



**STATEMENT BY
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ON THE OCCASION OF THE

**5TH ANNUAL BIODIVERSITY RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE INDABA
HOSTED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**VENUE: ZOOM
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Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my distinct pleasure and honour to address this fifth Annual Biodiversity Research and Evidence Indaba. I would like to thank the Government of the South Africa for inviting me to speak at this important event.

I am pleased to note that this year's Biodiversity Research and Evidence Indaba is dedicated to addressing the scientific capacity needed for the effective implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity agenda and the United Nations Decade of Ecosystem Restoration. This is a clear testament to your commitment to contributing to strong, ambitious and evidence-based action towards a future where: biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, thus sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The health of humanity and the health of our planet are intertwined. The ongoing COVID-19 crisis has again demonstrated this critical interlinkage between people and nature. The theme of this year's Indaba highlights the need for ecological restoration and improved scientific capacity.

I wish that I could be with you in South Africa today. Based on previous trips, I have been fortunate enough to experience South Africa's tremendous wealth of biodiversity and immense natural capital; therefore, there is no question that today's topic is both timely and welcome.

Biodiversity is declining at an unprecedented rate. None of the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets have been fully met. According to IPBES, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, around one million species are estimated to face extinction unless the drivers of biodiversity loss are drastically reduced. The greatest risk is in marine and freshwater ecosystems and in tropical regions. The current risk is being amplified by climate change, which will become an increasingly significant driver of biodiversity loss if it continues on its current trajectory.

This not only creates challenges in terms of maintaining ecosystem health and reducing the potential of mass extinction, but it also threatens ecosystem services that we depend on, such as the provisioning of clean air, clean water and food security.

However, we cannot let the risk paralyse us into inaction. It is not too late to turn the tide. We can achieve sustainable development. However, we must act now.

We, as a global community, need to agree on and work together to implement a new post-2020 global biodiversity framework which will provide a road map for how we can protect biodiversity and achieve the 2050 Vision of Living in Harmony with Nature.

This post-2020 global biodiversity framework will need to include goals related to the world that we want to live in. Currently, four goals have been proposed:

- Improving the connectivity and integrity of natural ecosystems supporting healthy and resilient populations of all species while reducing the number of threatened species and maintaining genetic diversity;
- Valuing, maintaining and enhancing nature's contributions to people through conservation and sustainable use, supporting the global development agenda for the benefit of all people;
- Ensuring that the benefits from the utilization of genetic resources are shared fairly and equitably;
- Promoting means of implementation for achieving the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

The post-2020 global biodiversity framework will also establish action-oriented targets which aim to provide a transformational pathway for realizing these goals, as well as means of implementation. One of the targets aims to achieve the restoration of our degraded freshwater, marine and terrestrial natural ecosystems and the connectivity among them. The achievement of that target would be supported by the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) and underpinned by various initiatives, such as the Pan-African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration for Increased Resilience, the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative and other such initiatives contributing to the Bonn Challenge.

To achieve the ambitious goals and targets of the global biodiversity framework, we need to be able to monitor and track progress in real time so that we can act before it is too late. We cannot do this without improved data and scientific knowledge.

We also need events such as this one, which bring governments, the scientific community, and other stakeholders together.

I believe that we can achieve a more sustainable future for both people and biodiversity. But to do so, all of us need to work together. Governments, scientists, the private sector, NGOs, the international community and citizens must be engaged and informed and must work towards the change that we seek.

Thank you once again for giving me the opportunity to take part in this year's Indaba and to share some of my thoughts. I look forward to continued collaboration with regard to the preparation and eventual implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, which will provide us with a road map towards achieving the 2050 Vision of "Living in harmony with nature".

Thank you.
