



STATEMENT BY

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**BUILDING BACK BETTER: PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY, COMBATING LAND DEGRADATION  
AND MITIGATING CLIMATE CHANGE**

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Thank you, ministers, colleagues, all courtesies observed.

The relationship between biodiversity and infectious diseases is complex. But the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the loss and degradation of biodiversity undermines the web of life and increases the risk of disease spillover from wildlife to people.

By conserving and sustainably using biodiversity while sharing the benefits with equity, we can prevent the emergence of future diseases. Our efforts to build back better, can be integrated with the One Health approach, and address the challenges of biodiversity, climate change and land degradation.

Let me suggest five main elements:

*First, we should reduce disease risk by conserving and restoring ecosystems.* We prevent further degradation that would create the conditions for the emergence of other zoonotic diseases. At the same time, we begin to restore the ecosystems of the world and by reversing damage already done, will also advance the climate and land agendas while generating employment.

*Second, we should promote sustainable, legal and safe use of wildlife* not only to have an immediate impact on disease transmission resulting from the illegal trade in wildlife but also to help rebuild livelihoods at local levels.

*Third, we need to promote sustainable and safe agriculture, including crop and livestock production and aquaculture.* Not only does this improve animal and human health, but it also provides the basis for climate-friendly agriculture that supports sustainable land use.

*We also have to look at the urban setting and create healthy cities and landscapes* that integrate biodiversity while supporting sustainable consumption to reinforce conservation and sustainable use beyond urban boundaries.

*And we need to promote healthy diets as a component of sustainable consumption.* Reduced meat consumption, including elimination of bushmeat from illegal sources, and the increased variety of foodstuffs from sustainable agriculture, would support conservation and sustainable use while leading to better overall health outcomes for populations.

As we carry these out, we need to build cooperation and complementarity among all actors and relevant instruments, including other multilateral environmental agreements and international organizations.

These steps call for fundamental shifts in political economy, accountability and governance.

The negotiation of an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework that supports transformative change would be the basis for such shifts and represent the realization of the opportunity to build back better.

Thank you.

