

**STATEMENT BY MS. ELIZABETH MARUMA MREMA,
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

**AT THE JOINT OPENING PLENARY OF
THE TWENTY-FOURTH MEETING OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC,
TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE (PART II); THE THIRD MEETING OF THE
SUBSIDIARY BODY ON IMPLEMENTATION (PART II); AND THE THIRD MEETING OF
THE OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON THE POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY
FRAMEWORK (PART II)**

14 March 2022

Excellencies, delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the resumed sessions of the twenty-fourth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, the third meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, and the third meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Today, we gather as a global community to continue our journey towards the second part of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and the adoption of a robust and ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

I commend our COP President, China through Ms. Zhou Guomei to H.E. Mr. Huang Runqiu, Minister of Ecology and Environment of China, for the successful hosting of the first part of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, which saw the adoption of the Kunming Declaration, the establishment of the Kunming Biodiversity Fund, and an overwhelming expression of support and commitment by Heads of State and Government, Ministers, and other senior high-level delegates.

I would also like to sincerely thank Minister Runqiu and his representative Ms. Zhao Guomei, as well as all our colleagues in the COP Bureau, for your outstanding leadership in preparing for these meetings.

Equally, I offer my sincere thanks and admiration to the Chairs of the Subsidiary Bodies – Mr. Hesiquio Benítez Díaz of Mexico, the Chair of SBSTTA, and Ms. Charlotta Sörqvist of Sweden, the Chair of SBI, along with the Co-Chairs of the Working Group, Mr. Francis Ogwal of Uganda and Mr. Basile van Havre of Canada. You have faced countless new challenges during your time as chairs. Nonetheless, you have exceeded our expectations and thus I commend you for your persistency and visionary leadership.

To the Government of Switzerland, our sincere thanks for generously hosting and supporting these three meetings. Geneva provides us with the perfect setting for our discussions, as it is home to many of the world's most important institutions for health, international trade and development, human rights, as well as multilateral environmental agreements, all of which are key dimensions of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. Consequently, Geneva will offer us a daily reminder to strive for a framework that utilizes the whole of government, the whole of society, and all sectors of the economy.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to all participants and encourage your active engagement in the meetings. I have already seen many familiar faces, as well as some new ones. After two years of virtual meetings, I am personally delighted to see each and every one of you and I believe you too are happy to see each other probably for the first time since our last face-to-face meeting in Rome just before the world went into a total lockdown. We have more than 550 registered participants representing 164 countries joining in person and 700 joining virtually. Likewise, we have as many as 900 participants from organizations joining us in person plus 500 joining online for these meetings. I am pleased that given the importance of these meetings, we have been able to finance, on request, at least two representatives from all eligible Parties. My sincere and profound thanks go to the donor Governments for their generous support, even during these difficult times globally, that made this possible. In particular, I would like to recognize 13 Governments, namely, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Finland, Germany, Japan, Monaco, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland as well as the European Union.

I cannot forget to acknowledge the presence of indigenous peoples and local communities' representatives and experts in these meetings and for making their views heard through the three global dialogues for indigenous peoples and local communities that were facilitated by the Secretariat, in coordination with the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity. For supporting the presence of some of their representatives with us these coming days, my sincere thanks for the generous contributions received from six Governments, namely, Australia, Germany, New Zealand, Norway, Slovakia, and Sweden.

Distinguished delegates,

I would also like to take a moment to say a few words about the loss of a dear colleague at the Secretariat.

Those of us who have been involved in the meetings of multilateral organizations like ours know that our recommendations and decisions reflect the many hours spent in rooms such as this, discussing and debating each and every word and turn of phrase. But we seldom think about those behind the scenes, who spend their days, and often their nights, ensuring that our closely negotiated compromises result in a clear, correct, consistent and coherent text. This was the life work of our colleague, Orestes Plasencia, who held the position of Editor at the Secretariat since 2014. Orestes left us suddenly on 5 January. Orestes was a kind and good-humored colleague, who will be missed. Please join me for a moment of silence to remember and honour his life.

[pause 20 seconds]

Thank you.

Distinguished delegates,

The road to this meeting has been long and challenging, but together you have laid a solid foundation for our work. The Kunming Declaration provides us with clear political direction, with a commitment to negotiating a post-2020 global biodiversity framework that can effectively bend the curve of biodiversity loss and is accompanied by the necessary resources and an effective mechanism for monitoring and reviewing its progress. Ministers have also underscored many of the key elements, such as mainstreaming, redirection of subsidies, rule of law, and the full and effective participation of all stakeholders including the youth, women, indigenous peoples and local communities, business, financial institutions, NGOs, private sectors, etc. that must be part of the universal, ambitious, realistic, action-

oriented, and accountable global plan for biodiversity that will bring together world leaders in Kunming, China.

To guarantee that Kunming will deliver a truly historic agreement, we will need to be open and make clear and certain progress here in Geneva. SBSTTA and SBI must make their best effort to complete their work on key contributions to the framework and the Working Group must continue to advance the text of the framework as much as possible. Such progress will allow us to arrive with confidence at the second part of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and the related meetings of the Parties to the Cartagena and Nagoya Protocols, as well as build momentum for early deployment at home by sending a strong political signal of our aim to begin swift implementation, collaborate across our borders, and get the job done within this decade.

The world and us all are clearly eager for urgent action to protect nature and to transform our unsustainable relationship with nature. The Glasgow Climate Pact at UNFCCC COP 26, held last year, underlined the role of nature in mitigating the impacts of a warming climate, while also helping ecosystems and communities to adapt and build resilience. The United Nations Environment Assembly, at the second part of UNEA-5, held recently in Nairobi, took a bold decision and endorsed a historic resolution to ‘End Plastic Pollution’ and forge an international legally binding agreement by 2024 which will address the full lifecycle of plastic, including its production, design, and disposal.

As ministers highlighted last year in Kunming, China, we have no time to waste. The Global Environment Facility, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme, is already taking action to fast-track support to governments to prepare for the rapid implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and China is developing modalities for the Kunming Biodiversity Fund. A number of developed countries have already committed to double their funding for biodiversity. I commend these initiatives as well as those under the Sharm El-Sheikh to Kunming Action Agenda and call upon on all actors to both strengthen and act upon their commitments.

We will be working in the shadow of a global pandemic, and military conflict. These are acute threats to peace and human well-being. At this time, I would like to recall and refer you to the statement of the United Nations Secretary-General to the United Nations General Assembly made on 23 February 2022, whereby he made it clear that any unilateral measures conflict directly with the United Nations Charter. He appealed to the countries to Stop the military operation. The United Nations Secretary-General is fully committed to support all efforts to resolve both these crises.

Ladies and Gentlemen, these are heavy times, but let me remind us all that almost 50 years ago, the world’s governments came together at Stockholm, Sweden and agreed on the principles that guide us, even today, in our work to protect nature and human well-being. Let us continue that energy and commitment, and demonstrate, through our actions the power of international cooperation and multilateralism.

With the support of the Secretariat and the guidance of the Chairs of the subsidiary bodies together with the Co-Chairs of the Working Group and the Bureaux, we can collectively work together to achieve our common Vision.

Together with the force of my Secretariat team, we are all here to support you and your work. In this regard, we wish you all success in your deliberations in the coming days. As one wise person once said, *“Coming together is the beginning. Keeping together is progress. And working together is success”*.

All the best, Thank you.