



Statement for the opening of the twenty-third meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice

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Montreal, Canada

Mr. Chairman,
Delegates,
Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to Montreal for the twenty-third meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Although I had the privilege to attend previous Subsidiary Body meetings, including the meetings of the Bureau representing the United Nations Environment Programme, it is a real honour and a privilege for me to be here and to support you, now along with the dedicated team of the Secretariat, in these important deliberations at this crucial time.

Honourable Chair, I would like to thank you sincerely, and your colleagues in the Bureau of the Subsidiary Body, for your excellent leadership in shaping this meeting. I am certain that, under your guidance and that of the other members of the Bureau, our discussions in the coming days will be fruitful.

Let me start by thanking the Governments of Austria, Canada, Finland, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, and the European Union for providing generous financial resources to support the participation of representatives of developing countries and countries with economies in transition as well as the representatives of indigenous peoples and local communities. Thank you so much for your support.

Today in Montreal, we have over 500 participants representing 118 countries which were registered as at the end of last week. It is only through the participation of Parties and the inclusion of indigenous peoples and local communities and stakeholders that we can all meaningfully discuss, engage and ultimately advance the three objectives of the Convention.

I took office at the Secretariat right before a series of important meetings. These include the Working Group on Article 8j meeting, the meeting of the Subsidiary Body, and the thematic workshops on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. I was indeed surprised and amazed at the volume of work before the Secretariat. I am equally impressed with how my colleagues at the Secretariat can deliver on several fronts, while being challenged by the scale of tasks covering requests from the Conference of the Parties on a variety of issues while simultaneously supporting and facilitating an extremely intense post-2020 process for the global biodiversity framework.

I would like to thank my colleagues for all their hard work in preparing this meeting.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We come together at a critical time for biodiversity and for the Convention. This meeting of the Subsidiary Body is being held after the publication of the first *Global Assessment on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services* report by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). The assessment concluded that significant declines in biodiversity were occurring at all levels, from genes and species to ecosystems. It also underlined how conservation actions, including protected areas, efforts to manage unsustainable use and address illegal taking and trade of species, and translocations and invasive species eradications, have all been successful in reducing the loss in biodiversity. Let me give you some examples from species:

- When we look at conservation, investment during the period between 1996 and 2008 reduced the extinction risk for mammals and birds in 109 countries by a median value of 29 per cent per country;
- Without conservation action in recent decades, the rate of deterioration in extinction risk for birds, mammals and amphibians would have been at least 20 per cent higher;
- At least 107 highly threatened birds, mammals and reptiles (these include the Island Fox and Seychelles Magpie-Robin) are estimated to have benefited from invasive mammal eradication on islands.

So, we have positive stories to talk about and let us learn and move forward with these positive stories.

In less than one year, Parties will adopt the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. To that end, we have embarked on an ambitious, open and transparent consultative process. We are working with all Parties and stakeholders in a meaningful and integrated manner, building on the success and on the lessons that we have learned in the past nine years. Parties requested that this process be fully informed by the best science and best available evidence, drawing from IPBES and other relevant assessments. At its first meeting, the Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework requested its Co-Chairs to prepare a zero-draft text of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, including drawing upon the discussions being held at this meeting.

The Subsidiary Body has been tasked by the Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework with providing elements concerning guidance on specific goals, SMART targets, indicators, baselines, and monitoring frameworks, relating to the drivers of biodiversity loss, for achieving transformational change within the scope of the three objectives of the Convention. The Subsidiary Body will do this on the basis of the best available evidence, including the results of the IPBES *Global Assessment*, other assessments and preliminary conclusions from the fifth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook*.

I cannot underscore enough the importance of the discussions that will be held in this context. Nature plays a critical role in providing food and feed, energy, water, medicines and genetic resources and a variety of materials fundamental for people's physical well-being and for maintaining culture. The combined market value of livestock and fisheries was nearly \$1.3 trillion in 2016; more than 2 billion people rely on wood fuel to meet their primary energy needs. About 25 to 50 per cent of pharmaceutical products are derived from genetic resources, and some 70 per cent of drugs used for cancer are natural or are synthetic products inspired by nature. A clear, actionable and transformative global framework on biodiversity, one that is easy to downscale to the national level, will serve as one of the pillars of the international sustainable development architecture contributing to maintaining it.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Both the recent assessments from IPBES and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change show that biodiversity loss, climate change and land degradation are deeply interconnected and are taking place on

an unprecedented scale, but, commensurate with these challenges, now, more than ever, we have evidence, knowledge and the ability to address them on a scale unimaginable even just a few years ago. The achievement of biodiversity targets will generate multiple benefits for the well-being of society. It will also make a major contribution towards facilitating sustainable development through poverty alleviation and enhanced economic prosperity, towards a life in harmony with nature at the local, national and global levels.

During this week, we will discuss the role of biodiversity in strengthening the global response to climate change. We will also hear outcomes from the eleventh meeting of the Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions on the opportunities to consider the role of indigenous peoples, local and traditional communities, in achieving the goals of the Convention; we will discuss approaches to improve the sustainability of wild meat use with practical examples being showcased during the poster session. We also look forward to seeing your proposals to review and potentially renew various technical and scientific cooperation programmes under the Secretariat.

One of the Convention's achievements over the last 10 years has been the description of ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs). We are proud to report the completion of the first round of this exercise globally, which has now covered over 75 per cent of the global ocean with the more than 300 areas meeting the EBSA criteria described all over the world. It is a good moment to celebrate the hard work of many Parties, organizations and experts who have contributed to the global EBSA process.

Distinguished delegates,

It is necessary to work on addressing all drivers of biodiversity loss – as clearly articulated by the IPBES assessment. Following the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, we also need to consider how to address these different issues in an integrated manner by also supporting all actors — women, men, indigenous peoples, youth and marginalized groups — so that they can play an active role in achieving biodiversity objectives together with governments and business.

And we are not alone in working towards these efforts. We see the immense energy that has been put into bringing these issues to the forefront of policymakers. Through our sister conventions, other multilateral environmental agreements and frameworks and United Nations system-wide efforts, such as the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, unique opportunities exist to address these challenges in a holistic manner and to scale up solutions to achieve an array of development goals.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me conclude by reiterating not only the urgency of these challenges but, equally, the availability of solutions.

Evidence suggests that, despite the challenge to meet the goals of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, it is not too late to slow, halt and eventually reverse the alarming trends in the decline of biodiversity.

I am confident that our Subsidiary Body provides the necessary impetus for identifying these solutions and finding ways and means to avert the biodiversity crisis.

I wish you successful deliberations, and, as always, the Secretariat stands ready to support you in your work.

Thank you.
