

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

**AT THE OPENING PLENARY OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF
THE OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON THE POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY
FRAMEWORK**

Tuesday, 21 June 2021

Excellencies, delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the fourth meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. This meeting marks an exciting moment for the international community. Together, you will forge ahead with a process that carries great hope for a transformative global agreement that will mobilize action and secure the future of people and the planet.

We have come a long way since the first meeting of the Working Group here in Nairobi in August 2019, and it is through your tireless determination, passion and commitment that we have arrived at this moment in the soil of Kenya and here in Africa — where humanity first emerged from nature. It provides us all with the perfect setting for recommitting ourselves to this essential work and building momentum for our journey towards the second part of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

I would like to thank our COP President, 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 and the establishment of the Kunming Biodiversity Fund and for his continued guidance since then. I would also like to sincerely thank him, and his representative Ms. Zhao Guomei, as well as all our colleagues in the COP Bureau, for his outstanding leadership in preparing for this meeting.

Equally, I would like to thank the United Nations Environment Programme, as well as the United Nations Office at Nairobi, for hosting us in Nairobi this week. Personally, sincere thanks to Ms. Inger Andersen, Under Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, as well as Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Under-Secretary General and Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, and their teams for their support in organizing the meeting, for the valuable partnership and cooperation we have with UNEP colleagues and for hosting a lovely reception for us yesterday.

My sincere appreciation and admiration also goes to the Chairs of the Subsidiary Bodies – Mr. Hesiquio Benitez Diaz of Mexico, Chair of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, and Ms. Charlotta Sörqvist of Sweden, Chair of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation for providing outstanding leadership and guidance to their respective

bodies which have developed key recommendations on matters that will become an intricate part of the post-2020 package to be adopted at the meeting of the Conference of the Parties. To the Co-Chairs of the Working Group, Mr. Francis Ogwal of Uganda and Mr. Basile van Havre of Canada, you do not only have my sincere gratitude but also my best wishes and hopes for navigating the myriad challenges and opportunities here in Nairobi.

A special and heartfelt thank you also goes to the Governments of Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the European Union, for your timely and quick response to our plea to fund this meeting, which has enabled us to organize it quickly and efficiently. Nonetheless, we still have a big shortfall of the required funds for this meeting and the Secretariat has had to tap its reserves to complete the necessary organizational arrangements, so we do call on other donors to come forward to help us fill the gap.

I would also like to thank the donors who helped cover the participation costs of delegates from developing countries and countries with economies in transition, namely Australia, Austria, Canada, Finland, Germany, New Zealand, Norway, Slovakia, and Sweden. With your support, we have been able to finance the highest number of representatives ever to such a meeting.

I cannot forget to acknowledge the presence of indigenous peoples and local communities' representatives and experts in this meeting. For their presence with us this week, my sincere thanks for the generous contributions received from the Governments of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Malta, Monaco, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Without your support, their participation would have been hampered.

The presence of such a remarkable range of participants at this meeting signals the world's commitment to this transparent, participatory and inclusive process. We have more than 1,300 registered participants, representing 156 countries with over 675 joining in person and the rest joining virtually. Likewise, we have as many as 253 organizations joining us with 560 participants in-person plus 540 participants joining online for these meetings.

Last, and certainly not least, I would like to express my deep appreciation to my entire team at the Secretariat for their tremendous hard work and commitment, without which our work here would not have been possible. It has been my good fortune to have such talented, committed, and capable colleagues.

Distinguished delegates,

It has been nearly four years since the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, where we adopted the landmark decision that set this process in motion. Since that time, you have accomplished a lot that you need to be proud of. Your work has spurred new action and inspired new partnerships at the highest levels of government, businesses and civil society. You have raised the profile of biodiversity in the international arena, with increased political attention for biodiversity in major forums, such as the G20, G7, the UN Environment Assembly, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and many others. Public calls for action to safeguard nature — led by the world's youth — grow stronger by the day, as unfortunately nature continues to decline at unprecedented rates and the impacts of biodiversity loss truly hit home.

Most important, through countless long nights, difficult technical and scientific discussions, and intense political battles, you have persevered and laid a solid foundation for your work at this meeting. This is a significant achievement, but much remains to be done to deliver an agreement that can bend the curve of biodiversity loss, contribute to the achievements of the Decade for Action for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and facilitate the achievement of the 2050 Vision of the Convention. The world expects this meeting to produce a strong political signal that will build momentum for early deployment at home, accelerate swift implementation on the ground, and change our current course within this decade.

This meeting therefore carries an enormous responsibility. This is our last meeting before part II of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and our last chance to shape not only the framework but also the many moving parts that will interact with the framework and help us achieve our goals with urgency, as 2030 draws ever closer on the horizon.

We will once again be working amid the continuing threats of a global crisis, including natural and man-made disasters, but I am certain that together we can demonstrate once again the power of international cooperation and multilateralism and move our agenda forward in the coming days. To quote a famous saying, “We all do better when we work together. Our differences do matter, but our common humanity matters more.”

With the support of the Secretariat and the guidance of the Co-Chairs of the Working Group and the Bureau, we can collectively work together to achieve our common Vision and take another step closer to a better future for all.

Distinguished delegates,

Finally, I am honored to make an important announcement that every one of you has been patiently waiting for, for months.

Acknowledging the urgency to address the biodiversity crisis, adopt the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and launch its implementation, the COP Presidency and the Bureau have emphasized that the second part of the meetings of the Conference of the Parties must be held in 2022. Due to the continued uncertainties related to the ongoing global pandemic, China, as COP President, with support from the Bureau, has decided to relocate the second part of the meetings of the Conference of the Parties.

After a series of consultations among the Government of China as COP President, the Bureau, the Secretariat and the Government of Canada as the host of the Secretariat, it has been decided that part II of the meetings will take place at the seat of the Secretariat, in Montreal, Canada, from 5 to 17 December 2022.

Further information is provided in the notification that has just been issued.

I take this opportunity to sincerely thank the Government of China for its flexibility, strong support, leadership and commitment during these challenging and critical times.

I would also like to thank the Government of Canada, the host of the Secretariat, for its readiness to speedily step in and provide the location for our meetings.

You will appreciate that with this change of venue, there is a need for all Parties to be prepared to share the cost of holding the second part of the Conference of the Parties in Montreal. I count on all Parties for their timely support and commitment towards making this Conference of the Parties successful.

The Secretariat will continue to work closely, in the coming days, weeks and months, with the COP President and the Government of Canada to ensure that preparations are fully in place for a successful fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and the concurrent meetings of the Parties to the Protocols in December 2022.

I wish you all fruitful deliberations this week.

Thank you.