



**STATEMENT BY ELIZABETH MARUMA MREMA**

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

**on the occasion of**

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

*“Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world”*

As this year's theme for International Women's Day makes clear, women's leadership is a critical element in the fight against the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Governments headed by women have fared better to date in battling the virus and maintaining the health and safety of their populations. At the same time, data on the impacts of the virus show a disproportionate burden on women – who are more subject to insecure employment, have higher responsibilities for caregiving, and face heightened risk of gender-based violence.

The pandemic has also resulted in a prolonged timeline for the development and negotiation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. This period now remaining for the agreement of the framework is a crucial one, for Parties and stakeholders to come together to determine ambitious global commitments to halt biodiversity loss, and in so doing, to contribute to a green and inclusive recovery.

Women's leadership and their full and effective engagement in the development and implementation of the framework is critical for its success. Those shouldering the greater share of the costs arising from biodiversity loss must have equal opportunity to lead decision-making processes related to biodiversity at all levels, and must be supported to have the capacity to do so effectively.

Putting a spotlight on the need for women's leadership at all levels of decision-making and action on biodiversity also emphasizes its importance for achieving transformational change. The ambition driving the development of the post-2020 agenda for biodiversity stems from the recognition of the dire state of the natural world and the little time remaining to change course. Effective leadership is a requirement for transformational change, and as such, so is the equal engagement of those who have long been excluded from these fora, particularly women, as well as other marginalized groups.



As the costs of exploitation of the natural world have not factored into our global economy, the costs borne by different parts of society, notably the poorest, and those without a voice, have not been counted. Effective leadership requires an awareness of the distribution of costs and benefits, and an openness to new ways of working and leading that inspires and engages others.

In order to achieve the 2050 vision of living in harmony with nature, everyone needs to be involved to help create change, at the lowest levels and the highest. Women's leadership is necessary to ensure the future we are working towards is one that will enable desired outcomes for nature and ensure equality for all.

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