

**Statement by
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On the occasion of the opening of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of
the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity
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Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates
Colleagues and friends,
Ladies and gentlemen

Greetings to you all!

Where we are today - Tiohtià:ke, or Montréal, has historically been a gathering place for many First Nations. The United Nations Biodiversity Conference takes place with full respect of the continued connections with the past, present and future with indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community.

This means that our community of people from around the world is coming together in a place of dialogue, a place where many voices may be heard. This includes the voices of all stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and local communities, the youth, women, and so many more. All of which are critical to our work and to the implementation of the decisions made here over the next two weeks.

We have waited almost four years to come together as a Conference of the Parties and for meetings of the Parties and we are finally here because of the tremendous efforts of so many.

I want to express my gratitude to COP 15 President H.E. Mr. Huang Runqiu, and the entire Government of China, for your tireless efforts. Through the global pandemic, you found a way for us to not only hold the first part of this COP last year, but to also mobilize the commitments of the world through the Kunming Declaration.

Thank you also to Minister Steven Guilbeault and the Government of Canada, and through them, the people of Canada, for so quickly coming on board and mobilizing all resources needed to make this meeting happen. What you have accomplished is astounding. Thank you very much.

As we are gathering in Montreal, Quebec, I want to thank the province of Quebec for their hospitality and energy that they have brought to our meeting.

Thank you to the Mayor of Montreal, Valérie Plante, for your commitment to biodiversity, and also for welcoming us all to this beautiful city.

I also want to thank the people of and the City of Montreal for your hospitality. As the world congregates in the heart of your city, you have the opportunity to show how you are a leader in building a new relationship with nature.

The year 2022 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the signature of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Convention has inspired and promoted so much action in support of life on earth. While there is still much work to be done, there is much progress to be proud of. The Republic of Korea organized and co-hosted a conference celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention in Montreal this past summer. Thank you – your continued support is much appreciated.

I am so pleased to see so many countries and stakeholders represented in this room. The generosity of donors has been essential; without it, many would not have been able to be here to participate or engage.

In this regard, we would not have been able to organize the meetings, support the participation of developing country delegates, indigenous community delegates, and youth without the generous contributions of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, including the Japan Biodiversity Fund, the Republic of Korea, Malta, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the European Union, Tourisme Montréal and the Institut de la Francophonie pour le développement durable.

From Kunming to now here in Montreal, this is the moment for biodiversity.

This moment needs to mark the beginning of transformative change.

It needs to include the ambition needed to ensure that we halt the loss of biodiversity.

It needs to take the commitments we have heard for months and years and turn them into actions that will take us to the 2050 Vision of the Convention: living in harmony with nature.

Distinguished delegates, we know what success here looks like – an ambitious and achievable post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

Your presence signals the world's commitment to this transparent, participatory, and inclusive process. We have over 18,000 registered participants, representing 193 countries. Clearly, the world is showing up for biodiversity.

The last four years have been a collective journey to develop the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. There have been challenges but there has also been progress. In the meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group that just closed a few days ago, both were in full view.

Our conversation takes place at an important point in the life of multilateralism. Yesterday, the Secretary General, António Guterres, outlined the stakes for global governance and our environment.

We often say in this Convention and its two Protocols that we need to work with nature and not against it. I hope that you will apply this same sentiment to your work by working together to find solutions for the challenging issues you will be addressing.

Parties to the Access and Benefit-sharing Protocol and the Biosafety Protocol “families”, you have grown and carried out important work over the biennium. Here at the fourth meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing and the tenth meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, you will discuss key topics to advance implementation.

Distinguished delegates, after the meeting of the Working Group, it is obvious that you all have much to say and are keen on ensuring that you find your voices in the final text of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

I implore you to find your ideas and voices in a text that reflects consensus, compromise, and ambition.

I urge you to be the chorus, a blend of the very best, rather than a group of soloists, each one trying to sing louder than the others.

Listen to the sounds of biodiversity and be aware of the silence that will echo from the disappearance of the one million soon-to-be extinct animal and plant species across the globe.

Listen to the voices of the 2.3 billion people in the world who were moderately or severely food insecure in 2021.

Hear the cries the estimated 4 billion people who rely primarily on natural medicines for their health care.

Not forgetting the noise of our global economy which is dependent on ecosystems and the services they provide.

These voices and sounds care less about synonymous, words, commas, and semicolons; they care about action.

In this way, keep sight of what the framework is meant to be and what the world needs it to be.

The fifth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook opened with the words “Humanity stands at a crossroads with regard to the legacy it leaves to future generations.”

Here, in Montreal, the moment to take the right path is here.

When you are negotiating and finalizing goals and targets of the framework, the mobilization of resources, and all the other decisions for the Convention and its Protocols, please keep our common goal in mind.

This cannot be done without you – every single one of you counts. Please, give your all efforts to these next two weeks as we bring together this historic agreement and finally put our planet on a road to recovery.

I will leave you with this thought as you head into discussions and negotiations:

If you want to go fast, go alone. But if you want to go far, go together.

Let’s go forward together.

Thank you for your kind attention.
