

"The road to New York, Nairobi and China: Actions for Nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals"

Ladies and gentlemen, your excellencies,

I am very pleased to participate in this online event on the international day for biodiversity. I hope this event will be the first in many in 2021 on the road to the fifth UN Environment Assembly in Nairobi, on to the Biodiversity Summit in New York and then CBD COP 15 in China. I look forward to engaging with a broad range of stakeholders in this process including business, indigenous peoples and local communities and civil society to discuss actions for nature.

Today I mainly speak in my capacity as president for UNEA 5. Of course, UNEA 5 will not just be about biodiversity. But biodiversity is indeed rising on the political agenda and will be an important part of the topics discussed.

The IPBES Global Assessment is clear. There is an urgent need for ambitious, effective and innovative actions for nature. Protecting biodiversity is a fundamental condition for sustainable development and essential if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Protecting nature is also key for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The theme of the UN Environment Assembly is *Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*. This is of course also what COP 15 in China is all about. So there is indeed a strong link.

Following COVID-19, the theme has not lost its relevance. It allows us to consider the relationship between COVID-19 and the environment. We need to better understand the risks of destroying habitats of animals and plants in the wild in the emergence and spread of zoonotic viruses and the benefits of safeguarding healthy ecosystems. We must work with nature, not against it. We need a green recovery or to build back better when we start to "re-build" our post-pandemic society.

The UN Environment Assembly can make a difference. Together we can act for nature.

Preparations continue throughout this year. I am actively involved.

I greatly appreciate the inputs I have received the last few weeks on what kind of critical elements that the UNEA ministerial declaration should contain.

We need to learn from each other to succeed. In June I will host stakeholder consultations to foster dialogue between governments and academia, the private sector, and civil society on topics related to nature.

The Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity, or Cop 15, is to take place in Kunming, China next year. I am happy that China is participating here and look forward to hearing their current thinking. You can rely on our full support to ensure the Kunming meeting achieves its very important objective, which is the adoption of the new Global Biodiversity Framework. The framework will play a crucial role to pave the way for biodiversity action.

The Summit on Biodiversity in New York in September is another major milestone on the road to Kunming. Heads of state will come together to commit and signal their support for an ambitious outcome.

The framework itself should in my view be universal, aid us to reverse the loss of nature and help us deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris agreement. Let's make it the most important multilateral environmental agreement for the next decade. And let us join forces doing so.

Thank you.