



STATEMENT BY

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on the occasion of

INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN DAY 2020

“Mountain biodiversity”

This year’s International Mountain Day celebrates the rich biodiversity of mountain ecosystems and its crucial importance to human well-being. Mountains host almost half of the world’s biodiversity hotspots and 30 per cent of all Key Biodiversity Areas, as their singular topography and climate have created the conditions for a wide spectrum of life forms to develop.

The full extent of ecosystem services provided by mountains is difficult to measure but we know that these regions and their biodiversity provide food and medicine, as well as climate, water, soil, and air quality regulation to humankind. In fact, it is estimated that mountains provide 60-80 per cent of the world’s freshwater. Some of the world’s largest cities, including Nairobi, Tokyo, Bogota and Rio de Janeiro, depend on freshwater sourced from mountains.

Mountains are home to thousands of endemic plant and animal species and provide habitat for many endangered species. They are also important centers of agrobiodiversity as many of the world’s most important food crops and livestock species originated in mountains.

However, mountain ecosystems are fragile and increasingly vulnerable to climate change, land-use change, deforestation, invasive species, natural disasters and pollution. Unsustainable farming and extractive activities also contribute to the acceleration of biodiversity loss in these regions.

The sustainable management and restoration of mountain ecosystems is now recognized as a global priority. Sustainable Development Goal 15, Target 4, is explicitly dedicated to the conservation of mountain biodiversity towards 2030. The United Nations has also declared 2021 to 2030 the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, underlining the urgent need for ecosystem restoration to bend



the curve of biodiversity loss. As governments negotiate the post-2020 global biodiversity framework for adoption at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, they must recognize the need to stop and prevent the further loss and degradation of mountain ecosystems.

Sound policies to protect mountain biodiversity will vary between regions; and recognizing the historical stewardship of indigenous and traditional mountain communities that have sustained biodiversity in these landscapes for generations is critical to sustaining success. Their valuable knowledge, traditions and cultural practices are essential to maintaining ecosystem services and food security in the face of rapid climate change.

As we celebrate International Mountain Day and its theme “Mountain biodiversity”, I invite Parties to adopt a long-term vision for the protection, conservation and restoration of mountain ecosystems and renew their commitment to action with mountain-specific national policies and international cooperation.

The future of mountain peoples and millions more is dependent on bold ambition to protect mountain biodiversity on all five continents.