

Opening remarks

Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity

All for One, Together towards Kunming Ministerial Round Table

20 May 2021

Your Excellencies, honourable delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address this esteemed round table on the occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity.

I thank the People's Republic of China and H.E. Mr. Huang Runqiu, Minister of Ecology and Environment of China, for steering the dialogue, and setting our collective sights on the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in Kunming, China.

All of you gathered here today represent the strength of the decades of collaboration that have brought the important work of the Convention to fruition. Working hand in hand, your countries, as Presidencies of the Conference of the Parties, and key actors have engaged in years of global action for biodiversity, beginning with the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit and continuing under the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity. My colleagues who serve in the United Nations and its agencies and serve as executive secretaries of the Rio conventions – you, too, are important players in the journey towards a sustainable future.

The Convention is at a pivotal point in its history, and you are poised to join hands and take the crucial steps needed to move towards a future of life in harmony with nature, together. In the coming months, 195 countries and the European Union will come together to adopt a new post-2020 global biodiversity framework. This will be the catalyst and the road map that will ignite and guide the transformations needed to safeguard the health of our planet and, therefore, our health, and our future.

We stand ready, together with the People's Republic of China, the host of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to support all countries, to ensure a successful and historic landmark event which will mark the beginning of our work to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, while simultaneously creating opportunities for the well-being of all people.

Our global community reached many important milestones throughout the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity, which marked the period of implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, agreed by Parties at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in Nagoya, Japan, in 2010.

Collectively, we built institutional capacities and supported governance systems; we raised awareness on biodiversity not only among policy processes, but also through public-private coalitions and the media. We facilitated convergence around cross-sectoral biodiversity mainstreaming for our well-being, as well as for sustainability, equity and resilience against future shocks.

It is also important to note that we have learned to work together to meet the challenges of climate change, land degradation, food security and biodiversity loss in a holistic manner. By addressing the causes and challenges in each, we help achieve solutions for all.



These are just a few examples. Yet, much more remains to be done, and, as we gear up for a new decade, the challenges that science has warned us about are getting too close for comfort. The COVID-19 pandemic, the changing climate and the pressures on land and food show us that the hour is late.

The difficulties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic have taught us much over the last year. The crisis has revealed that we have the power to change and adapt to a new reality. Through collaboration and multilateralism, we can quickly pivot. It has shown us that urgent transformational change is possible, and that we are at the centre of this deep transformation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we celebrate the International Day for Biological Diversity this week under the theme, “We are Part of the Solution”, I remind you to keep sight of the urgency and the opportunity to find solutions to our challenges. It is up to all of us to reach the right level of ambition to reverse biodiversity loss. We are part of the solution — if we work together.

I also trust that you will continue to channel your collective leadership to leverage investments, partnerships and other resources in ways that value, benefit and protect biodiversity, as integral parts of human development and global sustainability.

The journey to Kunming is in your hands. The decisions taken there will have profound impacts for the next century and beyond.

Let us inspire the deep transformations we need, with the full and active engagement of all stakeholders, to shift course and recalibrate our values and actions to attain our 2050 Vision of living in harmony with nature.

I wish you productive discussions.

Thank you.
