

**IDB Statement:**

*H.E. Dr. Hon. Omar Figueroa, Minister for Fisheries, Forestry, the Environment and Sustainable Development, Belize*



I am pleased to commemorate International Biodiversity Day with the international community today.

I do so with the fervent hope that 2020 will be the dawn of a new positively impactful relationship between humans and nature.

No doubt, despair may be more immediately felt as we witness and experience the tragic collision of the two in the COVID-19 pandemic and in the climate crisis.

Fueling that despair are the scientific findings of nature's unprecedented decline. Within a decade, we are warned that up to a million plant and animal species could face extinction. If this were to come to pass, it would be a tragedy for people and the planet.

The environment's sudden reprieve from the relentless pace of human activity in the past months has been the silver lining of COVID-19, for some. If not a silver lining, it certainly is a foreshadowing of the world that we could have.

For Belize and for the small island developing states I represent, that is the world we strive for. Getting there from where we stand now requires far reaching transitions to address the roots of our biodiversity crisis . It requires bold and ambitious targets and actions. Many SIDS have already taken the leap, committing to net zero emissions by 2050, designating vast areas of territorial seas and land as protected areas, and banding together with others in initiatives such as the 30x30 campaign

and the clean seas campaign. Our actions alone will not suffice. Achieving transformative change requires united action at a global scale.

We need a coalition of the willing to combat climate change, to change unsustainable consumption and production patterns, and to stop the proliferation of pollutants. We also need that coalition to also actively ensure that nature is conserved, restored and sustainably used.

Together, we must prepare to transition whole-of-societies and economies in a just and equitable manner to achieve 1.5°C. Human induced climate change is destroying the delicate natural balance in the myriad of unique ecosystems worldwide. As the planet continues to warm at a record rate, we stand to lose entire ecosystems, changing life as we know it.

Together, we must enable the transition to sustainable consumption and production patterns. Over 18 million acres of forest are destroyed each year for land use, and overfishing and overharvesting have already contributed to the extinction of numerous species during our lifetime. We cannot afford to continue these practices which are exhausting finite planetary resources, and causing irrecoverable environmental degradation.

Together, we must commit to work across sectors and stakeholders to transition away from dangerous pollutants and take steps to improve waste management. Dangerous chemicals released into the environment during manufacturing processes, combined with poor waste management lead to the exponential increase of pollution levels. Each year, over 8.8 million metric tons of plastic waste is dumped into the ocean, which not only destroys wildlife but also affects human health.

As we advocate for a decade of global ambition, our actions must address all of these interlinked issues in a holistic way. We need renewed focus on meeting our target of carbon neutrality by 2050 under the Paris Agreement. We need policy reform to deter companies and corporations from engaging in unsustainable practices, and afford more protection to our natural environment. We need to find ways to make more efficient use of resources, and generate less pollution and waste.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides an overarching international framework ready made to address all of these interconnected issues. Progress made across any one Goal reinforces the others, and this progress would only be possible with the joint and enhanced efforts of governments, private sector, civil society and academia.

As we near the end of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity this year, it is vital that we devise a more ambitious Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. We have 10 years of experience to draw on, combined with over 10 years of experience with our global development agenda. We need to align the 2030 action targets with the 2030 Agenda, and through both frameworks halt the net loss of biodiversity by 2030.

I believe this is also necessary to prevent future global crises like the one we are facing today. We must protect biodiversity not only for the future of the planet, but also for the future of humanity.