

Statement by Elizabeth Maruma Mrema
Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity
on the occasion of the
International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

“Leaving No One Behind: Indigenous peoples and the call for a new social contract”

It is with deep appreciation and respect that on behalf of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, I join this commemoration of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, observed yearly on the 9th of August.

I see this commemoration as an opportunity to listen to and learn from indigenous peoples. They remind us that we are all part of nature; and that living with nature is part of our humanity. Their knowledge, wisdom and experiences provide solutions to the global environmental crisis. Indigenous knowledge helps us to understand nature from different perspectives, including assistance to monitor, map and track the health of biodiversity.

Although indigenous peoples constitute 6.2 per cent of the world population¹, they represent the most significant portion of global linguistic and cultural diversity. Indigenous peoples' livelihoods depend on biodiversity. They cultivate a relationship with their lands that intertwines daily practices and knowledge with spiritual values. This relationship nurtures both cultural and biological diversity; for example, indigenous peoples food practices ensure sustainable use of biodiversity while entrenching ethical values around food. The bio-cultural approach teaches us that cultural and biological agendas are complementary.

This knowledge and approach to ensuring biological and cultural diversity are fundamental today when we are facing a global biodiversity crisis. Indigenous peoples' expert inputs and aspirations give us important direction on re-imagining our relationship with our planet's future. At the local level, indigenous territories and lands are examples of efficient conservation areas for nature and culture. A bio-cultural approach offers possibilities of a much richer experience of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

This year's theme for the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples – *Leaving No One Behind: Indigenous peoples and the call for a new social contract* – speaks directly to the heart of the Convention and to the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. In a general sense, a social contract refers to written or unwritten agreements, inspired by values

¹ International Labour Organization, [Implementing the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169: Towards an inclusive, sustainable and just future](#) (2020)

which speak to all those it addresses. In many cases, such agreements detail the purpose and sequence of steps to meet shared values. Building a social contract involves listening to all involved, to find points of common ground. Likewise, the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework is a place of common ground where nature is valued by all.

The fifth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook* reports that most of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets have not been completely met. The second edition of the *Local Biodiversity Outlooks* reports that the destruction of nature and the dramatic loss of biodiversity can be successfully reversed. Indigenous peoples' actions demonstrate how we can take decisive steps to protect nature.

It is clear that many challenges remain to chart a new course for the decade ahead. Indigenous peoples' values, collective actions and messages are central in this effort.

The Secretariat, together with the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, has organized two Global Thematic Dialogues for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities on the development of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework in November 2019 and in December 2020.

This Third Dialogue serves as a further opportunity for indigenous peoples and local communities and Parties to exchange views on the most recent draft of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, in preparation for the third meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Also, to support indigenous peoples' engagement at the third meeting of the Open-ended Working Group, the Voluntary Trust Fund, which supports indigenous peoples' participation in the CBD meetings, will support one to two representatives from each of the seven indigenous socio-cultural regions to ensure their full access to this upcoming online meeting.

The post-2020 global biodiversity framework proposes to set out a new social contract, which aims to respond to the urgent call to protect nature. This is critical to lead us toward the 2050 Vision, of *living in harmony with nature*.

Achieving harmony requires reflecting all essential elements in a consistent and unified whole. Indigenous peoples' contributions, and the social obligations these require, are essential elements to ensure we can all live in harmony with nature, and that no one is left behind.
