



**STATEMENT BY**  
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**FOR THE OPENING OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE**  
**POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK**

**Monday, 24 February 2020**

**Rome**

Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Colleagues,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to extend a warm welcome to you all at this important second meeting of the Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. As you may be aware, our Super Year for Biodiversity journey to Kunming in October began with the World Economic Forum having, for the first time in its history, biodiversity and nature as a theme which cut across most of the deliberations during their Forum a month ago. I was, together with many of you just a few days ago, in Gandhinagar, India, for the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, which had the post-2020 global biodiversity framework as its theme in the context of ecological connectivity and migratory species.

Honourable Co-Chairs, I would like to thank you sincerely and your colleagues in the Bureau for your excellent leadership in shaping this meeting. I am certain that, under your guidance, our discussions in the coming days will take us another step closer to our goal.

Let me start by thanking the Governments of Austria, Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, as well as the European Commission, for providing us with 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. While more countries and representatives would have wished to be supported and be present with us this week, we all understand that times are hard globally.

I would sincerely like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Qu Dongyu, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, for the kind offer and willingness to host us and the prompt arrangements made to support us in our work within such a short period of time. On your behalf, with a show of appreciation and a round of applause for FAO, I offer my sincere thanks for this marvellous and prompt support, and the actions that have made this day and this week possible. Mr. Qu, we are not taking this support for granted. We know the amount of work which you and your team at FAO have undertaken to make this meeting take place on the same dates as originally planned and scheduled.

Permit me to equally recognize the enormous efforts and actions being taken by the Government of China to control the outbreak of the novel coronavirus 2019. Along with the Secretariat, I want to express our sincere appreciation for the substantial efforts that the Government of China, through the Ministry of Environment and Ecology, as well as Yunnan Province and the City of Kunming, has taken to make this meeting possible.

Here in Rome, we have over 1,000 registered participants representing 142 countries, as well as delegates from civil society, from indigenous peoples and local communities, from business, from women and youth, and many other stakeholders. It is only through the participation of Parties, the inclusion of indigenous peoples and local communities and all other stakeholders that we can all meaningfully discuss, engage and ultimately advance the three objectives of the Convention and ensure the ensuing products will indeed be of a universal nature.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We come together at a critical moment for biodiversity and for the Convention. Both the recent assessments from Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) as well as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have shown that biodiversity loss, climate change impacts and land degradation are deeply interconnected and are thus taking place on an unprecedented level. However, we now have the evidence, knowledge and 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 all levels, be it local, national or global.

The world is presently reeling under a severe biodiversity crisis. Extinction rates are estimated to be 1,000 times the background rate, and future rates could even be 10,000 times higher. IPBES reports that 75 per cent of the Earth's land surface is significantly altered, 66 per cent of the ocean area is experiencing increasing cumulative impacts, and over 85 per cent of wetlands have been lost. On average, population sizes of wild vertebrate species have declined precipitously over the last 50 years on land, in freshwater and in the sea, and approximately 25 per cent of species in assessed animal and plant groups are threatened.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Addressing these problems will require all of us to take serious concerted actions to bring about the world we want and to set global priorities for the “what”, “how” and “where” of biodiversity conservation. This meeting marks the start of a critical year in our journey, which will culminate in the adoption of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework at the fifteenth meeting of the Parties. To that end, we have embarked on an ambitious, open and transparent consultative process. Parties and stakeholders will work together in a meaningful and integrated manner, building on the successes and lessons we have learned in the past nine years. As emphasized by Parties, this work will continue to be fully informed by the best science and best available evidence, drawing from IPBES and other relevant assessments.

At your first meeting, in August of last year, the Working Group 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 thematic workshops, as well as other contributions which have been received. I am happy to report that the Co-Chairs have delivered on this request and published the first zero draft of the global biodiversity framework in all official languages of the United Nations on 13 January.

The zero draft contains a proposed framework that applies a “theory of change” approach, a strategic planning framework that will allow diverse stakeholders to work together towards common goals, use the same language, and ensure collective action. It also considers elements of guidance on goals, SMART targets, indicators, baselines, and monitoring frameworks, relating to the drivers of biodiversity loss, for achieving transformational change. In addition, the proposed framework considers the various consultation processes that have taken place, including views expressed during the informal briefing of the Co-Chairs on 24 November 2019. I would like to thank the Co-Chairs for their leadership and for providing us with this solid starting point for our discussions.

To assist Parties in their preparations, the Co-Chairs have also organized regional briefings through webinars, held during the first week of February, for each region. These webinars have provided

yet another opportunity for regional focal points and organizations to have a debriefing on the zero draft before this second meeting.

Distinguished delegates,

I cannot underscore enough the importance of making progress at this meeting. I encourage you to initiate and advance our discussions on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. It is my sincere hope that you will focus on building a common understanding of the different elements of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and on exploring the scope and key content blocks of the framework.

The world out there is watching and eagerly waiting for results. They want to see demonstrable progress towards a clear, actionable and transformative global framework on biodiversity – a framework that is easy to downscale to the national level, a framework that can serve as one of the pillars of the international sustainable development architecture.

Let me conclude by reiterating not only the urgency of these challenges but, equally, the availability of solutions. To do so requires us to ensure that all sectors are engaged in the development and implementation of the new framework. It is not too late to slow, halt and eventually reverse the alarming trends in the decline of biodiversity. The evidence shows that policy measures, when implemented, do work. For example, we have reduced extinctions by at least two to four times compared to 10 actions.

Let us follow the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, and consider how to address these different issues in an integrated manner by also supporting all actors — men, women, indigenous peoples, youth and marginalized groups — so that they can play an active role in achieving biodiversity objectives together with governments and business.

I am confident that this Working Group, with the engagement of other stakeholders, will produce the SMART post-2020 global biodiversity framework that will enable the world to take the steps needed to bend the curve of biodiversity loss. We know that investing in nature is one of the best ways to address climate change and restore our natural life support systems. Concrete actions are an investment that will allow us all to build a future of life in harmony with nature.

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

Thank you.

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