exploit the natural resources. A short video on the pledge is being run on all flights to Palau. The effort has been paired with law enforcement and reporting of destructive behaviour, and received global acclaim from celebrities and activists, winning multiple international awards.

These types of multisectoral, multidimensional interventions are necessary to enable systemic change and mitigate the loss of biodiversity, as well as to generate a better understanding of the value of our natural capital, both in monetary and non-monetary terms. How we convey this understanding of our connection to nature and nature’s connection to us will be critical for the post-2020 biodiversity framework, to be adopted at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in 2020.

The second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, held in July, in its recommendation SBI-2/19, invited all Parties to submit views and suggestions about the post-2020 global biodiversity framework by 15 December 2018. We encourage all Parties, in particular Parties present at this meeting, to discuss innovative approaches that could help accelerate and scale up progress, while staying on track to achieve our 2050 Vision. We also hope that this meeting will contribute input on setting the direction for the work of the Convention over the next two years and, more importantly, beyond 2020.

Colleagues, small island developing States are facing unique challenges in addressing various threats to biodiversity and in implementing the Convention and its Protocols. The issues include climate change and biodiversity loss, invasive alien species, synthetic biology, capacity-building, resource mobilization, and mainstreaming – all of which will be addressed at the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. In this regard, I hope that this meeting of the Conference of the Parties will provide effective guidance and support for our future actions in addressing these challenges. This meeting can therefore help prepare countries in the region to contribute to the decision-making of the Conference of the Parties by developing proposals that address the concerns of small island developing States.

Colleagues, after this meeting, there will be a workshop on the preparation of the sixth national reports for the Pacific countries which will be organized by UN Environment with the support of the CBD Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme. I wish to take this opportunity to stress that the timely submission of the sixth national reports with high-quality information will be crucial for the processes under the Convention in the next two years, particularly for the process of developing the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

As you know, the sixth national reports provide a final review of progress in the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, including its 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Information from the sixth national reports will not only help us know where we stand in achieving these targets, but also provide a baseline for developing future targets and support mechanisms for the post-2020 period. For this reason, I would like to encourage all the countries in this region to complete and submit the sixth national reports on time. The Secretariat and its partners stand ready to support your efforts in this regard.

Colleagues, I wish you very productive discussions in the next few days. I am looking forward to seeing you all at the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in November in Egypt. I also hope to have several opportunities to listen to your thoughts and suggestions on how collectively we can deliver the transformational changes needed to make our planet’s future more sustainable.

Thank you.

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