

Closing statement by the Acting Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, David Cooper, for the twelfth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Intersessional Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions of the Convention

Geneva,
16 November 2023

Thank you Mr. Chair, and let me start by thanking you and your Co-Chair for your hard work and guidance to us through this week. As we have seen in the last few hours, this has not always been easy, but you have nonetheless successfully guided us through this meeting, and to the end.

I would like to thank you and, through you, the Chinese presidency, for your continued support to this process in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. To our Co-Chair from the indigenous communities, thank you, and through you, I thank the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity and all of the friends of the Bureau for your strong support and the discussions that have taken place this week.

This week, we started with an in-depth dialogue, at which we increased our understanding of the role of indigenous languages and how important they are for the intergenerational transfer of knowledge, innovations and practices, as well as our understanding of the crucial role of women in this respect.

We have also been able to further the work and make important recommendations on the knowledge component of the Framework that will be taken up by the Subsidiary Body on Implementation.

We have also progressed the work on the Joint Programme of Work on the Links between Biological and Cultural Diversity, in particular with some recommendations for the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice and its process and the different types of indicators. We also have had the pleasure of hosting, at the beginning of the week, the Chairperson of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and, the difficult discussions that we have had this afternoon notwithstanding, I think that it is very important that we have listened to those recommendations and that the Conference of the Parties will be able to consider how to take this forward.

Of course, the main focus of your work this week has been on the development of a new programme of work on Article 8(j) and related provisions of the Convention emphasizing the importance of the role of indigenous peoples and local communities in the work of the Convention and, of course, the development of proposals for new institutional arrangements. Again, despite some difficulties, you have made significant progress this week. There have been a lot of very rich

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discussions in the contact group, which are now reflected in the recommendation for the Conference of the Parties. We can see that much of the text is in brackets, and we will need further discussion, but I think that you should still not underestimate the progress that was made this week and its importance.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework clearly acknowledges the important role and contributions of indigenous peoples and local communities as custodians of biodiversity and as partners in its conservation, restoration and sustainable use, and that is why the development of this new programme of work is so important to give further practical support to that recognition. Let me also just note that, as a matter of fact, just yesterday, the Second Committee of the General Assembly, in considering the annual resolution on the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and its contribution to sustainable development, also emphasized the importance of indigenous peoples and local communities for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and welcomed the process established at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, which we have been carrying out here this week to further develop a programme of work on this topic.

I think that there is no doubt that the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the programme of work have been welcomed by the Second Committee, and we will go to the plenary meeting of the General Assembly shortly to stress their importance and the importance that the entire international community gives to them. I would like to thank all Parties, all representatives of indigenous peoples and local communities, women, youth, other parts of civil society and the other stakeholders that are represented here for your hard work in moving us in this direction. We began the week (or before this week) with an international dialogue among indigenous peoples and local communities, women, youth and parties, which I think was a very important opportunity for all the parties (the indigenous peoples and local communities) to listen to one another and to understand, and clearly this need for dialogue will not go away. We look forward to further dialogues and further ways of understanding one another, recognizing the need to better understand different concepts, different cosmovisions, different world views, different epistemologies and different ways of knowing, and it will be very important to have more opportunities for further discussion and dialogue between now and the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, so that we may adopt some strong decisions at that meeting.

I would like to thank you all. I would like to thank the teams that have been supporting us this week, my colleagues in the Secretariat for their hard work, Olivier, Q'apaj and the team, all the staff that have been working to support this process administratively, the interpreters and all the staff of this centre. Let me also thank the Government of Switzerland again for hosting us here, for its hospitality. We look forward to returning to Geneva again. In the meantime, I wish you well. Some of you may be staying on for some more hard work on digital sequence information. I wish you all a safe return home, and we will continue the discussions on this matter at the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Thank you very much.
