



STATEMENT BY MS. ELIZABETH MARUMA MREMA

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ON THE OCCASION OF THE

**EIGHTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE AFRICAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
ON THE ENVIRONMENT**

ONLINE, 4 DECEMBER 2020

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to address this eighth special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), convened to explore ways of enhancing environmental action for effective post-COVID recovery in Africa.

I would like to thank Her Excellency Ms. Barbara Creecy, Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries of South Africa and President of AMCEN, as well as the AMCEN Bureau and all the Ministers and representatives taking part in this Conference, for your continued leadership and commitment to safeguarding the environment and biodiversity for the benefit of people and the planet.

Excellencies,

As the President and many of you have said, this special session of AMCEN is taking place at a critical time in our history. Humanity is under threat from multiple unprecedented and interlinked crises that are disrupting our economies and the day-to-day lives of people all around the world. The COVID-19 pandemic and the climate and biodiversity crises cannot be tackled in isolation.

The fifth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook*, released in September, clearly indicates that “humanity stands at a crossroads”. The window of opportunity available to us to change course is short. Nature as a whole is being compromised as humanity exploits its resources in unsustainable ways. This has led to situations such as the emergence of new devastating zoonotic diseases like COVID-19, and also the degradation of the ability of ecosystems to continue meeting our needs.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

“Business-as-usual” is not an option. We must do things differently and better. The *Global Biodiversity Outlook* report has proposed a number of concrete transitions across a range of sectors and human activities. Transitions relating to land use, food systems, climate, water and the biodiversity-inclusive “One Health” transition are crucial opportunities for the world to build back better. I urge you to review and adapt the proposed actions to your national policies and programmes.

I am pleased to note that the proposed African Green Stimulus Programme seeks to support Member States in their efforts to “build back better and greener”, including addressing the threats facing Africa’s biodiversity and enhancing environmental action to catalyse sustainable development in the region.



Madam President, ladies and gentlemen,

As stated by the Chair of the African Group of Negotiators on Biodiversity, the world community is in the process of preparing a new framework to guide the post-2020 global biodiversity action. This ambitious plan needs to facilitate the transformative changes that will address the challenges highlighted above.

Despite the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the process is on course under the guidance of the Co-Chairs of the Open-ended Working Group on the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Following a series of regional and thematic consultations, and the first and second meetings of the Open-ended Working Group, an updated zero draft of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework is available online.

The Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice at its twenty-fourth meeting will provide guidance on the various components of the draft goals and targets of the framework and on the monitoring elements and indicators, from a technical and scientific point of view, to facilitate further development of the draft framework prior to the third meeting of the Working Group. The Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its third meeting will also consider issues related to means of implementation, enabling conditions, and responsibility and transparency.

I would like to urge the African region to continue contributing proactively to this process, taking into account the unique opportunities and circumstances facing the continent.

Crafting an ambitious yet pragmatic framework will require strong political will and broad input from actors across various sectors. I therefore also urge you to engage and involve all relevant stakeholders in your national consultative processes.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

As underlined by several Heads of State and Government during the United Nations Summit on Biodiversity convened by the President of the United Nations General Assembly on 30 September 2020 and during the recent G20 Riyadh Summit held virtually in November 2020, urgent action is needed at all levels to confront the multiple crises facing us.

We must act immediately to protect and restore our ecosystems and biodiversity and build back better to increase our resilience to future crises.

We must also work together to put in place an ambitious and transformative post-2020 global biodiversity framework that will put us on a sustainable path towards “Living in harmony with nature” by the year 2050.

I thank you for your kind attention.
