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**Opening statement**

**at the high-level segment of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the  
Convention on Biological Diversity**

“Ecological Civilization — Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth”  
United Nations Biodiversity Conference  
Kunming, China  
12 October 2021

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*Your Excellency, Mr. Huang Runqiu, Minister of Ecology and Environment of China,  
Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,*

2020 was a year of disruption. A year that amplified our awareness of the interconnected ecological, social and economic emergencies, and highlighted the systemic risks from our assault on nature.

The year surrounded us with extreme hardships. It brought into sharp focus the need for urgent action for the health and equity of all people, together with concerted efforts to halt climate change, land degradation and biodiversity loss.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations clearly stated in his State of the Planet address, “COVID recovery and our planet’s repair can be two sides of the same coin”.

At the Leaders’ Summit today, Mr. Guterres reminded us of this priority connected to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. Together with Heads of State and Government, he urged clear ambition, action and accountability on biodiversity.

I heartily welcome the commitments signalled during the Leaders’ Summit and the inspiration that Heads of State and Government bring to today’s high-level deliberations.

President XI’s remarks on eco-civilization demonstrate the importance of a harmonious coexistence between man and nature. I thank the Government of China for their contributions in response to global biodiversity challenges, and leadership on global biodiversity governance to strengthen multilateral cooperation on this important issue.

We warmly welcome the establishment of the Kunming Biodiversity Fund and the generous contribution of the Government of China. We hope this announcement will stimulate further support.

I would also like to take this opportunity to offer our sincere congratulations to the Government and people of China for the momentous celebrations this year, namely 110 years since the revolution, 100 years of the Communist Party of China and 50 years since China became a member of the United Nations, and now it is the host of our COP 15.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

The aspirations we heard from the Heads of State for inclusive, just and sustainable pathways for nature and people must now permeate the negotiations on the new global biodiversity framework. And you, as Ministers, must guide your negotiators to deliver on these imperatives.

We must lead by example, act with urgency and accelerate our collective efforts.

Science has been very clear on the combination of measures needed to bend the curve of biodiversity loss and put biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030.

There has been a visible rise in momentum behind the biodiversity agenda, with increasing engagement by different actors. Numerous coalitions, individual countries, indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as public-private-community initiatives, have publicly announced their commitments, working to address various aspects of the biodiversity crisis.

Prominent among these have been commitments to expand and improve protected areas. I applaud these commitments. I also encourage continued work to demonstrate the central importance of biodiversity in a myriad of sustainable development issues.

But these efforts alone are not enough.

Without addressing the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss and providing adequate means of implementation, in a manner that advances all three objectives of the Convention, including the Protocols under the Convention, such commitments will carry only partial, and inadequate, results.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

We risk repeating the failures of the last decade. Words, even targets, are not enough.

If we are serious in realizing our sustainable development goals and avoiding significant risks caused by the loss of biodiversity and degradation of our life support systems, then our commitments must be translated into effective policies and concrete actions.

These must confront the drivers of biodiversity loss in the short term and restore biodiversity over the longer term. Pledges and commitments bring the most impact when they are matched with planned, prioritized and persistent actions: catalysing partners, reforming incentives and mobilizing resources. These are essential to build confidence and deliver real results for people, prosperity and the planet.

Safeguarding biodiversity is the defining task of the decade, positioned at the centre of the biggest issues the world faces. We – you – have the responsibility to ensure that an effective post-2020 global biodiversity framework is successfully negotiated, and that urgent action is taken to implement it.

The framework will provide the rule book to address land and sea use change, enhance the conservation and restoration of ecosystems, mitigate climate change, reduce pollution, control invasive alien species and prevent overexploitation.

It is absolutely essential that indigenous peoples and local communities be empowered to act and their stewardship of biodiversity on traditional lands and territories recognized.

To be successful, you, as Ministers responsible for the Convention, will need to advance a whole-of-government approach that jointly defines the step changes required across government, to transform economic and financial systems and to ensure sustainable production and consumption as well as the reduction of waste.

The business and financial sectors also have a central role to play in shifting global financial flows from negative to positive outcomes for nature. Identifying and disclosing their dependencies and impacts on nature, and the associated risks, is an essential step in this transition. The Task Force for Nature-related Financial Disclosure, which I have the privilege to co-chair, is ready to assist in this transition.

Let us use every opportunity to be bold and ambitious in our approaches.

Inspired by German writer and plant scientist Johann Wolfgang von Goethe “Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do.”

Thank you.

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