



**Statement by Ms. Astrid Schomaker, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity
International Human Rights Day - 10 December 2025
Theme: Human Rights, Our Everyday Essentials**

Human rights and the environment are intrinsically intertwined. By respecting and upholding human rights, we also contribute to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. The rights to adequate food, water, health, development, work, and even life itself depend on ecosystems that support us; similarly, those ecosystems flourish when human rights are respected.

We cannot protect the natural world while environmental human rights defenders are attacked, indigenous peoples and local communities are dispossessed of their lands and territories, and women and youth are excluded from decision-making.

As environmental decline accelerates, this year's theme reminds us that human rights are essential to the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of biodiversity.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework calls for a human rights-based approach to guide its implementation, fully acknowledging the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment to ensure that we achieve the goal of living in harmony with nature.

In its Section C, the Framework further recognises the roles and contributions of indigenous peoples and local communities as custodians of biodiversity, and calls for the respect of their rights, including over their traditional knowledge, lands, territories, and resources. It promotes gender equality and intergenerational equity.

In October this year, the international community came together in Panama City for the inaugural meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j). This Subsidiary Body is the first permanent body in the history of the Convention to focus on indigenous peoples and local communities as key partners in the protection of biodiversity.

The first meeting was a watershed moment in progressing towards the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in environmental governance. Progress was made in a number of areas, including the development of guidelines to support the role of indigenous peoples and local communities in spatial planning, restoration and conservation and environmental impact assessment. The proposed guidelines were transmitted to CBD COP17 in Yerevan next year for further consideration.

Next year will also mark the half-way point for the Convention's Gender Plan of Action to 2030. The Plan seeks to ensure that all women and girls, including from indigenous peoples and local communities and defenders of their territories, have equal opportunity to contribute to the objectives of the Convention by promoting their land ownership, access to resources, and meaningful participation in biodiversity decision-making.

These steps forward remind us that the universal realisation of human rights is not an abstract idea, but an essential element of our goal to protect biodiversity and to halt and reverse its loss. All must participate and no one can be left behind in this effort.

Every day, we must uphold human rights to protect biodiversity, and we must protect biodiversity to uphold human rights. This is how we will realise our shared vision of living in harmony with nature.