



**Statement by  
Elizabeth Maruma Mrema  
Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity  
On the occasion of the High-Level Segment  
15 December 2022**

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Our COP 15 President Minister Huang Runqiu,  
Our COP 15 host Minister Steven Guilbeault,  
Deputy Secretary-General, Amina J. Mohammed  
Excellencies,  
Valuable stakeholders and colleagues,

On behalf of the Secretariat to the Convention on Biological Diversity, I welcome you all to Montreal.

The Secretariat is based here in Montreal, a city taking a leadership role in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. With the Government of Canada, we are excited to extend our hospitality to you over the course of this UN Biodiversity Conference.

As you are aware, biodiversity is needed to fight climate change, poverty and provide food security.

It is the basis for human well-being, health and culture and it is critical to supporting the achievements of most of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Sadly, despite our efforts, biodiversity is still being lost at a rate faster than any time in human history.

We are approaching the point of no return.

The UN Biodiversity Conference here in Montreal *must* be the turning point.

As we gather here, there is no question that there are innumerable differences in this room.

Different cultures, different interests, different levels of social and economic development.

Truthfully, it is most often our differences that make our world more beautiful and exciting.

The variety of life – amongst people and nature – is absolutely fascinating.

Yet, with all these differences, we can still come together with a common vision and goal – an ambitious but realistic and achievable post-2020 global biodiversity framework.



This is where we must focus our energy – the common ground.

Compromise may be needed but we must put aside our preferences for the common good.

### **Excellencies,**

I know that you would not be here if you were not prepared to face the challenge and the opportunity before us.

At part one of COP 15, the Kunming Declaration and the Kunming Biodiversity Fund made headlines, offering a glimmer of hope for the future of our planet.

Let us now turn our assurances into actions.

As Executive Director of UNEP, Inger Andersen, said a few days ago, “Action must be bold, and not bracketed.”

Let us face these upcoming challenges boldly with the same end goal in sight.

The issue of Digital Sequence Information has been complex and challenging but it is critical that Parties and all stakeholders must find a solution that allows for the ushering in of social justice and impactful benefit-sharing in the spirit of the Convention and its Protocols.

We must also close the gap between available financial resources and other means of implementation. With more than half of the world’s GDP estimated to be at risk from biodiversity loss, this is a critical moment in time.

You bear the weight of finding solutions to protect ecosystems, species as well as our land and water, use biodiversity sustainably, share benefits equally, increase financial flows, protect traditional knowledge, find financial mechanism, monitor it all and more.

I know you do not take these responsibilities lightly.

The time has come to fulfill the commitments made in the Kunming Declaration as well as pronouncements made for the High Ambition Coalition, Leaders Pledge for Nature, and the Global Ocean Alliance.

The successful adoption and later implementation of a strong biodiversity framework is what the world is demanding.

Yes, it will require additional financial resources to match the ambitions on action.

And once adopted, rapid implementation and transparency will be key for success.

I urge you to lead by example and work with all levels of government to ensure a holistic national approach and to find consensus to achieve the outcome that our planet and people are desperately seeking – to live in harmony with nature.

Over the course of the next few days, you will be making decisions that impact not only the rest of this decade, but the next two millenniums and beyond.

Therefore, as John Rockefeller once said, “Don’t be afraid to give up the good to go for the great”.

Yes, you all have different interests on the biodiversity framework, hence the four years of continuous negotiations, but now let us go for the final stretch of the greater good for humanity's sake, future generations, and this planet.

Thank you and I wish you all the wisdom and courage to act accordingly.