



United Nations Decade on Biodiversity

Statement by Ms. Elizabeth Mrema

Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity

at the

High-level Side Event of the United Nations Summit on Biodiversity:

“Biodiversity – the Ocean’s Role”

30 September 2020, 8:00 to 9:30 a.m.

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

First, I wish to express my appreciation to our good friend, Ambassador Thomson, for continually flying the flag for the oceans and elevating our collective ambition and hopes for ocean sustainability.

As the ocean contains around 80% of all life on Earth, a sustainable future for biodiversity depends on a healthy ocean. The ocean must be central to our discussions at the UN Summit on Biodiversity.

The fifth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook*, or “GBO-5”, shows that none of the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets will be fully met. It does, however, showcase bright spots that need to be scaled up. It shows that, when good fisheries management is applied, fish stocks are being maintained or rebuilt. It shows that conservation efforts have reduced the number of extinctions and that, without such actions, extinctions of birds and mammals would likely have been two to four times higher. And, it shows progress in achieving marine protection, as we are on track to achieve the quantitative element of Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 and pushing hard to protect 10% of the global oceans, as enshrined in Sustainable Development Goal 14.5.

GBO-5 calls for major transitions in specific areas, including fisheries and oceans, climate action, sustainable food systems and a biodiversity-inclusive One Health approach. Focused efforts are needed to achieve a transition to healthy and productive fisheries and oceans, but we must not place oceans in a silo; they underpin nearly all of the transitions we need to achieve a healthy planet.

GBO-5 also clearly illustrates that we do not need to sacrifice ocean health for human needs. In fact, recent research shows that we could increase the amount of food we get from the sea if we use more sustainable approaches and under-utilized resources. Trends in food waste, with about 35% of fisheries and aquaculture harvest being lost or wasted every year, outline the need for a food systems transition that places greater emphasis on a diversity of foods and reduced waste in food supply and consumption.

The post-2020 global biodiversity framework, which is set to be adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity next year, provides a major opportunity to begin these transitions and is perhaps our last chance to achieve a healthy ocean into the future.

Finally, we must remember our common enemy of climate change. Climate change calls for a common and concerted effort that brings together biodiversity, oceans and the climate crisis. This United Nations Summit on Biodiversity, the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Ocean Conference in Lisbon, and the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change have the opportunity, and indeed the responsibility, to lay out ambitious plans and frameworks to realize changes that will lead to a healthy, resilient, productive and sustainable planet long into the future.

Thank you.

