



Convention on
Biological Diversity

STATEMENT BY MS. ELIZABETH MARUMA MREMA
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
AT THE OPENING OF THE
INFORMAL SESSION IN PREPARATION FOR SBSTTA-24

17 February 2021

Mr. Chairman,
Delegates,
Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to be with you today to address this virtual informal meeting in preparation for the twenty-fourth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-24) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

It is an honour for me to support you, along with the Secretariat, as we take these important steps that will lead us towards the United Nations Biodiversity Conference, including the adoption of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework hopefully later this year.

Honourable Chair, Hesiquio,

I would like to sincerely thank you, and through you, the colleagues in the Bureau, for your excellent leadership in preparing for this meeting in these difficult times.

Let me start by thanking the Government of Canada, our host country, for generously providing the financial resources that support additional costs incurred for our virtual meetings, including the services of our excellent team of interpreters. From all of us, thank you a million.

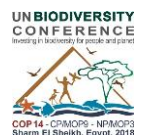
We have over 1,800 participants registered representing 125 countries and many organizations online with us for this meeting. I look forward to your active participation as only through your participation can we engage and advance equally all three objectives of the Convention. I am very pleased to have you all join us today.

Dear participants,

I hope you all had a chance to attend the information session webinars that we had organized to prepare us all ahead of this informal meeting. Those webinars had presented a rich information and background on different topics that have an important economic, social and environmental bearing on the



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
413 Saint-Jacques Street, Suite 800
Montreal, QC, H2Y 1N9, Canada
Tel : +1 514 288 2220 | secretariat@cbd.int
www.cbd.int



work of the Convention and its Protocols, and which will be addressed by upcoming SBSTTA-24. This meeting is therefore an important opportunity to further hear your views on these topics.

Please allow me to briefly highlight the substantive agenda items we will have before us to focus on:

Post-2020 global biodiversity framework

Under this item, we invite statements on the scientific and technical advice related to the updated goals and targets, and related indicators and baselines, of the draft global biodiversity framework.

Your inputs will support the recommendations to be developed by SBSTTA-24 for the third meeting of the Open-ended Working Group and the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties later this year. The scope of this item also includes the fifth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook*.

On your behalf also, I extend my gratitude to our colleagues at UNEP-WCMC and members of the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership for their continuous support and contribution to the preparation of documents for this agenda item.

Synthetic biology, risk assessment and risk management of living modified organisms

The deliberations on synthetic biology and risk assessment and risk management of living modified organisms have provided an important opportunity for the Convention and the Cartagena Protocol to work closely together.

Your inputs under this item will inform the need for further guidance to be developed, and any adjustments to the process for identification and prioritization of specific issues of risk assessment, established through a specific decision of the Parties taken at their last meeting.

Equally, your contributions will enlighten the discussion on the potential benefits and adverse effects of synthetic biology as it relates to the three objectives of the Convention, as well as developing a forward-looking programme of work.

For this agenda item, my sincere appreciation to all members of the ad hoc technical expert groups for their work on synthetic biology and risk assessment.

Marine and coastal biodiversity

In view of the diversity of uses, interests and priorities for the ocean, work under the Convention on marine and coastal biodiversity has evolved to address a broad range of issues.

Importantly, SBSTTA-24 will consider proposed approaches for the future of the Convention's process on ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (or "EBSAs") and ways to make the EBSA process more adaptive and able to better integrate growing knowledge of marine ecosystems.

Biodiversity and agriculture

Under this item, we will have an opportunity to underscore the critical role of soil biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides. I thank our colleagues at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for providing the basis for our discussions on the draft plan of action 2020-2030 for the International Initiative for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Soil Biodiversity.

Invasive alien species

The agenda item on invasive alien species is particularly critical as you may know it is one of the direct drivers of biodiversity loss.

Our discussions will, once again, focus on additional advice given by the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group and contained in its report on broader sectors' collaboration regarding classification and labelling of environmentally hazardous organisms.

IPBES programme of work

We welcome the IPBES rolling work programme up to 2030, which is in response to a request from the Conference of the Parties to the Convention at its fourteenth meeting. The four new deliverables—namely the nexus, transformative change and business and biodiversity assessments, and the technical paper on biodiversity and climate change—align closely with the request from the Parties.

Under this item, you may wish to consider the request for a second global assessment on biodiversity and ecosystem services and aligning its scope and timing with the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. As always, I once again wish to express my deepest gratitude to colleagues at IPBES for their support and continuous cooperation.

Before I close, I would like to sincerely recognize my team of staff at the Secretariat, who have gone above and beyond the call of duty during these trying moments to support this and other meetings, including the post-2020 global biodiversity process. This past year has been very challenging, but they have risen to the occasion and thus have my gratitude.

I look forward to your interventions on these agenda items. With the support of the Secretariat and the guidance of the SBSTTA Chair and SBSTTA Bureau, this meeting will provide the necessary support for our formal discussions at SBSTTA-24, leading us on the pathway to the adoption of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

I wish you all a successful meeting.
