



STATEMENT BY

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AT THE OPENING OF THE SPECIAL VIRTUAL SESSION OF SBSTTA-24

Launch of the fifth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook

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

I am happy to welcome you all to today's special session, the first of a series of special virtual sessions of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice and the Subsidiary Body on Implementation.

I sincerely thank you all for participating in these special sessions; your virtual presence here today demonstrates your clear determination to maintain momentum and step up our efforts to conserve and protect nature.

May I also offer my thanks to Mr. Zedan, for his remarks in opening this meeting and for his untiring efforts in support of the Convention, especially in steering the Bureau and guiding the Secretariat through these difficult times. I would also like to express my appreciation to you, Mr. Chair, and to the entire SBSTTA Bureau for your guidance and support in organizing this session.

We are living through one of the most extraordinary threats to global health experienced in the past century, with its impacts felt across all nations. I would like to join the President of the Conference of the Parties in expressing my sympathy and solidarity with all of you, especially those who have lost loved ones or suffered hardship from the impacts of this pandemic.

Over the next three days, we will seek to facilitate preparations for the twenty-fourth meeting of SBSTTA and the third meeting of SBI, which are currently scheduled to begin their work virtually later this year and to complete it hopefully at physical meetings in the first quarter of next year. On the immediate horizon, these sessions will also help us raise the political profile of the global biodiversity agenda ahead of the United Nations Biodiversity Summit, which will be convened by the President of the United Nations General Assembly on 30 September.

Whether through the latest technology on our computer screens or through our traditional face-to-face meetings – or most likely a combination of both – we will summon up our resolve and continue faithfully on the path towards the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Kunming, China, next year. There, we will adopt a post-2020 global biodiversity framework, which will set out a transformative and innovative plan to implement broad-based action towards the 2050 Vision.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, at this special virtual session of SBSTTA, we have come together to mark an historic milestone in the road to Kunming, the launch of the Convention's flagship report, and the leading United Nations report on biodiversity, the *Global Biodiversity Outlook*. To understand what action we need to take, we need a clear,



authoritative assessment of where we are, where we need to go, and what we need to do to get there. This new fifth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook* provides us with precisely the information we need. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all Parties and all individuals that have contributed to the fifth edition, be it by submitting their sixth national reports, by providing peer review comments or by sharing their expertise and knowledge. As the acknowledgements in the report show this report is an output of the community that has rallied around the Convention. I would also like to extend my thanks to the governments of Canada, the European Union, Japan, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, whose financial contributions have made the preparation of the fifth edition possible.

I now have the honour to formally launch the fifth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook*!

In a few minutes, my Deputy, David Cooper, will guide us through the contents of the report. But first, I will take a few minutes to highlight some key messages emerging from the report.

The stark conclusion of the fifth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook* is that none of the twenty Aichi Biodiversity Targets have been achieved in full. Six of them have been partially met – that is, one or more of the sub-elements of the respective targets have been achieved.

This is clearly disappointing and indicates that Parties, individually and collectively, have not taken the actions necessary to reverse biodiversity loss. Biodiversity continues to decline.

But I also want to stress that, even where we have not met the targets, progress is being made by a number of countries, as the report sets out.

Perhaps most importantly, where policy measures have been put in place and where actions have been implemented, they have delivered results. Policies do work!

This and many other lessons are set out in the report.

Distinguished colleagues, in the days ahead, we will come together to discuss our progress towards a new global pact to protect biodiversity, and to identify the pathways to make progress by 2030 towards the world's ultimate vision of "Living in harmony with nature by 2050".

The fifth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook* provides us with vital information in this regard, identifying the types of actions we will need to stem the loss, bend the curve, and put biodiversity on a path of recovery. It identifies eight vital areas of transition where these actions will need to be implemented.

Ladies and gentlemen, the future of humanity depends on our determination to act now, with both urgency and compassion. Therefore, our discussions today could not come at a more important time. As SBSTTA is the body dedicated to technological advice, I suspect their virtual nature will be no obstacle. I look forward to hearing your valuable insights and perspectives on this historic report.

I thank you.
