



**Statement of Executive Secretary Cristiana Paşca Palmer
at the closing of the
United Nations Biodiversity Conference 2018
Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt
29 November 2018**

Dear colleagues,

It has been over two weeks of challenging and important work. Over two weeks ago, we began our discussions.

In the presence of ministers from across Africa at the African Ministerial Summit, and then at the high-level segment, with the participation of ministers from around the world, I pointed out what science is showing us.

Despite all the tremendous successes this Convention has helped usher in over its 25 years, the indicators of the state of biodiversity and the current path, continue to show that we are failing to stop the extinction crisis.

I also pointed out that, even though this biodiversity community is broad and global, we still need to engage a broader audience. In this respect, we must move from the very real incremental change that we have created to a model that continues to push incremental wins while also fundamentally reaching for transformational change.

As this meeting of the Conference of the Parties shows, we have already begun this journey.

The African Biodiversity Summit endorsed an ambitious Pan-African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration for Increased Resilience.

At the global level, we also brought attention to restoration in all corners of the world through the call for a decade on ecosystem restoration from 2021-2030.

At the high-level segment, ministers committed to working at all levels within their governments and across all sectors to mainstream biodiversity. They also committed to accelerating efforts to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets during this final two-year sprint to the 2020 finish line.

Ministers' commitments also extended to support for the development and implementation of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework expected to be adopted in Beijing, and for which the preparatory process has begun.

But we all know that more engagement, contributions, and actions need to be undertaken, accelerated, and implemented both from the Parties and from all stakeholders.

Bending the curve of biodiversity loss and safeguarding nature for the benefit of all peoples and future generations requires that we go beyond even these strong commitments.

We must also continue to engage and build multi-sector coalitions among all stakeholders to reach our shared objectives.

That is why I am so pleased that, at the high-level segment, the Government of Egypt, the Government of China, and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity announced the Sharm El-Sheik to Beijing Action Agenda for Nature and People.

This Action Agenda is aimed at catalysing, collecting, coordinating and celebrating a groundswell of actions from all sectors and stakeholders in support of biodiversity and its myriad of pathways to solve global challenges, including towards sustainable development, food security, climate mitigation and adaptation, health and welfare, and human security.

And we already see initial responses to our urgent call for action. Just this week, we have received positive responses and initial contributions from the sixth Global Biodiversity Summit of Local and Subnational Governments and the Nature and Culture Summit, sponsored jointly with UNESCO.

And we invite contributions from other stakeholders, and will be conducting outreach as per decisions of the Conference of the Parties, to build a global movement in the lead-up to 2020 and beyond.

Colleagues, I know that these have been long negotiations, but you have made important decisions.

The Parties have agreed to accelerate action to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets from now until 2020. Achieving these targets at the global, regional, national and subnational levels will build the base we need to move beyond 2020.

The decision of the Parties on the process for developing the post-2020 framework also shows commitment, vision, and leadership. The principles that will guide this are noteworthy. Let me list them: Participatory, Inclusive, Gender responsive, Transformative, Comprehensive, Catalytic, Visible, Knowledge-based, Transparent, Efficient, Result Oriented, Iterative, and Flexible.

Further, I am pleased to hear that several donors have already committed to contributing resources to this process. And I invite other Parties to demonstrate similar commitment to this critical process, including through financial contributions as they can.

Colleagues, we all know that even as we are looking towards these milestones, we still need to guide the implementation of the Convention in its other important dimensions.

More than three dozen decisions have been undertaken over these two weeks, which shows that the Parties have been guiding the Convention's full agenda.

As we all know, important developments in biotechnology, informatics and other new technologies, have consequences for our relationship with this world, as well as consequences for the equitable sharing of benefits from the use of genetic resources.

Therefore, your discussions at this conference on digital sequence information, synthetic biology and risk assessment represent a key engagement of the Convention.

Another significant development this week relates to your decision on protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, which defined other effective area-based measures and welcomes voluntary guidance on their integration into the wider land- and seascapes.

Colleagues, as you know, to mainstream our work into the human activities that have an impact on biodiversity, we need the active involvement of all sectors and actors. Those who are not in the room with us, need to be brought into the conversation.

The parallel forums that took place throughout the meeting are critical bridges that can expand the community working to save life on Earth.

The Business and Biodiversity Forum showed the great interest from the business community in working with us to mainstream biodiversity into diverse business areas.

In the coming two years, we need to continue to engage the private sector at all levels, from major corporations to the huge number of small and medium-sized enterprises that are at the heart of the vast supply chains producing consumable goods.

The sixth Global Biodiversity Summit of Local and Subnational Governments showed us that this level of government, which is closest to the citizens of our world, is ready to make implementation of the Convention a reality. Moreover, they are ready to not only accelerate implementation of the Aichi Targets, but to contribute to the post 2020-agenda.

The Nature and Culture Summit reminded us not only that indigenous peoples and local communities are already a key partner in our work to save life on Earth, but also reminded us that saving cultural diversity goes hand in hand with saving biodiversity.

It has also been noted that youth might be almost half of the world now, but they are 100% of the future. At this conference, I also have witnessed the energy and the engagement of youth in our agenda. They need to be an active partner in our efforts to build this sustainable future.

Colleagues, we now bring this conference to a close. I want to thank all of you who have played a part in it.

I want to thank the host Government of Egypt again, Minister Fouad and her colleague ministers, President El-Sisi, Governor Khaled Fouda, thank you all for your leadership and your incredible hospitality.

And thank you also to the people of Sharm, of South Sinai, and of Egypt. You have welcomed us into your homeland and you will remain in so many of our hearts and as an inspiration as we work together for the next two years.

Thank you also to all the delegations representing 184 countries. This is a long conference with significant time away from families and friends. Birthdays have been celebrated here with colleagues, holidays have been celebrated together.

I know the hardship involved for all of you in being away from home for so long, but I also know that the work you are doing is vital for your home, for your homelands, and for the future of our common home here on planet earth.

Last, and certainly not least, I want to thank my staff: each and every member of the Secretariat, whose hard work day in, and day out, has made this meeting of the Conference of the Parties successful. I know the long hours that you have dedicated to this conference. I've seen the passion and I know that you so often do your work behind the scenes and in representation of public service.

And I want you to know that I see you, our Parties see you, and that future generations — though they may never know our individual names — will be indebted for the work that you have done, are doing, and will do.

So, I thank each and every one of you personally for your work, for your passion and commitment, and for the greatest honour you have given me in my lifetime: the chance to be your colleague. Thank you.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to the Governments of Australia, Canada, Egypt, Finland, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the European Union, which have provided generous financial support to ensure that participants from developing countries as well as representatives of indigenous peoples and local communities are able to attend this conference. I thank them for their active and continued support to the Convention.

We now have some time to rest, to be with our families and friends, to recharge our batteries.

But the work continues soon. Very soon. We start our journey towards the future the day after tomorrow. Before this year is up, we will bring together the views and aspirations for the future of

biodiversity and our actions to save it. As the new year begins, we will start the journey from Sharm El-Sheikh to Beijing.

Let me remind you all of the African proverb that we all know so well: If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together. Let us go together, towards 2050, towards a future of life in harmony with nature.

Thank you all, and safe travels.
