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CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
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Kunming, China, 11-15 October 2021
and 25 April to 8 May 2022

REPORT ON THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT 12–13 OCTOBER 2021

A. Introduction

1. A high-level segment of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which included a Leaders' Summit and a ministerial segment, was held on 12 and 13 October 2021. The high-level segment, on the theme "Ecological Civilization – Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth", was attended by leaders from Parties, the United Nations Secretary General, ministers of environment and other ministers and ambassadors, other heads of delegation and ministers, as well as representatives of national and international organizations, local authorities and subnational governments, the private sector, indigenous peoples and local communities, civil society and youth. Owing to the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the high-level segment was held primarily online, with limited in-person participation in Kunming, China.
2. The present report has been prepared by the President of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, as Chair of the high-level segment, with the support of the Secretariat.

B. Leaders' Summit

3. The Leaders' Summit was introduced by Mr. Han Zheng, [*to be completed*]
4. The keynote address was made by Mr. Xi Jinping, President of China, following which statements were made by Mr. Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation; Mr. Abdel Fattah El Sisi, President of Egypt; Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President of Turkey; Mr. Emmanuel Macron, President of France; Mr. Carlos Alvarado Quesada, President of Costa Rica; Mr. Sadyr Japarov, President of Kyrgyzstan; Mr. James Marape, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea; Charles, Prince of Wales and Mr. Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations.
5. In his keynote address, President Xi [*to be completed*]
6. In their statements, other leaders [*to be completed*].
7. The Secretary-General, Mr. Antonio Guterres, thanked China for convening and hosting the Conference and for promoting the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The two-century-long

experiment with burning fossil fuels, destroying forests, wilderness and oceans, and degrading the land, been a catastrophe; humanity's reckless interference with nature would leave a permanent record, just as the traces of previous extinctions were still visible today. Humanity was well into the Anthropocene extinction, with a rate of species loss tens to hundreds of times higher than the average over the past 10 million years. That rate was accelerating with over a million species of plants and animals at risk of extinction, many within decades. The damage done had already affected the lives and livelihoods of millions, contributing to hunger, sickness and unemployment, with indigenous people and other vulnerable groups among the worst affected. An ecosystem collapse could cost almost three trillion dollars annually with its greatest impact being felt by the poorest and most highly indebted countries.

8. The world had to reverse its trajectory; it was losing its suicidal war against nature. Together with the upcoming climate negotiations, the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties was the last chance to lay the foundations for a permanent peace agreement with nature. An ambitious and effective post-2020 global biodiversity framework, with clear targets and benchmarks, should work in synergy with the Paris Agreement on climate change, and other multilateral agreements, to achieve bold action in five areas. The post-2020 framework had to support the legal right of all people, everywhere, to a healthy environment, including the rights of indigenous peoples who were stewards of biodiversity. It had to support national policies and programmes that tackled the drivers of biodiversity loss, especially unsustainable consumption and production. It had to transform national and global accounting systems, so they reflected the true cost of economic activities, including their impact on nature and the climate. It had to deliver a package of support to developing countries that included significant financial resources and technology transfer. Finally, there had to be an end to perverse subsidies, including those to agriculture, that made it profitable to attack nature and pollute the environment; those funds should be redirected into repairing the damage that had already been done. Action on those five areas would go far beyond biodiversity, it would contribute across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Young people stood to lose the most from the devastation of natural environments and the loss of species; they were crying out for change and were mobilizing for a sustainable future for all and he urged bold and ambitious action for the future of all generations to come.

C. Opening statements

9. The high-level segment was chaired by Mr. Runqiu Huang, Minister of Ecology and Environment of China, President of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, who opened the meeting at 3.55 p.m.¹ on 12 October 2021. Welcoming the participants, Mr. Huang echoed the points made by President Xi during the Leaders' Summit held immediately preceding the opening of the high-level segment and called on delegates to summon their political will and increase the momentum to make biodiversity protection an important part of conservation efforts. As the first global agreement on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, the Convention on Biological Diversity had played an important role in the global biodiversity conservation process in the 29 years since its adoption. Yet, species extinction was accelerating, and biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation posed a significant risk to human survival and development; and, now, the sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had ravaged the planet, thrown the world economy into deep recession and led to unprecedented crises. Recalling that the aim of the high-level segment was to raise political aspirations and create strong political momentum, Mr. Huang invited all participants to express their views frankly, share their thoughts and make a joint effort to ensure the success of the meeting.

10. Opening statements were also made by Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

11. Ms. Anderson thanked the Government of China and the Secretariat for their commitment to making the conference happen despite the many challenges of the pandemic. The conference was historic,

¹ All times shown in the present report are in China Standard Time (UTC+8).

and its outcome would be remembered. The Sustainable Development Goals, notably those to end hunger and poverty, depended on biodiversity and a natural capital stock up to 80 per cent greater than current levels. The survival of other species and the future of millions of people and of economies and businesses was at stake.

12. Ms. Anderson noted that the draft Kunming Declaration showed that Parties grasped the scale and breadth of the task ahead and were prepared to increase ambition and action. Nevertheless, once agreed, the post-2020 global biodiversity framework would need to be implemented in the context of a broader cultural shift and on the understanding that a nature-positive future depended on ambition and action across all its elements. Every commitment would have to be backed by policies, legislation and delivery through a whole-of-government approach designed to tackle the drivers of biodiversity loss. Within the United Nations system, the three Rio conventions, covering climate, biodiversity and land, were indivisible and needed a common approach to biodiversity, which UNEP was working on, with the strong support of the Secretary-General. The financing gap had to be closed by reducing the harmful use of financial resources, redirecting financial flows to align them with nature, transforming national and global accounting systems to reflect the true cost of nature in economic activities, generating new international and domestic financial resources and increasing the efficiency of existing resource use. With that aim, UNEP, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) would fast-track support to enable countries to jumpstart action once the new framework was adopted. In addition, reforms were needed to make economies circular and to cease the unsustainable use of natural resources. The right to a healthy environment, recently reaffirmed by the United Nations Human Rights Council, had to be acted on, and the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities protected, all requiring political will, resources and capacities, the tackling of vested interests and other barriers to action and the demonstration of true transparency and accountability on national and international commitments.

13. Ms. Anderson further noted that the current conference, in conjunction with the Glasgow climate conference, was an opportunity to shift course and agree on the pathway to “the world we want”. Parties were urged to ensure that the conference would be remembered as the moment societies and economies were set on the path to rebuilding the biodiversity upon which the world relied.

14. In her remarks, Ms. Mrema echoed many of Ms. Anderson’s messages. She began by recalling that 2020, a year of disruption, had amplified awareness of the interconnected ecological, social and economic emergencies, highlighted the systemic risks of people’s assault on nature and brought into focus the need for urgent action to halt climate change, land degradation and biodiversity loss. The Secretary-General, in his address on the state of the planet, had said that “COVID recovery and our planet’s repair can be two sides of the same coin”, and, at the Leaders’ Summit just ended, he had linked that sentiment to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and urged clear ambition, action and accountability on biodiversity. Noting that nature and its vital contributions to people were deteriorating worldwide at a rate and scale unprecedented in human history, Ms. Mrema highlighted key findings of a recent global assessment, including that three quarters of the Earth’s land surface was significantly altered, 1 million plant and animal species were threatened with extinction, and 14 out of the 18 contributions that people derived from nature were in decline. She reiterated the pivotal role of nature in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and called for a transformative change with unprecedented levels of ambition that could place biodiversity at the centre of any human endeavour.

15. Welcoming the commitments signalled during the Leaders’ Summit, Ms. Mrema highlighted President Xi’s remarks on eco-civilization and thanked the Government of China for its leadership in strengthening multilateral cooperation on global biodiversity governance and its establishment of and contribution to the Kunming Biodiversity Fund. The aspirations of the Heads of State for inclusive, just and sustainable pathways for nature and people should now permeate the negotiations on the new global biodiversity framework, and ministers were called upon to guide negotiators to deliver on those aspirations.

16. Ms. Mrema noted that science had clearly defined the measures needed to place biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030 and the momentum behind the biodiversity agenda had visibly increased, with

numerous coalitions, countries, indigenous peoples and local communities and public-private-community initiatives announcing commitments on various aspects of the biodiversity crisis, including expansion and improvement of protected areas. While continued work was encouraged, those efforts alone were not enough; unless the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss were addressed and adequate means of implementation were provided, such commitments would be inadequate and the failures of the last decade risked being repeated. To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and avoid the significant risks of biodiversity loss and degradation of the world's life support systems, commitments had to be translated into effective policies and concrete actions to confront the drivers of biodiversity loss in the short term and restore biodiversity over the longer term. Planned, prioritized and persistent actions that catalysed partners, reformed incentives and mobilized resources were needed to build confidence and deliver real results.

17. Ms. Mrema stated that safeguarding biodiversity was the defining task of the decade, and the conference participants had the responsibility to ensure that an effective post-2020 global biodiversity framework was successfully negotiated and action was taken to implement it. The framework would provide the rule book for changing land and sea use, enhancing ecosystem conservation and restoration, mitigating climate change, reducing pollution, controlling invasive alien species and preventing overexploitation, and should empower indigenous peoples and local communities to act and recognize their stewardship of biodiversity on traditional lands and territories. Ministers responsible for the Convention would need to advance a whole-of-government approach that defined the step changes required across government to transform economic and financial systems, ensure sustainable production and consumption and reduce waste, and the business and financial sectors would need to shift global financial flows from negative to positive outcomes for nature and identify and disclose their dependencies and impacts on nature and the associated risks, a transition that could be supported by the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosure.

18. In closing, Ms. Mrema called on Parties to use every opportunity to be bold and ambitious and quoted German writer and plant scientist Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, saying “Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do.”

D. Moderated panels

19. During the opening plenary of the high-level segment, three panel discussions were held on the theme of “Ecological civilization – building a shared future for all life on Earth”, moderated by the President of the Conference of the Parties. The first panel focused on what “ecological civilization” meant for food, health, jobs, trade and education, the second on how to align financial and build capacity for an ecological civilization, and the third on how promoting synergistic action for biodiversity, climate, land and oceans could contribute to implementing the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. In each case, the President of the Conference of the Parties introduced the topic and addressed questions to the panellists.

20. An introductory presentation was made by Ms. Anne Larigauderie, Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), Ms. Larigauderie, set the scene by introducing the 2019 IPBES *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services* and highlighting the fact that nature and its vital contributions to people are deteriorating worldwide at an unprecedented rate and scale in human history. She quoted key findings from the global assessment, including that three quarters of the land surface is significantly altered, 1 million plant and animal species are threatened with extinction, and 14 out of the 18 contributions which people derive from nature are in decline. She reiterated the pivotal role of nature in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and called for a transformative change with unprecedented levels of ambition that could place biodiversity at the centre of any human endeavours.

Panel 1: What does “ecological civilization” mean for food, health, jobs, trade and education?

21. The panellists for the first panel were Mr. Dongyu Qu, Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); Ms. Zsuzsanna Jakab, Deputy Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO); Ms. Chihoko Asada-Miyakawa, Assistant Director General of the

International Labour Organization (ILO); and Mr. Xing Qu, Deputy Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

22. A summary of the panel discussion is provided in the annex to the present report.

Panel 2: Aligning finance and building capacity for an ecological civilization

23. The panellists for the second panel were Mr. David Malpass, President of the World Bank; Mr. Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, Chief Executive Officer of the Global Environment Facility; and Mr. Achim Steiner, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme.

24. A summary of the panel discussion is provided in the annex to the present report.

Panel 3: Promoting synergistic action for biodiversity, climate, land and oceans

25. The panellists for the third panel were Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD); Ms. Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); Mr. Peter Thompson, the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean; Mr. Bruno Oberle, Director General of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN); and Ms. Rebecca Lent, Executive Secretary of the International Whaling Commission (on behalf of the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions).

26. A summary of the panel discussion is provided in the annex to the present report.

27. Following the panel discussions, Ms. Josefa Cariño Tauli, a young member of the Ibaloi-Kankanaey people of the Philippines, spoke of the need for urgent, transformative action by all actors. She described the ongoing role of indigenous peoples in protecting and defending the land, and encouraged decision-makers to take action for a clean, safe and healthy environment, both as a human right and to halt the unsustainable patterns of the past. There were currently many challenges facing biodiversity and the environment, but movement for change was growing among young people, local communities and others, and she urged world leaders to provide the leadership needed for a transformational post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

28. Summing up the panel discussions, the President of the Conference of the Parties said that humans were part of nature and there was a need for cross-disciplinary action to achieve progress across all areas of sustainable development. There was broad consensus that biodiversity was the foundation of the economy and human health, and that, given the severe challenges of biodiversity loss, there was a need to commit to promoting sustainable development by promoting biodiversity protection and ecological civilization. All representatives should commit to taking practical actions to achieve the goal of living in harmony with nature. He highlighted the need to raise awareness, from the local to the national level, in non-governmental organizations and the private sector, and among the media and the public, in order to achieve the goal of living in harmony with nature.

E. Ministerial round tables

29. Two round-table discussions were held on the first day of the high-level segment, 12 October 2021, one on putting biodiversity on a path to recovery and the other on closing the financing gap and ensuring the means of implementation. Two further round tables were held on 13 October 2021, one on biodiversity conservation and sustainable development and the other on knowledge, innovation and benefit-sharing. The summaries of the round-table discussions are set out in the annex to the present report.

F. Closing plenary

30. The closing plenary session, on 13 October 2021, began with reports from the co-chairs of the round tables. The summaries are contained in the annex to the present report.

31. The Chair then presented the Kunming Declaration on Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth, prepared by the Government of China following extensive consultation with

the other Parties to the Convention. The declaration was a strong statement of political will in support of the creation of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework and was adopted by acclamation (for the text of the declaration, see CBD/COP/15/5/Add.1).

32. Following the adoption of the Kunming Declaration, statements were made by the representatives of Costa Rica (on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group), Iceland (on behalf of Australia, Canada, Israel, Monaco, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America), India (on behalf of Asian and Pacific Group), Senegal (on behalf of the African Group) and Slovenia (on behalf of the European Union and its member States).

33. Regional representatives welcomed the Kunming Declaration as a solid foundation for continued work on an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework that contributed to achieving all three objectives of the Convention. They commended the encouraging commitments made during the week while acknowledging the challenges that still lay ahead, both in finalizing the framework and then in implementing it, and reaffirmed their commitment to the high ambition and international cooperation called for to meet the challenges ahead, in line with the 2030 Agenda and in synergy with the Rio conventions and the needs of developing countries in implementing the framework.

34. Statements were also made by representatives of Amundi, BirdLife International, the CBD Alliance, the CBD Women's Caucus, the Global Youth Biodiversity Network, the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (also on behalf of the Advisory Committee on Subnational Governments and Biodiversity (coordinated by Regions4 and the Government of Quebec), the Group of Leading Subnational Governments towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (coordinated by the Aichi Prefecture), the European Committee of the Regions and the Edinburgh Process Partners), the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, the Mengiu Group, Natura and the Smithsonian Institute.

35. The representatives of major stakeholder groups also welcomed the Kunming Declaration, with its acknowledgment of their important roles and contributions to the development of an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework, as well as its commitments in that regard. They were encouraged by the concept of an ecological civilization that built a shared future for all life on Earth, and outlined additional areas that they still hoped to see addressed in the framework, and reiterated their commitment to working with all stakeholders, at all levels, to ensure that the post-2020 global biodiversity framework would achieve the needed transformative change.

36. The Executive Secretary then delivered closing remarks. She noted that participants had heard from nine Heads of State and Government, with 99 interventions from ministers and other high-level representatives from 97 countries in discussions that focused on concerns, commitments and actions to place biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030. It was evident that the intensification of biodiversity loss sent a clear call for urgent action, and the question now was whether that action would be commensurate with the challenge.

37. The Kunming Declaration was a step in the right direction, with Parties undertaking to negotiate an effective post-2020 global biodiversity framework matched by the necessary resources, with an effective monitoring and review mechanism. It also outlined the key elements for success, including mainstreaming, redirection of subsidies, rule of law, and full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities.

38. Noting that encouraging commitments had been heard from Heads of State and ministers during the high-level segment, the Executive Secretary highlighted those of President Xi Jinping to build upon China's current efforts to protect biodiversity and combat climate change and to establish and generously contribute to the Kunming Biodiversity Fund, the joint commitment of GEF, UNDP and UNEP to support the development of national targets and their integration into national biodiversity strategies and action plans, and Japan's announcement of an additional contribution to the Japan Biodiversity Fund. She also outlined commitments for nature conservation made in the lead-up to the fifteenth meeting of the

Conference of the Parties, which included: (a) a \$5 billion pledge for land, inland water and sea protection and conservation; (b) a doubling of external funding for biodiversity for the most vulnerable countries by the European Union; (c) Green Climate Fund investments of close to \$9 billion for ecosystem restoration; (d) European country commitments to dedicate 30 per cent of their climate finance to also support biodiversity; and (e) a 12 trillion euro commitment by 75 financial institutions to protect and restore biodiversity through their finance activities and investments. Such commitments brought hope.

39. Concluding her remarks, Ms. Mrema recalled that the second part of the fifteenth meeting would be a historic opportunity to set an example on a global agreement for action on biodiversity. Much remained to be done, requiring the support of indigenous peoples and local communities, subnational and local authorities, civil society, youth, women and the business and financial sectors. To prevail, everyone would have to work together to resolve unavoidable trade-offs and advance measures that offered multiple benefits to people and the planet. She called on leaders to be bold, to demonstrate how their countries were a powerful force for the global commons and to actively engage in leading the journey to Kunming 2022.

40. Mr. Huang, in his closing remarks, said that the statements made, discussions and sharing of experiences during the ministerial segment had given strong political impetus to the process of developing the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and boosted confidence in the possibilities for protecting biodiversity. He thanked the participants for their flexibility in the face of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and for their active participation and contribution, which had smoothed the way for the adoption of the Kunming Declaration and ensured the success of the online meeting.

41. Mr. Huang declared the high-level ministerial segment closed at 4.55 p.m., on 13 October 2021.²

² Statements made during the closing plenary of the high-level segment and provided to the Secretariat can be found at <https://www.cbd.int/conferences/2021-2022/cop-15-hls/documents>, as received from the Party or observer concerned.

Annex

[to be inserted]