



**STATEMENT BY ELIZABETH MARUMA MREMA**

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

**on the occasion of**

**INTERNATIONAL MOTHER EARTH DAY**

*“Restore our Earth”*

Mother Nature is calling for our help.

Global biodiversity is declining at unprecedented rates. One million plant and animal species face extinction, more than ever before in human history. Studies suggest we are overusing Earth’s biocapacity by at least 56 per cent. And the COVID-19 crisis has served to highlight just how critical the health of our ecosystems is for human well-being and sustainable development.

Continued biodiversity loss and runaway climate change present a fundamental risk to the healthy and stable ecosystems that sustain all aspects of our societies. These crises reduce the ability of biodiversity and ecosystems to provide essential life-sustaining services, from food security and nutrition to the regulation of water and air quality, but also pest and disease regulation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us the need to re-imagine and transform our relationship with nature, while promoting community and global health. It has shown that safeguarding the environment must be at the heart of development plans.

One way to achieve this is by taking the ‘One Health’ approach, which calls for managing ecosystems, including agricultural and urban ecosystems, as well as the use of wildlife, through an integrated approach, to promote healthy ecosystems and healthy people.

We also need to harness the power of nature to address the climate crisis in ways that limit global temperature rise without imposing unintended additional pressures on biodiversity. Nature-based solutions not only reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and sequester more carbon, they build resilience to climate change, as well as provide water filtration, flood buffering, and disaster risk reduction while improving soil health and biodiversity.

Finally, the solution to the crisis also lies in healing and restoring the planet. This year sees the launch of the UN Decade on Ecosystem restoration. Restoring ecosystems increases the supply and quality of ecosystem services over time towards desired outcomes supporting national sustainable development priorities.



Moreover, we must harness the economic benefits of nature and biodiversity, we must re-align incentives across governments, economic sectors and society at large, in order to make production and consumption more sustainable. We need to re-orient our investments from biodiversity-harmful activities to biodiversity-friendly or, at least, biodiversity-neutral ones. And, we need to make progress in mainstreaming biodiversity into economic and political decision-making, and into business models and operations.

The time to act is now. Confusion no longer exists about the importance of biodiversity. Last September's UN Summit on Biodiversity saw a record number of countries - nearly 150 countries and 72 Heads of State and Government – address the Summit; the Leader's Pledge for Nature, which includes renewed efforts to reduce deforestation, halt unsustainable fishing practices, eliminate harmful subsidies, and begin the transition to sustainable food production systems, has now seen 84 countries and the EU sign it; and, January's One Planet Summit saw world leaders highlight the destruction of nature as increasing the risk of future pandemics, and the launch of the PREZODE initiative, the first global initiative to help prevent the next pandemic through collaborative research and reducing pressures on biodiversity.

Let us take these efforts and further step up global ambition and commitments on nature. Let us set in motion the political momentum needed to develop a robust and ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework, to make progress on climate goals, to begin to restore our one and only planet, and set countries on the path to a sustainable future.

This is our opportunity to achieve our ambition of living in harmony with nature, let's take it.

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