



## Convention on Biological Diversity

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BUREAU OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE  
PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON  
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY  
2 December 2021

### MINUTES OF THE FIRST TELECONFERENCE OF THE BUREAU OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES IN THE INTER-SESSIONAL PERIOD

1. A teleconference session of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties was held via MS Teams on 2 December 2021 at 7:00 a.m. EST, to provide a briefing on the first part of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention (COP-15) and its concurrent meetings, as well as an update on the preparations for the second part of the meetings. Given the urgent situation arising from the implications of the new COVID variant for the upcoming meetings of the subsidiary bodies planned for January 2022 in Geneva, this issue was also addressed.

2. The teleconference was attended by the following members of the COP Bureau and substitutes:

*Presidency:* His Excellency Huang Runqiu (China)

*Africa:* Mr. Eric Okoree (Ghana);

*Asia and the Pacific:* Ms. Leina Al-Awadhi (Kuwait)

*Latin America and the Caribbean:* Ms. Helena Jeffery Brown (Antigua and Barbuda); Ms. Eugenia Montezuma (Costa Rica, representing H.E. Minister Meza Murillo); Mr. Joaquín Salzberg (Argentina, substitute for Costa Rica for matters related to the Nagoya Protocol);

*Central and Eastern Europe:* Ms. Teona Karchava (Georgia); Ms. Elvana Ramaj (Albania); Mr. Dilovarsho Dustov (Tajikistan, substitute for Georgia for matters related to the Nagoya Protocol);

*Western Europe and Others:* Ms. Gabriele Obermayr (Austria); Ms. Rosemary Paterson (New Zealand); and Mr. Gaute Voigt-Hansen (Norway, substitute for New Zealand for matters related to the Nagoya Protocol);

*Ex-officio:* Ms. Charlotta Sörqvist (Sweden), Chair of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation; Mr. Hesiquio Benítez (Mexico), Chair of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice; Mr. Basile van Havre (Canada) and Mr. Francis Ogwal (Uganda), Co-chairs of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework; Mr. Hamdallah Zedan (Egypt), COP 14 President representative;

Observers: Dr. Zhou Guomei (China), Representative of COP 15 President; Mr. Liu Ning (China), Deputy Representative of COP 15 President; Mr. Cui Shuhong (China), Mr. Xia Yingxian (China), COP 15 host representatives; Mr. Neville Ashe (UNEP); Ambassador Franz Perrez (Switzerland), host of resumed sessions; Ms. Paula Ximena Sanmiguel (Colombia), host of WG2020-3.

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3. The Secretariat was represented by Ms. Elizabeth Mrema, Executive Secretary; Mr. David Cooper, Deputy Executive Secretary; Ms. Jyoti Mathur-Filipp, Director of Implementation Support Division; Mr. Markus Lehmann, Officer-in-Charge, Science, Society and Sustainable Futures Division; Ms. Wadzanayi Mandivenyi, Head, Biosafety Protocol Unit; Mr. Taukondjo Shikongo, Head, Nagoya Protocol Unit; Mr. Wataru Suzuki, Global Coordinator for the Japan Biodiversity Fund; Mr. Worku Yifru, Senior Legal Officer; Ms. Gudrun Fosse, Head of Administration, Mr. Lijie Cai, Programme Officer, Ms. Gu Li, Programme Officer and Mr. David Ainsworth, Information Officer.

#### **ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING**

4. The teleconference was opened on 2 December at 7:00 a.m. EST by H.E. Mr. Huang Runqiu, Minister of Ecology and Environment and President of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The President welcomed the members of the Bureau and noted this was the first meeting of the COP Bureau itself since the first part of COP 15. He thanked the Secretariat for the hard work in helping them complete the mandate of the first part of the COP and thanked the Bureau for their support. Noting the new challenge posed by the new COVID variant to the upcoming meetings of the subsidiary bodies in Geneva in January 2022, he informed the Bureau the issue would be addressed under agenda item 7. Before inviting the Executive Secretary to deliver opening remarks, the President emphasized that the Government of China would spare no efforts to make progress and consult with Parties in order to secure as much consensus as possible for the post-2020 process, as well as fulfil their responsibility to deliver the second part of COP 15.

5. The Executive Secretary offered brief welcome remarks. She congratulated the Government of China for a very successful first part of COP 15 and thanked them for their support. She noted the event had fulfilled its vision to provide key political momentum and surpassed expectations and hopes for a global rally towards biodiversity and had laid a solid foundation for the second part of COP 15. She also recalled a number of gaps she had identified at COP-15, such as the gap between commitments and actions, and between ambition on outcomes, drivers of change and means of implementation, and highlighted the need to work to close these gaps in the coming weeks. The Executive Secretary also drew attention to the new global challenge with the Omicron variant, which has forced the Secretariat to pause the preparations for the meetings in January and evaluate the best course of action. She noted the Secretariat had been closely consulting with the Government of Switzerland and keeping the situation under constant review, and she looked forward to guidance from the Bureau on this matter.

#### **ITEM 2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

6. The President introduced the provisional agenda for the Bureau session, and after no objections and changes from the Bureau, the provisional agenda was adopted.

#### **ITEM 3. REVIEW OF OUTCOMES OF PART I OF THE FIFTEENTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES AND ITS CONCURRENT MEETINGS**

7. Under this agenda item, the President invited the Deputy Executive Secretary to provide a brief overview of the main substantive outcomes of these meetings, and to briefly share on the experience with the logistical arrangements during the first part of the meetings held in October.

8. The Deputy Executive Secretary began by indicating that the final reports of COP 15 and the concurrent meetings of the Protocols were being published on the website that day. He expressed appreciation to the rapporteur, Ms. Elvana Ramaj from Albania, who worked with the Secretariat to finalize the documents. He noted there had been one substantive decision by each of the three bodies on an interim budget for 2022 and noted that they would be coming back to the issue of the budget and other substantive items in the second part of COP. He also noted the Kunming Declaration was also available on the website and that the final report of the High-Level Segment would be published shortly. Regarding logistical matters, he outlined that the Secretariat and the host Government faced a number of challenges with the hybrid modality but overall the experience was very successful, and that the Secretariat would welcome feedback from the Parties. He emphasized the Secretariat would continue working closely with the host government to ensure a well prepared and successful meeting next year.

9. Regarding the outcomes of the High-Level Segment, the President thanked the Bureau members for their active support to ensure the adoption of the Kunming Declaration. He noted the Chinese State President Xi Jinping had announced the establishment of the Kunming Biodiversity Fund, which has gained lots of attention, noting that it was intended to be a multilateral fund implemented in cooperation with international institutions and for the main purpose of supporting biodiversity conservation efforts in developing countries, including LDCs and SIDs. He noted the intention was for the Fund to start functioning as soon as the post-2020 global biodiversity framework is adopted. He noted China would continue working closely with the Secretariat and would hold informal consultations regarding the modalities of the fund.

10. The Deputy Executive Secretary complemented the information provided by the President by informing the Bureau that many commitments and pledges to advance conservation were observed during the first part of COP, including a number of commitments related to finance, commitments from international organizations, civil society, business and others. He indicated that the Secretariat would compile a synthesis of the announcements made and would work with the Presidency and the Bureau to see how best to make full use of these commitments and provide more momentum to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and its implementation.

11. Members of the Bureau congratulated the Government of China and the Secretariat for the successful realization of the first part of COP 15. In addition, a member of the Bureau expressed an interest in receiving further information on the criteria for use of the Kunming Biodiversity Fund by developing countries.

#### **ITEM 4. REFLECTIONS ON UNFCCC'S COP26 AND OTHER RELEVANT PROCESSES**

12. Under this agenda item, the Deputy Executive Secretary provided the Bureau with an overview of the substantive outcomes of UNFCCC's COP 26, as well as an overview of the experience with logistical arrangements, with a view to apply lessons learned to part two of COP 15 and its meetings. He informed the Bureau that a small delegation from the Secretariat had attended COP 26 and had participated in a number of formal events and side-events. He indicated the Secretariat had been in touch with the United Kingdom Government and the Climate Change Secretariat with a view to learn lessons from the logistics side and substantive preparations for the meeting. This had been the largest meeting ever under the UNFCCC with approximately 30,000 delegates in total and about 10,000 participating at one time.

13. Substantively, the Deputy Executive Secretary noted there had been unprecedented attention given to nature and biodiversity-related issues with a number of Heads of State making reference to the Convention on Biological Diversity. This was reflected to some extent in the formal outcomes, which recognized ecosystem-based approaches (otherwise known as nature-based solutions) to climate mitigation. He noted an opportunity to increase attention towards adaptation and not only mitigation. He noted that the UK Presidency would be preparing a synthesis of these contributions to bring to the attention of the CBD, with a view to leveraging the advances under COP 26 to support the post-2020 process under the CBD. In addition, there is an opportunity to build synergies between the two processes and see how the COP 15 in Kunming can provide further momentum to COP 27 in Sharm El Sheikh, next year.

#### **ITEM 5. PREPARATION OF SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS FOR PART II OF THE FIFTEENTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES AND ITS CONCURRENT MEETINGS**

14. The President invited the Deputy Executive Secretary to provide a general overview of the agenda items and of substantive preparations and then invited the Co-Chairs of the post-2020 Working Group to add their perspective.

15. The Deputy Executive Secretary informed the Bureau that the provisional agendas for COP 15, CP/MOP-10 and NP/MOP-4 had been developed, approved and made available on the website, and now the need was to prepare a detailed annotation for each of these agendas for the second part of the meetings. This would need to be done, in light of the outcomes of the resumed meetings of the subsidiary bodies. He noted that, as per usual practice, the Secretariat would be preparing a compilation of draft decisions arising

from the different subsidiary bodies making the appropriate links to the outcomes of the WG2020. He highlighted that, accordingly, the number of pre-session documents would be limited, but that there would be a number of documents for the Protocols. These documents would be prepared and made available ideally 3 months in advance and at least 6 weeks ahead of the meetings. The other document that would be prepared is the programme of work and budget, which would be available 3 months ahead of the meetings. The Bureau would need to meet later to develop the organization of work for the meetings and division of work between the plenaries and the working groups. He noted close collaboration would be needed with the Presidency to look at how the High-Level Segment would be organized, and these proposals would be put together with the Presidency to present to the Bureau in good time next year. The Co-chairs of the WG2020 then made a brief presentation on the status of document preparation for the third meeting of the Working Group. They noted that they have prepared a Co-chairs' Reflections document that would be published very soon. They briefed the Bureau on its contents, noting that they thought it would be useful to assist and guide Parties with the process. They also informed the Bureau that a strong group of co-leads for the contact groups had been established. The Co-chairs noted this would be the first time they will have all three subsidiary bodies meeting concurrently, so a lot of flexibility and coordination will be needed. They indicated that some documents would be available shortly, and some had already been posted on the website.

16. The Bureau expressed its appreciation to the Secretariat and the Co-chairs for the update on the preparations for WG2020-3 and the second part of COP15. They encouraged the Co-chairs to post the missing documents as soon as possible in order to have enough time to prepare for the meetings.

#### **ITEM 6. PREPARATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL AND LOGISTICAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR PART II OF THE MEETINGS**

17. Under this agenda item, the President informed the Bureau that China and the Secretariat were committed to holding part two of COP 15 in Kunming and had started planning for this next stage. However, with the new Omicron variant there was uncertainty of the situation of the January meetings. He noted they would keep close review of the pandemic situation and would review the dates of the COP in close consultation with the Secretariat and the Bureau in case the January meetings were postponed.

18. The Deputy Executive Secretary noted that the Secretariat and China were working closely on a constant basis, with a view to holding COP 15 in Kunming as soon as possible. If there was a delay in the meeting of the subsidiary bodies, they would work to keep this delay to a minimum with the intention of holding COP in the first part of 2022. He noted the Secretariat was looking closely at the experience of the UNFCCC COP-26, as well as other meetings that will be organized in the coming weeks and months, in order to ensure a meeting that is inclusive for all Parties and stakeholders while ensuring the health and safety of all.

#### **ITEM 7. OTHER MATTERS**

19. The President turned to the question of the resumed meetings of SBSTTA-24, SBI-3 and WG2020-3 and the implications of the recent development of the pandemic regarding the Omicron variant and the travel restrictions that have been put in place.

20. The representative from the African region had informed the Bureau that the region had met last week to discuss the impact of the Omicron variant on the region. The fact that various countries of the region had been slapped with travel bans and cannot travel until the situation improves, would compromise the participation of Africa in the Geneva meetings in January. Therefore, Africa tabled a proposal to postpone the Geneva meetings in January in order to ensure all Parties could participate effectively in the meetings.

21. The President welcomed Ambassador Franz Perrez of Switzerland to the meeting and invited him to update the meeting on the situation.

22. Ambassador Perrez thanked the President for the opportunity to brief the Bureau. He noted that Switzerland was extremely committed to the CBD process and to supporting the Chinese Presidency to

make COP 15 a success. He noted that although all the preparations had been well under way for the meetings to take place in Geneva, the new appearance of the Omicron variant had created new challenges. He informed the Bureau that the Swiss government had new measures in place including a ban from countries with variant outbreak, quarantine measure for travellers coming from another 23 countries of concern including Canada (from which the majority of the Secretariat staff would be travelling) and strengthened measures for meetings that would apply until 24 January (although these measures do not automatically apply to UN meetings in Geneva, it is expected the UN may apply stringent measures soon). Finally, travellers may face additional quarantine measure upon return to their home countries. He noted that it was difficult to say with certainty what would happen in January and as Switzerland was not the official host of the meetings, the Bureau had to make a decision based on the current circumstances. He informed the Bureau that the next confirmed availability for the venue in Geneva was 22 May.

23. The Deputy Executive Secretary expressed sincere appreciation to the Swiss government for all the preparations made so far and noted that regrettably, in light of the summary provided by the Ambassador, the Secretariat recommended postponing the January meetings given that delegates needed at least 6 weeks to secure tickets, hotels and visas and that the new measures did not make it feasible to go ahead with the meetings as planned. He noted that the Secretariat had already paused the issuance of tickets and contractual agreements. The Deputy Executive Secretary informed the Bureau that the Secretariat had started looking for alternative options, including venues in Geneva and Montreal, with a view to holding the meetings in March, after the UNEA meeting. He reassured the Bureau that the Secretariat would try to keep the delay as short as possible and by the beginning of January would have to assess the conditions of the pandemic in order to confirm the arrangements.

24. Members of the Bureau thanked the Government of Switzerland and the Secretariat for the hard work in preparing for the meetings in Geneva in January 2022. The Bureau agreed that given the global situation, it would be necessary to postpone the meetings of SBSTTA, SBI and WG2020 to a later date, once the situation allowed for the full participation of all Parties and stakeholders. They also acknowledged the challenges of establishing alternative dates and venues and expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Secretariat and the Swiss government to provide them with information as soon as possible.

25. In discussing how to make the best use of time in between January and the resuming of the meetings possibly in March, the Bureau considered various options including holding a few virtual sessions in January to carry out first readings of items, as well as address other non-negotiated items. However, taking into account the heavy burden of work for delegates and the Secretariat staff, and the need for a break over the end of year holiday season, the Bureau decided not to hold any official virtual meetings in the coming month and to convene again in January to think how to best use the time of the delay to advance the process. Ideas of webinars and workshops in order to advance some of the work were also proposed.

26. The President thanked the Bureau for the active exchange and contributions on this matter and assured the participants that China would follow-up with the Secretariat regarding the impact of the postponement of the January meetings on the dates for COP 15 and would keep the Bureau informed.

## **ITEM 8. CLOSING OF THE MEETING**

27. The Executive Secretary took the opportunity to provide some final remarks and thanked the Bureau and her Secretariat team for their dedication, support and resilience in steering and navigating one of the most challenging times in the history of the Convention. She noted that despite these challenges, they had accomplished so much for the process and their work. She wished a happy holiday season to those who celebrate it and a Happy New Year to all.

28. The President thanked the Bureau and all participants for the discussion and wished them a happy holiday season for those who celebrated it, and a peaceful break for all. He closed the meeting on 2 December 2021 at 9:15 a.m. EST.