



Statement by Elizabeth Maruma Mrema
Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity
on the occasion of
Biodiversity PreCOP
Monday, 30 August 2021

Your Excellency, President Iván Duque Márquez
Excellencies, honourable delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address the high-level segment of the Pre-COP. This event marks the political impetus towards an ambitious and effective post-2020 global biodiversity framework, to be adopted at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in Kunming, China.

I wish to thank the Government of the Republic of Colombia and H.E. Mr. Iván Duque Márquez, President of Colombia, for convening us and focusing our collective sight on the critical elements and level of ambition needed to safeguard and put biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030.

Our gathering in Leticia, Colombia, allows us to take a unique outlook at the incredible natural and cultural wealth that we must safeguard and sustainably manage. There have been remarkable policy measures undertaken by the Government to protect the flora and fauna and cultural diversity of this region.

I applaud the Government and people of Colombia for their unwavering commitment to the diversity of life on Earth. Your leadership has inspired global action towards an inclusive, just, and sustainable pathway for nature and people.

As we focus on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, I wish to address three key points:

First, biodiversity is at the centre of the biggest issues the world faces. The loss and decline of biodiversity impact us all.

Our health, well-being, development and resilience significantly depend on biodiversity. The more we take a systems approach, the more we can visualize how biodiversity is inextricably linked to post-COVID-19 recovery plans, health and disease prevention, food security, equality, climate action and so many other critical sustainable human development issues.

Our economies are embedded in natural systems and depend considerably on the flow of ecosystem goods and services, such as food, other raw materials, pollination, water filtration and climate regulation.

Our societies are also connected to nature. Hundreds of millions of people rely on nature for the air we breathe, the food we eat, the medicines we need, the jobs for our well-being or survival, and value it as a significant cultural heritage and not as a free for all resource to plunder.

According to the 2019 OECD report *Biodiversity: Finance and the Economic and Business Case for Action*, globally, the services of nature are worth an estimated \$125-140 trillion per year, which is more



than 1.5 times the size of the global gross domestic product. More than half of the world's total gross domestic product, or \$44 trillion, involves activities that are moderately or highly dependent on nature.

Actors in economic sectors, in particular businesses and the financial sector, will thus have a central role to play in shifting their business model, operations and practices from nature-negative to nature-positive. Identifying and disclosing their dependencies and impacts on nature as well as associated risks are a critical step towards achieving this.

I am pleased to have seen several recent launches of key initiatives, including the Task Force on Nature-related Financial Disclosures, which I have the honour to co-chair together with my colleague David Craig. The engagement of and with the finance sector bodes well for the future.

Connections between human well-being and the health of our ecosystems are also extensive. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic provides evidence of the risks of habitat encroachment resulting in zoonotic diseases that can overwhelm our societies. National economies have shut down and health systems have become over-extended due to COVID-19 rolling back years of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. It is clear that we must protect the erosion of biodiversity to protect ourselves.

Second, putting biodiversity on a path to recovery is the defining challenge of our time. We stand at a decisive moment which requires transformational changes.

In reaching the 2050 Vision of living in harmony with nature, we must look at global and domestic leadership for integrated, ambitious and transformative change that secures a future path where biodiversity conservation and sustainable development are indivisible.

Science shows us that the changes needed to transition towards a sustainable and equitable future, but, to seize this opportunity, we need strong political will. We need to make biodiversity a long-term interest for all. The long-term prospects and benefits for people, planet and our prosperity also need to be strongly communicated and understood.

The fifth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook* outlined eight major transitions needed to slow, then halt nature's accelerating decline and move our societies into a more sustainable co-existence with nature, including:

- Land and forests
- Sustainable freshwater
- Sustainable fisheries and oceans
- Sustainable agriculture
- Sustainable food systems
- Cities and infrastructure
- Sustainable climate action
- Biodiversity-inclusive One Health approach, where we are concerned with the health, of people, wild and domesticated animals, and the wider environment all together.

Governments can steer the transitions and accelerate collective action necessary to reduce the negative impacts on biodiversity, typically outside the environmental sector; to assess the impacts, dependencies and values associated with biodiversity within national planning and budgeting processes, and to redesign financial incentives and policies, taking a whole-of-government approach to set us on the path of sustainability.

This brings me to my third and final point. Biodiversity must be valued in decision-making, at all levels, and accounted for as a long-term sustainability priority.

This is critically important if we are to improve our collective public and private responsibility to efficiently use and provide access to the goods and services that biodiversity provides.

Simultaneously, biodiversity must be allowed to regenerate so that such goods and services may be sustained or enhanced over time.

The adoption of an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework will provide a decisive direction to our collective road map for action.

This is a momentous opportunity to set the highest level of political ambition to reduce and reverse biodiversity loss, and to safeguard its invaluable contributions to people and planet, ensuring that the benefits are shared fairly and equitably, and the necessary resources and tools are mobilized to reach our 2050 Vision.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The journey to Kunming continues to evolve. Your steering of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework will have profound impacts for the next century and beyond.

Although the work on the post-2020 framework is ongoing, I am deeply encouraged by the unwavering determination to strive for a framework that brings to the forefront nature's value and co-benefits across all areas and sectors of the economy and society.

The successful implementation of the post-2020 framework will require the mobilization of partnerships, redirecting or repurposing resources across all sectors to co-create models of change that move away from unsustainable consumption and production and empower the necessary transitions to enable real on-the-ground change.

Let us use every opportunity to be bold and ambitious in our approaches, create impactful partnerships, and mobilize all actors to incorporate the value of biodiversity across public and private operations, so that, together, we can build a better future for all.

Thank you.
