

Summary of the UN Biodiversity Conference (Part One): 11-15 October 2021

The UN Biodiversity Conference, originally scheduled to take place in 2020 but delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, is not just another international environmental conference. Biodiversity is declining at an unprecedented rate and the drivers of decline show no sign of abatement. Humanity stands at a crossroads. Biodiversity and the ecosystem services nature provides are crucial for human survival and wellbeing. Continued biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation will have profound consequences in human societies and will pose an existential threat to future generations.

The UN Biodiversity Conference's task is to set the path for a sustainable future by systemizing the actions needed to ensure transformative change to rebuild a harmonious relationship between nature and people. Examples of progress exist from around the world, various initiatives point in the right direction, and innovative options are available that can halt and reverse biodiversity loss. It is hoped that the development and adoption of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF) will be this path.

The first part of the UN Biodiversity Conference convened virtually from 11-15 October 2021, with a limited number of delegates physically present in Kunming, China. The Conference comprised the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the 10th meeting of the COP serving as the meeting of the parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CP COP/MOP 10), and the fourth meeting of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing (NP COP/MOP 4). The meeting's theme is "Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth." It attracted more than 1,500 in-person participants and over 3,000 virtual participants.

Highlights of the meeting included:

- the adoption of the Kunming Declaration, which called for urgent and integrated action to reflect biodiversity considerations in all sectors of the global economy;
- a high-level segment, which over two days revealed a renewed sense of commitment and urgency from Heads of State and Government, environment ministers, and other leaders;
- commitments by parties and organizations to step up efforts for biodiversity conservation; and

- increased involvement of the private sector, including an open letter from business CEOs to world leaders, urging for bold action.

Parties further:

- approved the interim budget for 2022 for the CBD and its protocols, allowing for the smooth continuation of work;
- received reports from subsidiary bodies' Chairs on recent meetings, and from the Chairs of the protocols' compliance committees; and
- addressed procedural issues.

The second part of the Conference is scheduled to be held in person in Kunming, China, from 28 April – 8 May 2022. Meetings of the CBD's subsidiary bodies and of the Working Group on the GBF are scheduled to take place in person in Geneva, Switzerland, from 12-28 January 2022.

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A Brief History of the Convention on Biological Diversity

The CBD was adopted on 22 May 1992 and opened for signature on 5 June 1992 at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (the Rio “Earth Summit”). The CBD entered into force on 29 December 1993. There are currently 196 parties to the Convention, which aims to promote the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the governing body of the Convention, and there are currently four bodies meeting intersessionally: the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA); the Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions; the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI); and the Open-ended Working Group on the GBF. The COP also serves as the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) to the protocols adopted under the Convention.

Key Turning Points

Three protocols have been adopted under the Convention. The Cartagena Protocol (CP) on Biosafety (January 2000) addresses the safe transfer, handling, and use of living modified organisms (LMOs) that may have adverse effects on biodiversity, taking into account human health, with a specific focus on transboundary movements. It entered into force on 11 September 2003 and currently has 173 parties. The Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (October 2010) provides for international rules and procedures on liability and redress for damage to biodiversity resulting from LMOs. It entered into force on 5 March 2018 and currently has 49 parties. The Nagoya Protocol (NP) on Access and Benefit-sharing (October 2010) sets out an international framework for the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and transfer of relevant technologies, taking into account all rights over those resources and technologies, and by appropriate funding, thereby contributing to the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable use of its components. It entered into force on 12 October 2014 and currently has 131 parties.

Other major decisions have included:

- the Jakarta Mandate on marine and coastal biodiversity (COP 2, November 1995, Jakarta, Indonesia);
- work programmes on agricultural and forest biodiversity (COP 3, November 1996, Buenos Aires, Argentina);
- the Global Taxonomy Initiative (COP 4, May 1998, Bratislava, Slovakia);
- work programmes on Article 8(j), dry and sub-humid lands, and incentive measures (COP 5, May 2000, Nairobi, Kenya);
- the Bonn Guidelines on Access and Benefit-sharing and the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (COP 6, April 2002, The Hague, the Netherlands);
- work programmes on mountain biodiversity, protected areas, and technology transfer, the Akwé: Kon Guidelines for cultural, environmental, and social impact assessments, and the Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for sustainable use (COP 7, February 2004, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia);

- a work programme on island biodiversity (COP 8, March 2006, Curitiba, Brazil);
- a resource mobilization strategy, and scientific criteria and guidance for marine areas in need of protection (COP 9, May 2008, Bonn, Germany);
- the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, including the Aichi Targets, and a decision on activities and indicators for the implementation of the resource mobilization strategy (COP 10, October 2010, Nagoya, Japan);
- an interim target of doubling biodiversity-related international financial resource flows to developing countries by 2015, and at least maintaining this level until 2020, coupled with targets aiming to improve the robustness of baseline information (COP 11, October 2012, Hyderabad, India); and
- a plan of action on customary sustainable use of biodiversity as well as the “Pyeongchang Roadmap,” a package of decisions on resource mobilization, capacity building, and scientific and technical cooperation linking biodiversity and poverty eradication, and monitoring implementation of the Strategic Plan (COP 12, October 2014, Pyeongchang, South Korea).

Recent Meetings

COP 13 (December 2016, Cancún, Mexico) considered: issues related to operations of the Convention, including integration among the Convention and its protocols; progress towards implementation of the Strategic Plan and the achievement of the Aichi Targets, and related means of implementation; strategic actions to enhance the implementation of the Strategic Plan and achievement of the Aichi Targets, including with respect to mainstreaming biodiversity within and across sectors, particularly in agriculture, fisheries, tourism, and forestry; and biodiversity and human health interlinkages. It also launched consideration of a series of items on emerging technologies, including synthetic biology, gene drives, and digital sequence information (DSI).

COP 14 (November 2018, Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt) set up an intersessional working group on the GBF, and established an intersessional process, including an *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group to continue work on DSI on genetic resources under the Convention and the Nagoya Protocol. COP 14 further adopted the Rutzolijirisaxik voluntary guidelines for the repatriation of traditional knowledge relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity as well as voluntary guidelines and guidance: on the integration of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures into wider landscapes and seascapes; on effective governance models for management of protected areas, including equity; for the design and effective implementation of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction; for a sustainable wild meat sector; and for avoiding unintentional introductions of invasive alien species associated with trade in live organisms.

During the intersessional period and despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, work continued under the Convention. SBSTTA 23 and the 11th meeting of the *Ad Hoc* Open-ended Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions were held in November 2019. The first part of SBSTTA 24 was held virtually from 3-4 May, 23-26 May, and 7-9 June 2021 back-to-back to the first part of SBI 3.

The Open-ended Working Group on the GBF held its first meeting from 27-30 August 2019 in Nairobi, Kenya; its second meeting from 24-29 February 2020 in Rome, Italy; and the first part of its third meeting virtually from 23 August - 3 September 2021, which negotiated the first draft of the GBF.

UN Biodiversity Conference (Part One) Report

On Monday, 11 October, Yasmine Fouad, Minister of Environment, Egypt, on behalf of the COP 14 Presidency, via telepresence, described advances over the past three years, including: a reinforced commitment to mainstreaming biodiversity across all economic sectors; setting out pathways for furthering international cooperation at the nexus of biotechnology and equity; and establishing a roadmap for the development of a GBF. She delivered her address after an inspiring video on the famous 17-month journey of a herd of elephants through the Chinese province of Yunnan, and a performance of local songs.

Huang Runqiu, Minister of Ecology and Environment, China, formally took over the COP presidency from Mohamed El Badry, Egyptian Ambassador to China, and opened COP 15 by welcoming over 1,500 delegates present in person and over 3,000 delegates participating virtually. He highlighted how they successfully overcame challenges posed by the pandemic, and the firm, positive, and resolute action needed to halt and reverse biodiversity loss.

Han Zheng, Vice Premier of the State Council, China, introduced the conference theme of “Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth,” which he said was emblematic for recalibrating the relationship between humankind and nature. He underlined that protecting biodiversity while alleviating poverty was very much possible, referring to the Chinese example. He called for strengthened multilateral consensus, increased resource mobilization, and accelerated transformation to meet global environmental challenges.

Inger Andersen, Executive Director, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), on behalf of Amina Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary-General, stressed that making peace with nature is the defining task of the 21st century, highlighting that the GBF offers a new opportunity to ensure a sustainable future for all. She emphasized that conserving and sustainably using biodiversity is necessary to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the objectives of the Paris Agreement, which should remain the main navigation point. She highlighted nature conservation as a development issue, and called for mobilizing resources from all sources and placing nature at the heart of decision making.

Ruan Chengfa, Governor of Yunnan, China, highlighted regional efforts for biodiversity conservation, underscoring the need to build a shared future for all life on Earth. He stressed that the meeting offers the opportunity to strengthen global cooperation and achieve the common dream of ecological civilization.

Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Executive Secretary, CBD, noted that holding COP 15 in one of the world’s most culturally and ecologically diverse locations denotes the deep value of nature and the links between nature and culture. She highlighted China’s actions to protect and restore biodiversity and drew attention to the interconnecting biodiversity, climate, and health emergencies, noting that the COVID-19 pandemic is a stark reminder of these

interconnections. She stressed that if we are to meet the 2050 vision of living in harmony with nature, we must act during this decade to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, and get on a path to recovery by 2030.

Argentina, for the LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN GROUP (GRULAC), welcomed the opportunity presented by the first part of this COP with its high-level segment and the Kunming Declaration to gather political momentum for an ambitious, realistic, and balanced GBF to be adopted at the second part of the COP.

Georgia, for CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE, pointed to equally crucial aspects of the GBF including the importance of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs), mainstreaming biodiversity, and specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) monitoring indicators.

Slovenia, for the EUROPEAN UNION (EU), stressed that the window for humanity to avoid the collapse of our Earth’s life-support systems is closing quickly. He supported a 30-by-30 target, aiming to conserve 30% of Earth’s land and sea areas by 2030, and urged participants to address the drivers of biodiversity loss, including land and sea use change, natural resource overuse, climate change, pollution, and invasive alien species.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo, for the AFRICAN GROUP, stressed that while Africa is home to a diverse fauna and flora, which provide valuable ecosystem services and act as a buffer against climate change, it is vulnerable to environmental challenges, including biodiversity loss. He called for a robust, ambitious, and realistic GBF accompanied by the necessary means for implementation. He highlighted conservation efforts and priorities at the continent level, and called for developing synergies, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, engagement and commitment, as well as finalizing discussions around DSI.

Noting that digital technologies allowed for biodiversity-related work to continue during the COVID-19 pandemic, Kuwait, for the ASIA-PACIFIC GROUP, stressed that people have interacted with nature for millennia, but our unsustainable way of life and consumption trends have led to the current status quo. She said that lockdowns allowed nature and biodiversity to regroup to a certain extent, and stressed the need to develop synergies to achieve common biodiversity goals.

New Zealand, also on behalf of Australia, Canada, Iceland, Israel, Monaco, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Switzerland, the UK, and the US, members of the JUSCANZ GROUP, emphasized that COP 15 and the high-level segment reveal our collective willingness to come together and address the unprecedented biodiversity crisis, and maintain the momentum towards and ambitious GBF. She urged for addressing all drivers of biodiversity loss and finding areas of compromise when tackling the most difficult issues.

The AMAZON COOPERATION TREATY ORGANIZATION highlighted the Amazon’s significance in terms of biodiversity conservation and fighting climate change. She outlined instruments, methodologies, and initiatives, and called for the recognition of regional contributions as effective tools for achieving the Convention’s objectives and the GBF’s goals.

A local community and youth representative from the Hani People of Yunnan emphasized the importance of living in harmony with nature. She stressed that their ancestors have protected natural

resources for 1,300 years, coexisting with nature and urged for better protecting natural ecosystems for future generations.

The INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS FORUM ON BIODIVERSITY (IIFB) stressed that Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) are the best stewards of nature, emphasizing the need to respect their governance systems and traditional knowledge. She expressed appreciation for including in the draft GBF references to free, prior, and informed consent, traditional knowledge, customary sustainable use, equity, and a rights-based approach, and urged for further strengthening the GBF by explicitly recognizing IPLCs' lands and fully respecting their rights.

The CBD ALLIANCE welcomed the postponement of substantial negotiations until face-to-face meetings can resume, and urged parties to be serious about halting and reversing biodiversity loss. She emphasized that today's economic logic perpetuates biodiversity loss and impacts negatively on IPLCs, and called for a multilateral benefit-sharing mechanism for the use of DSI.

The CBD WOMEN'S CAUCUS called for a standalone target on gender-based aspects of the GBF, based on human rights including the recently recognized right to a healthy environment.

ICLEI-LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FOR SUSTAINABILITY referred to the vital role that subnational governments play in translating global targets to regional and local action, and praised the Edinburgh Process as a platform to channel subnational voices in the development of post-2020 targets.

The GLOBAL YOUTH BIODIVERSITY NETWORK (GYBN) cautioned that shallow quick fixes will not work to effectively address biodiversity loss, and called for inter-generational equity within the GBF, which must leverage all forms of education to foster change.

The TRUE NATURE CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION, China, also on behalf of Youth of China, highlighted regional conservation efforts, focusing on wildlife protection.

Organizational Matters

On Monday, plenary adopted the agenda and organization of work for: COP 15 (CBD/COP/15/1/Rev.1, Add.1, and Add.2); CP COP/MOP 10 (CBD/CP/MOP/10/1/Rev.1, Add.1, and Add.2); and NP COP/MOP 4 (CBD/NP/MOP/4/1/Rev.1, Add.1, and Add.2).

COP 15 President Huang noted that COP 14 had elected the Bureau members to serve until the closure of COP 15. Following two replacements, the COP 15 Bureau consists of: Eric Okoree (Ghana); Melesse Maryo (Ethiopia); Vinod Mathur (India); Leina El-Awadhi (Kuwait); Teona Karchava (Georgia); Elvana Ramaj (Albania); Andrea Meza Murillo (Costa Rica); Helena Jeffery Brown (Antigua and Barbuda); Gabriele Obermayr (Austria); and Rosemary Paterson (New Zealand).

Parties agreed that the election of officers will be further considered at the second part of the meeting. COP President Huang invited regional groups to submit their nominations, preferably prior to the second part, to enable newly elected members to attend, as observers, the Bureau meetings during the second part of COP 15 and ensure a smooth transition between outgoing and incoming Bureau members. Hamdallah Zedan (Egypt) was invited to remain an ex officio member of the Bureau, as the representative of the COP 14 Presidency.

The same procedure was followed for the two protocols. Any COP Bureau member representing a party to the Convention that is not a party to a protocol has to be substituted by a member elected by and from the parties to the respective protocol.

Regarding the Cartagena Protocol, all COP Bureau members represent parties to the Protocol so the COP Bureau also serves as CP COP/MOP Bureau. Parties to the Cartagena Protocol agreed to further consider the election of officers at the second part of the meeting.

For the Nagoya Protocol, the following Bureau members were noted, following NP COP/MOP 3 election, including three substitutions of COP Bureau members representing a party to the Convention that is not a party to the Nagoya Protocol, and one replacement: Eric Okoree (Ghana); Melesse Maryo (Ethiopia); Vinod Mathur (India); Leina El-Awadhi (Kuwait); Dilovarsho Dustov (Tajikistan); Elvana Ramaj (Albania); Joaquin Salzberg (Argentina); Helena Jeffery Brown (Antigua and Barbuda); Gabriele Obermayr (Austria); and Marie Haraldstad (Norway). Parties to the Nagoya Protocol agreed to further consider the election of officers at the second part of the meeting.

Plenary elected Elvana Ramaj as Rapporteur and Eric Okoree as representative of the Bureau for the review of credentials.

On Friday, reporting on the credentials provided to the Bureau, Okoree noted that an exceptionally high number of parties have not yet submitted valid credentials, likely also due to the extraordinary situation with the pandemic. It was agreed that delegates can exceptionally provide their credentials within 30 days after closure of the meeting.

Reports of Intersessional and Regional Preparatory Meetings

On Friday, COP 15 President Huang invited the Chairs of the subsidiary bodies and open-ended working groups to present reports from intersessional work.

SBSTTA Chair Hesiquio Benítez Díaz (Mexico) provided an overview of the work during SBSTTA 23 and the first part of SBSTTA 24 (CBD/SBSTTA/23/9 and CBD/SBSTTA/24/11). He stressed that SBSTTA 23 engaged in early work to inform the evidence base for the GBF. He outlined virtual intersessional work following COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions, including webinars, special sessions, and the informal SBSTTA meeting in February 2021. He highlighted outcomes from SBSTTA 24, held online in June 2021, stressing interlinkages among agenda items, which makes progress on particular issues in isolation challenging. He underscored that the resumed sessions, to be held concurrently in Geneva in January 2022, will ensure coherence and allow for a comprehensive approach.

Hamdallah Zedan (Egypt), Co-Chair of the *Ad Hoc* Open-ended Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions, provided a report from the 11th meeting of the Working Group (CBD/WG8J/11/7). He highlighted relevant recommendations and focused on the development of a new programme of work on Article 8(j) and related provisions, including objectives, general principles, and draft elements. He stressed that the unique relationship IPLCs have with the CBD is one of the Convention's biggest strengths, urging for further strengthening and empowering IPLCs' role, fully respecting and protecting their rights.

SBI Chair Charlotta Sörqvist (Sweden) reported on the first part of SBI 3 (CBD/SBI/3/20). She highlighted the considerable progress achieved at virtual meetings, including at SBI 3, stressing that further work needs to be done for the successful adoption of a package of decisions during the second part of the UN Biodiversity Conference.

GBF Working Group Co-Chairs Francis Ogwal (Uganda) and Basile van Havre (Canada) reported on the good progress of the Working Group despite the challenges posed by the pandemic; acknowledged the encouraging commitments made by global leaders; and expressed their confidence that a new, truly transformational GBF is achievable.

Parties took note of the reports. No reports on any regional preparatory meetings were presented.

Reports from the Protocols' Compliance Committees

On Friday, COP President Huang invited the Chairs of the compliance committees of the protocols to provide their reports.

Rigobert Ntep, Chair of the Cartagena Protocol Compliance Committee, introduced the report of the Committee on its 16th and 17th meetings held in May 2019 in Montreal and in April 2020 online (CBD/CP/MOP/10/2). He explained that the recommendations of the Committee annexed to the report will be considered at the second part of CP COP/MOP 10.

Betty Kauna Schroder, Chair of the Nagoya Protocol Compliance Committee, introduced the report of the Committee and its third meeting held online in April 2020 (CBD/NP/CC/3/5). She likewise explained that the recommendations of the Committee annexed to the report will be considered at the second part of NP COP/MOP 4.

Parties took note of the reports. In response to a proposal by COP 15 President Huang, the members of both committees were confirmed until the end of 2022 without objection. President Huang called regions to consider candidates to be nominated for election at the second part of CP COP/MOP 10 and NP COP/MOP 4.

Administration and Budget

On Monday, CBD Executive Secretary Mrema introduced the relevant documents, including the proposed interim budget and programme of work for the Convention and its protocols for 2022 (CBD/COP/15/3, CBD/CP/MOP/10/3, and CBD/NP/MOP/4/3). She highlighted the necessary adjustments due to the COVID-19 pandemic; provided information on the collection rate of assessed contributions; and noted that the draft budget covers operational requirements for 2022 at a maintenance level until the programme budget is considered in the second part of the meeting.

A contact group, chaired by Spencer Thomas (Grenada), was established to consider the interim budget in detail. The group met on Monday evening.

On Friday, contact group Chair Thomas reported back to plenary, thanking all members for their contributions and spirit of compromise, and presented a draft interim budget for the 2022 programme of work for the Convention and its protocols. Parties approved and adopted the interim budget.

Final Decision: The proposed interim budget for 2022 was approved by COP 15 for the CBD (CBD/COP/15/L.2), by CP COP/MOP 10 for the Cartagena Protocol (CBD/CP/MOP/10/L.2), and by NP COP/MOP 4 for the Nagoya Protocol (CBD/NP/MOP/4/L.2).

The interim budget of approximately USD 18.4 million for the Convention and its protocols allows for the smooth continuation of activities. Staff costs represent about two-thirds of the interim budget. The meetings to be funded are the resumed sessions of the CBD subsidiary bodies and of the Working Group on the GBF, and the second part of the UN Biodiversity Conference. The budget decisions confirm the extension of parts of the 2019/2020 budget until after the end of the second part of the Conference and the core budget for 2021, and reconfirm the ratio of 74:15:11 to share costs among CBD, the Cartagena Protocol, and the Nagoya Protocol.

With the interim budget, the Conference also decides that additional voluntary contributions will be sought to facilitate any additional focused and targeted work necessary to ensure the successful finalization and adoption of the GBF. The Conference also notes with concern that a number of parties have not paid their contributions to the core budgets for 2020 and prior years, including parties that have never paid their contributions.

Adoption of Reports

On Friday, Rapporteur Ramaj introduced the reports from the meetings of the Convention and its protocols. She explained that they are largely procedural, reflecting opening statements and organizational items, and noted they will be finalized after the closure of the meeting, incorporating the final day's proceedings.

JAPAN emphasized that the Kunming Declaration intends to build political momentum and neither constitutes a negotiated COP decision nor is legally binding in nature. He added that given that some of their suggestions have not fully been taken into account despite efforts by the host nation, the declaration does not set precedent for ongoing and future intergovernmental discussions in the context of the CBD, the UN, or other intergovernmental fora, requesting a relevant inclusion in the meeting's report.

COP 15, CP COP/MOP 10, and NP COP/MOP 4 adopted their respective reports with no further comments (CBD/COP/15/Part/L.1, CBD/CP/MOP/10/Part1/L.1, and CBD/NP/MOP/4/Part1/L.1).

Closing Plenaries

On Friday, COP 15 President Huang opened the closing plenaries session with a brief report on the high-level segment of this first part of the UN Biodiversity Conference, highlighting the renewed political momentum, also from the Kunming Declaration.

Cui Shuhong, Director General, Ministry of Ecology and Environment, China, summarized the deliberations and conclusions from the Ecological Civilization Forum held on Thursday and Friday, with about 100 experts and delegates speaking, and about 2,100 participants in person and online. The Forum provided impetus for mainstreaming biodiversity in other sectors, and focused on mountain ecosystems in particular.

Xu Guang, Secretary-General, China Environmental Protection Foundation, reported from the NGO Action Forum that took place with over 400 participants on 27-28 September 2021 in Kunming. The Forum issued a joint call for action and mobilized important commitments by non-state actors to help advance biodiversity goals and objectives, including the GBF. He reported that ten Chinese non-state actors have pledged to invest CNY 2.55 billion (approximately USD 400 million) to help protect an area of 10 million hectares.

In closing remarks, the UNITED KINGDOM announced an additional voluntary contribution of GBP 200,000 to the Special Voluntary Trust Fund to facilitate participation in the Convention's processes. China reiterated its commitment to establish the Kunming Biodiversity Fund, including a contribution of CNY 1.5 billion (approximately USD 230 million) in the spirit of the Kunming Declaration.

CBD Executive Secretary Mrema thanked China for successfully organizing the first part of the meeting and all involved for their contributions. She identified three key components of an effective GBF: sufficient ambition to meet the 2030 goals and 2050 vision by addressing all drivers of biodiversity loss; commensurate financial commitment including via the Global Environment Facility (GEF); and a mechanism to ensure we are on track to achieve our goals and targets.

COP 15 President Huang expressed satisfaction that the hard work at the first part of COP 15 has paid off with good progress on all fronts, and ensured all participants that China will work hard to be ready for the second part of the Conference and the successful adoption of the GBF. He concluded with a Chinese proverb, "If we walk together, we will be able to overcome any obstacles," and closed the first part of the Conference at 5:09 pm Kunming time (UTC+8).

High-level Segment

The high-level segment was held on Tuesday and Wednesday 12-13 October, and focused on the Conference's theme of "Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth." It featured in-depth discussions among national ministers, other high-level party representatives, and international and regional organizations and non-party stakeholder groups to reinforce the ambition for the GBF. The high-level segment produced the Kunming Declaration and included a Leaders' Summit, opening and closing plenaries, and roundtable discussions.

Leaders' Summit: COP 15 President Huang opened the Leaders' Summit, explaining that it is meant to leverage the highest political commitment and to make full use of COP 15 as an important opportunity to reverse biodiversity loss and embark on a new journey in global environmental governance.

Han Zheng, Vice Premier of the State Council, China, said biodiversity is the foundation of all life on Earth, our common home, and called for ecological civilization and low-carbon, sustainable development. He said we are currently at a critical stage regarding biodiversity protection, and the GBF will be an important document for the future, requiring "utmost political resolution."

Chinese President Xi Jinping said that COP 15 has great significance since it will work on the GBF, identifying goals and targets for biodiversity in the future. He urged:

- using the theme of "Ecological Civilization" as a guide to stay within environmental limits;
- striving for a green transition to facilitate global sustainable development;
- concentrating on bettering people's wellbeing; and
- taking international law as the basis for a fair and equitable international environmental governance system.

He reported on China's progress in building an ecological civilization and developing protected areas, and announced the establishment of the Kunming Biodiversity Fund, including a contribution of CNY 1.5 billion (approximately USD 230 million), and invited contributions from others. He concluded that "if we humans do not fail nature, nature will not fail us" and called on delegates to shoulder their responsibility for future generations.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said the CBD is more important than ever due to the active impact human development has on environment and climate. He urged for nature conservation, building on universally recognized scientific findings, and closer international cooperation while recognizing national sovereignty.

Egyptian President Abdul Fattah El-Sisi noted the COVID-19-related challenges and negative effects, the need to focus on the biodiversity agenda, and the progress made under Egypt's COP Presidency, including designing the process towards a GBF with clear implementation mechanisms. He said he was honored to hand over the COP Presidency to China, knowing they can actively lead efforts for biodiversity protection.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan emphasized that everything in nature is interconnected, noting that natural disasters harm the environment and pose a direct threat to human life and prosperity. He stressed that the biodiversity crisis goes hand in hand with a polluted environment, food and water scarcity, and eventually leads to conflicts and migration. He highlighted Turkey's richness in biodiversity and national efforts to ensure its conservation and sustainable use, expressing its commitment to host a successful CBD COP 16.

French President Emmanuel Macron underscored the need to put nature at the core of development efforts. He highlighted France's efforts to play a leading role on environmental conservation, including by hosting international meetings such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Congress in September 2021 and the One Ocean Summit to be held in early 2022. He emphasized the 30-by-30 target and called for attracting adequate funding for implementation.

Costa Rican President Carlos Andrés Alvarado Quesada highlighted the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, co-chaired by Costa Rica and France, noting that its success reveals that by working together, achieving our targets is possible. He urged for building momentum towards the second part of COP 15; underscored that the 30-by-30 target makes sense financially since the cost of inaction is very high; warned that the window of opportunity is closing fast; and called for transformative action.

Kyrgyz President Sadyr Nurgozhoevich Japarov underscored the interlinkages between biodiversity conservation and climate change, and drew attention to the sustainable development of mountainous regions. Highlighting the importance of international cooperation, he outlined national efforts to protect biodiversity and urged supporting a special programme on forests under the auspices of the UN.

Papua New Guinean Prime Minister James Marape underscored the close relationship between the environment and people in the Pacific, and provided details on his country's rich biodiversity and ecologically-distinct regions. He outlined national efforts for biodiversity conservation, including strengthening research

capabilities and developing renewable energy, and stressed the need for concerted conservation efforts accompanied by social development.

Prince Charles, United Kingdom, emphasized that the COVID-19 pandemic showed that human and planetary health are interconnected, and provided an opportunity for action. He stressed that any successful response to the biodiversity crisis requires work across the whole of the economy. He stressed the need for transforming commitments and pledges into concrete actions, urging: considering natural capital as a central pillar for global economic decision making; building conservation and nature-based solutions into supply chains; properly pricing carbon and deploying carbon capture and storage technologies to buy time; and rethinking our health and food systems.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres said “We are losing our suicidal war against nature; our two-century-long experiment with burning fossil fuels, destroying forests, wilderness and oceans, and degrading the land, has caused a biosphere catastrophe.” He warned that damage to the complex web of life has already impacted the lives and livelihoods of millions, contributing to hunger, sickness, and unemployment; and that Indigenous Peoples and other vulnerable groups are among the worst affected. He urged that the GBF support:

- the legal right of all people everywhere to a healthy environment;
- national policies and programmes that tackle the drivers of biodiversity loss; and
- work to transform national and global accounting systems so they reflect the true cost of economic activities, including their impact on nature and the climate.

He further called for ending perverse subsidies, and emphasized the need for a package of significant financial support and technology transfer towards developing countries.

Ministerial Segment: COP 15 President Huang Runqiu introduced the plenary session of the ministerial segment on Tuesday, urging all leaders to commit their political will to biodiversity conservation.

UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen identified COP 15 as a historic chance to shift our course towards a nature-positive future and a circular economy with a renewed GBF. She pleaded for ambition and courage to address vested interests, and to repurpose and redirect financial flows and subsidies. She called for clear and tangible action, and stressed that the momentum on the biodiversity agenda during this meeting will send a message of a global purpose on environmental protection to COP 26 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

CBD Executive Secretary Mrema described safeguarding biodiversity as the task of this decade, and reiterated the UN Secretary-General’s call for clear ambition, action, and accountability. She thanked China for its leadership on global biodiversity governance, and welcomed the establishment of the Kunming Biodiversity Fund. She emphasized that the bold commitments already made in response to the urgent need for action have to be translated into policies and results. She stated that the GBF will provide a rulebook to address direct and indirect drivers

of biodiversity loss, and ensure concerted efforts in addressing environmental challenges.

A discussion followed, under the COP 15 theme “Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth,” moderated by COP President Huang Runqiu.

Setting the scene, Anne Larigauderie, Executive Secretary, Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), stressed that the SDGs may still be achieved, but that transformational change is needed, which again requires that we place biodiversity at the center of every human endeavor. She promoted supply chain models that reduce their impact on nature, and governance approaches that are integrative, coherent, inclusive, informed, and adaptive.

Three panel discussions ensued.

Panel 1: What does Ecological Civilization mean for food, health, jobs, trade and education? Qu Dongyu, Director-General, UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), said that the “Ecological Civilization” concept relates to several dimensions of agri-food systems, which can help reverse biodiversity loss, provide avenues for climate change mitigation and adaptation, and improve productivity and food security. He pointed out how agri-food systems can make important contributions to reducing hunger, including by assisting members to produce more with less based on innovation, responsible investment, and inclusiveness. He said FAO is committed to do all that is necessary to be more efficient, and build inclusive and resilient agri-food systems.

Zsuzsanna Jakab, Deputy Director-General, World Health Organization (WHO), said the concept of “Ecological Civilization” harnesses the potential of healthy ecosystems and helps collectively tackle drivers of biodiversity loss, noting that prevention is infinitely less costly than emergency responses. She urged for holistic approaches, such as the One Health Approach, meant to safeguard ecosystems and employ a whole-of-government approach that takes into account equity and environmental factors. She said the health sector should be at the heart of efforts to address climate change and biodiversity loss.

Chihoko Asada-Miyakawa, Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, International Labour Organization (ILO), said they support a just transition to a green economy, including through the Climate Action for Jobs Coalition, a UN initiative led by the ILO that contributes to research on the impact of climate action, strengthens social dialogue, and enables the development and implementation of a just transition. She said the ILO is aiming to accelerate job creation globally and create 100 million jobs by 2030, including in the green economy.

Qu Xing, Deputy Director-General, UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), noted the interrelated climate and biodiversity crisis that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and IPBES have been warning about. He said that protecting 30% of the planet by 2030 is important, but does not mean we can destroy the remaining 70%. He urged a change in behavior and thinking, including through education and making environmental education central in school curricula. Pointing to UNESCO’s work on biosphere reserves and World Heritage Sites, he urged protection of the world’s shared natural heritage and

pointed out that economic development and biodiversity protection are not mutually exclusive.

Panel 2: Aligning finance and building capacity for an ecological civilization: This panel addressed how mainstreaming biodiversity in all economic sectors can be supported for an effective implementation of the GBF.

David Malpass, President, World Bank, noted that the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic offers the opportunity to mobilize additional resources and put in place more effective institutions to address biodiversity loss. He outlined the World Bank's conservation efforts in many developing countries and underscored: nature-based solutions are a critical component of the necessary transition; the need to increase support towards the poorest countries and most vulnerable populations; and the need to integrate biodiversity considerations at the early stage of planning, especially in sectors such as agriculture and infrastructure.

Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, CEO and Chair, GEF, stressed that GEF, as the CBD's financial mechanism, will do its utmost for the successful implementation of the GBF, pointing to an ambitious strategy envisaged in the GEF's eighth replenishment (GEF-8). He highlighted the GEF's inclusive strategy and emphasized the need to mobilize additional domestic resources and build critical capacities, and build partnerships and synergies to fast track the GBF's implementation towards a carbon-neutral, nature-positive, and pollution-free future.

Achim Steiner, Administrator, UN Development Programme (UNDP), urged rethinking and redesigning the human path to progress, putting sustainable finance at the center of these efforts. He noted that nine out of ten dollars subsidizing farmers fuel the climate crisis and harm nature, underscoring UNDP's assistance to countries to drive forward nature-positive investments. He outlined UNDP's efforts, including on innovative finance, and called for assigning to nature its true value, which is priceless.

Panel 3: Promoting synergistic action for biodiversity, climate, land and oceans: Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary, UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), emphasized that restoring land also stores carbon and reduces ocean pollution, and stressed that we do not have time to address one challenge at a time, but need to tackle them together, holistically, and with urgency.

Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary, UNFCCC, stressed that "nature is our best ally" in the fight against climate change, and called for countries to systematically link their CBD, UNFCCC, and SDG-related commitments, including their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and NBSAPs.

Peter Thomson, UN Special Envoy for the Ocean, said the current red alert for humanity requires the very best of multilateralism, as well as full coherence within the UN system. He also noted the ocean is "the great bunker" of biodiversity, comprising 80% of life on Earth.

Bruno Oberle, Director General, IUCN, supported among others: a common understanding of nature-based solutions, which could provide up to 37% of the climate mitigation required by 2030; the 30-by-30 target; the allocation of 0.7-1% of global gross domestic product (GDP) to fund implementation of the GBF; and the redirection of subsidies harmful to nature.

Rebecca Lent, Executive Secretary, International Whaling Commission, on behalf of the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions, urged that the mandates of the biodiversity-related conventions should be woven into the GBF to take full advantage of their relevant strengths, including by appropriate use of indicators.

Josefa Cariño Tauli, Youth Indigenous Leader on behalf of the GYBN, asked "Who are you, as decision makers? Are you who you need to be?" She urged delegates to be transformative leaders and mindful ancestors to future generations, noting her community defends the land as if life depends on it, because it does.

COP President Huang closed the opening plenary, stressing that all parties should demonstrate political will at the highest level to embark on the journey towards ecological civilization.

Roundtable Sessions: Four roundtable discussions took place on Tuesday and Wednesday, providing the opportunity for ministers from around the world to exchange views on various thematic areas.

Roundtable A: Putting biodiversity on a path to recovery: The session was co-chaired by Zhao Yingmin, Vice Minister of Ecology and Environment, China, and Yasmine Fouad, Minister of Environment, Egypt.

In her opening remarks, Minister Fouad referred to the momentum created by the Sharm El-Sheikh to Kunming Action Agenda for Nature and People, and urged her colleagues to use the opportunity of this session to reaffirm their commitments towards the 2050 vision of living in harmony with nature. Two expert presentations followed.

Sandra Diaz, University of Cordoba, Argentina, and Co-Chair of the IPBES Global Assessment, reminded participants that the fabric of life on Earth is unraveling at an unprecedented pace, but stressed that it is still possible to put nature on a path to recovery.

Wei Fuwen, Zoology Institute, Chinese Academy of Sciences, likened nature to the most inclusive welfare system for people's livelihoods, and called for an effective monitoring of our actions using continuous, quantifiable, and easily operational indicators.

Ministers then had the opportunity to speak. Kiritapu Allan, Minister of Conservation, New Zealand, noted that many biodiversity, ocean, climate, and livelihood solutions are mutually supportive, and noted her country's new NZD 1.2 billion Jobs for Nature Programme, as well as recognition of the rights of nature. Krista Mikkonen, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, Finland, urged for: biodiversity mainstreaming across government, business, and society; and the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, and youth.

Sussan Ley, Minister for the Environment, Australia, reported on national progress, including: the recent establishment of two new Marine Protected Areas that now mean 45% of the ocean area under national jurisdiction is protected; the Indigenous Protected Area Programme; extensive wildfire recovery efforts; and a new national waste policy that is moving towards a circular economy. Carolina Schmidt Zaldívar, Minister of the Environment, Chile, noted her country's progress in measuring natural capital, incorporating Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, protecting the marine environment, and developing their urban wetlands program.

João Pedro Matos Fernandes, Minister of Environment and Energy Transition, Portugal, noted his country's pilot projects on payment for ecosystem services, and spatial planning policies that

connect biodiversity, climate change, and land restoration efforts. Beatrice Anywar Atim, Minister of State for Environment, Uganda, highlighted that her country hosts half of the world's mountain gorilla population, and outlined national species action plans for the mountain gorilla, elephant, giraffe, chimpanzee, and pangolin.

A representative speaking on behalf of Leila Benali, Minister of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development, Morocco, presented efforts at the national level to protect key habitat including forests, dry and semi-dry zones, wetlands, and coastal areas, with a particular focus on the Forests of Morocco 2020-2030 strategy, and coastal and marine protected areas. Carole Dieschbourg, Minister for the Environment, Climate and Sustainable Development, Luxembourg, focused on key areas where global and national ambition must go beyond the Aichi Targets, and highlighted her country's 27% protected land area, and innovative payment scheme for forest ecosystem services.

Céline Caron-Dagioni, Minister of Public Works, the Environment and Urban Development, Monaco, demonstrated her country's commitment to two protected marine zones, shoreline restoration, land species conservation, city renaturalization, and waste reduction. Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, EU, referred to the European Green Deal as the core instrument to transform the economy and societies, with 2030 targets to protect 30% of the EU's land and sea area, and reduce the use of chemical pesticides by 50%, and with a commitment to double financial flows to developing countries for biodiversity.

Svenja Schulze, Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety, Germany, offered three key features for the future biodiversity framework, namely: ambitious and specific targets; effective and decisive implementation mechanisms; and mainstreamed diffusion in all areas of policy and economy. Danas Augutis, Vice-minister of Environment, Lithuania, emphasized how biodiversity and ecosystem services act as a safeguard from natural disasters, and highlighted their national agreement on forests, which includes expanding forests to cover 45% of the landscape and promoting sustainable forestry certification.

A representative on behalf of Anna Mazmanyán, Deputy Minister of Environment, Armenia, illustrated how a strong GBF provides invaluable guidance and momentum for national implementation measures, and highlighted some of his country's achievements including a 60-70% representation of species in protected areas covering 13.1% of Armenia's landscape. Juliet Kabera, Director General, Environment Management Authority, Rwanda, outlined national action addressing climate resilience, threatened species, single-use plastics, air pollution, transboundary collaboration, and the integration of biodiversity issues into school curricula. She highlighted their aim to invest 2% of GDP in biodiversity implementation.

Andrej Vizjak, Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning, Slovenia, expressed support for green infrastructure approaches, nature-based solutions, and a shift towards sustainable agriculture, food systems, fisheries, and forestry. Teresa Ribera, Minister for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge, Spain,

stressed the need to address consumption, including international coordination on global supply chains.

Tamar Zandberg, Minister of Environmental Protection, Israel, outlined the national protection of ecologically unique marine environments, and the integration of ecological corridors into their protected areas approach. Tesfai Ghebreselassie Sebhatu, Minister of Land, Water and Environment, Eritrea, emphasized national challenges including severe droughts and deforestation, and outlined efforts in tree planting, soil enhancement, and promoting community-run biodiversity management.

Richard Brabec, Minister of the Environment, Czech Republic, reported on their recently adopted NBSAP, which involves improved data collection and science-based decision making. Sveinung Rotevatn, Minister of Climate and Environment, Norway, called for the alignment of financial flows with biodiversity values, and celebrated the recent launch of the Lowering Emissions by Accelerating Forest Finance (LEAF) Coalition. Bhupender Yadav, Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, India, reported that their national protected areas now cover over 17.4% of their land area.

Varawut Silpa-archa, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand, called for a flexible GBF that accounts for national circumstances and capacities, and referred to the strong biodiversity commitments in Thailand's National Strategy 2018-2037, and a target to expand green areas to cover up to 55% of the country. István Nagy, Minister of Agriculture, Hungary, presented the recent designation of the five-country UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube as a flagship example of collective biodiversity conservation, an area covering 700 river kilometers and one million hectares, co-managed by Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Serbia, and Slovenia.

Jamil Mutour, Chair, Environment Quality Authority, Palestine, referred to the need to make economic systems and financial markets compatible with biodiversity conservation, and to the financial and other challenges they are facing when developing and implementing conservation initiatives. Tõnis Mölder, Minister of the Environment, Estonia, illustrated his country's lead role towards the adoption of a global environmental data strategy by 2025, and announced a global Data for the Environment Alliance (DEAL) to be launched at the resumed fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) in February 2022.

Andrea Meza Murillo, Minister of Environment and Energy, Costa Rica, stated that recognizing nature as an asset and investing in its protection is good for economic growth and contributes considerably to the GDP. Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Canada, stressed that the 30-by-30 target was already a fully-funded policy in his country, and advocated for an overarching "nature positive by 2030" global goal.

Lea Wermelin, Minister of Environment, Denmark, identified key enablers for biodiversity recovery including resource mobilization, innovative financial mechanisms, technical and scientific support, and accountability safeguards. Baomiavotse Vahinala Raharinirina, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, Madagascar, illustrated her country's efforts to combat the abusive and illicit exploitation of unique natural resources via species-specific action plans under a landscape approach. Bounkham

Vorachit, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Lao People's Democratic Republic, focused on the interconnected socio-economic development and sustainable management of natural resources and environmental safeguards in her country.

Siti Nurbaya Bakar, Minister of Environment and Forestry, Indonesia, outlined her country's progress on risk-based assessments for business activities and conservation partnerships with local communities. Khin Maung Yee, Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Myanmar, reported on strengthened forest management, acceleration of bird conservation, and the establishment of 46 protected areas.

Jean Luc Assis, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, Côte d'Ivoire, focused on conservation efforts in his country, highlighting targets of zero deforestation, afforestation, and sustainable cocoa cultivation. Moustafa Abid, Chargé d'Affaires, Embassy in Beijing, Tunisia delivered an intervention in Arabic, which was not interpreted due to technical difficulties.

Co-Chair Yingmin concluded the roundtable by highlighting that all the achievements and ambitions expressed in contributions will provide a solid foundation for an ambitious and pragmatic GBF.

Roundtable B: Closing the financing gap and ensuring the means of implementation: This roundtable was co-chaired by Guo Lanfeng, Deputy Secretary General, National Development and Reform Commission, China, and Barbara Pompili, Minister for the Ecological Transition, France.

Co-Chair Guo introduced the discussion, emphasizing initiatives by the Chinese government to advance biodiversity conservation, including generating necessary resources. He underscored the need to transform incentive mechanisms, stressing that the financial sector will play a key role in the implementation of the GBF, and that the sector's participation creates additional possibilities for biodiversity governance and sustainable development.

Co-Chair Pompili stressed the need to: identify and reform harmful subsidies, and promote biodiversity-positive investments; use resources efficiently, addressing the links between climate and biodiversity; and generate additional resources from the private sector. She highlighted work to promote understanding of biodiversity-related financial risks, including under the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures.

Two experts then provided introductory remarks on the roundtable's theme. Partha Dasgupta, University of Cambridge, UK, lamented that biodiversity is declining faster than ever before and drew attention to an independent global review on the economics of biodiversity, published in 2021. He stressed that while nature is our most precious asset, delivering life-sustaining ecosystem services, it is often taken for granted. He highlighted the need to address our ecological footprint; revise our measures of economic success, taking into account natural capital; and transform our institutional structures, especially educational and finance systems.

Ma Jun, Chairman and President, Beijing Institute of Finance and Sustainability, and Chair, Green Finance Committee, China, outlined initiatives at the national level to mobilize private capital to support green activities, including biodiversity protection. He highlighted the development of green financial guidelines as well as green finance products, and incentives for eco-friendly investments. He stressed that declining biodiversity poses serious risks to financial stability,

affecting activities in many sectors, including the financial sector. He called for developing capacities to assess biodiversity-related risks, quantify them, and explore relevant policies.

Ministers then had the opportunity to speak. Malik Amin Aslam, Minister for Climate Change, Pakistan, highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that "we need nature as an ally, not as an adversary," stressing the need to develop a financial framework that values natural capital and ensures that the value added is channeled towards local communities. Tsuyoshi Yamaguchi, Minister of the Environment, Japan: noted that despite failure to meet the Aichi Targets, there was considerable progress on biodiversity conservation during the past decade; highlighted the 30-by-30 goal; underscored the Japan Biodiversity Fund pledging an additional contribution of USD 17 million; and drew attention to relevant projects under the Satoyama Initiative.

Shahab Uddin, Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Bangladesh, called for fast-track mobilization of adequate financial resources to halt biodiversity degradation, enhancing relevant capacities of the GEF, the Green Climate Fund, and other funding sources. Orlando Habet, Minister of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management, Belize, stressed that the COVID-19 pandemic reduced the capacities of developing countries to invest in environmental protection, calling for targeted and sustained financial and technical support from developing countries, including via innovative financial mechanisms, to ensure effective implementation of the GBF and the SDGs.

Eve Bazaiba Masudi, Minister of Environment, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, called for doubling financial flows from developed to developing countries for biodiversity conservation and suggested drawing additional resources through: mainstreaming biodiversity concerns in key economic sectors, such as mining; developing synergies with mitigation options; and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources.

Underscoring the biodiversity sector's potential for job creation, especially in rural areas, Barbara Creecy, Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, South Africa, outlined conservation efforts at the national level, including on protected areas, and called for doubling financial flows by 2030 through a dedicated global biodiversity fund. Carola Schouten, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Netherlands, stressed that the GBF's success will depend on the successful transformation of economic systems, highlighting that non-state initiatives move towards the right direction as they realize the extent to which they are exposed to nature-related financial risks. Nino Tandilashvili, Deputy Minister of Environment Protection and Agriculture, Georgia, outlined conservation efforts at the national level and stressed that resource mobilization under the GBF should focus on: redirecting resources causing harm; generating additional resources from all sources; and increasing resource use efficiency.

Dario Mihelin, Ambassador to China, Croatia, underscored the need to: ensure political support; be creative in financing solutions to provide the necessary means of implementation; and develop synergies across policies, ensuring that biodiversity considerations are mainstreamed across all sectoral policies. Emphasizing that nature is our most valuable asset, Simonetta Sommaruga, Minister

of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications, Switzerland, called for: mobilizing resources from all sources; redirecting incentives harmful for biodiversity; and aligning all financial flows with the GBF, linking them with nature-positive outcomes.

Underscoring that “we have to change how we think, act, and measure success,” Zakia Khattabi, Minister of the Climate, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Green Deal, Belgium, presented on national conservation efforts at the federal and regional levels, including the establishment of a federal sustainable finance strategy. Noting that alarming levels of poverty reveal that conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are interdependent, Joaquim Alvaro Pereira Leite, Minister of Environment, Brazil, emphasized that without the creation of a global biodiversity fund backed by developed countries, “we will hardly be able to implement the GBF,” especially in areas that require heavy investment.

Announcing a 50% increase to national funds devoted to global biodiversity conservation, Gerd Müller, Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany, noted the need to: further engage with the private sector and commit donors; set the right incentives, ensuring that agriculture-related incentives globally are nature-positive; and strengthen domestic resource mobilization for nature. Noting that even smaller countries can make a difference in conservation efforts, Costas Kadis, Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment, Cyprus, outlined national initiatives; highlighted the interlinkages between the CBD and other relevant multilateral conventions; and underscored that the Kunming Declaration highlights the required commitments to achieve global goals.

Keriako Tobiko, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Kenya, focused on adequate provision of financial resources, access to technology, and capacity enhancement, calling for a dedicated global biodiversity fund and innovative, sustainable finance mechanisms to bridge the funding gap. Flavien Joubert, Minister of Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment, Seychelles, highlighted innovative ways to finance biodiversity conservation and transition into the blue economy at the national level, stressing that COVID-19 changed the economic landscape, making it more difficult to leverage funds for biodiversity.

Co-Chair Guo Lanfeng summarized the discussion’s main points, thanked all participants for their contributions, and closed the roundtable discussion.

Roundtable C: Biodiversity conservation and sustainable development: Co-Chair Zhang Zhanhai, Chief Engineer, Ministry of Natural Resources, China, opened the roundtable discussion, noting that biodiversity protection is good for sustainable development and linked to issues taken up at UNFCCC COP 26 and the UN Food Systems Summit. Co-Chair Akif Özkaldi, Vice Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Turkey, said that the COVID-19 pandemic showed the link between human health and biodiversity loss, and set back achievement of the SDGs. He urged aligning NBSAPs with the GBF.

Two experts introduced the topic. Luthando Dziba, Co-Chair, IPBES Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, South Africa, explained how direct drivers of biodiversity loss, such as sea and land use

change, pollution, and invasive alien species, and indirect drivers, such as demographic and economic ones, are interlinked. He said the biosphere relates to SDGs 14 and 15, and underpins healthy societies and economies, with biodiversity contributing food resources, income through nature-based tourism, and job creation. He urged focusing on leverage points to ensure biodiversity protection, such as reduction of total consumption and waste.

Gao Jixi, Director General, Satellite Environment Application Centre, Ministry of Ecology and Environment, China, said the future of civilization depends on biodiversity, which has allowed humans to continue to develop laying the foundation for agriculture and industry. He explained that Chinese philosophy values harmonious co-existence of humans and biodiversity, and that in order to balance economic development and nature protection, an innovative model with measures to protect nature has to be developed.

Ministers then had the opportunity to speak. Juan Santos Cruz, Minister of Environment and Water, Bolivia, said we cannot move towards living in harmony with nature from an anthropocentric point of view, rather it requires looking at nature as integral and acknowledging the rights of Mother Earth. Pem Narayan Kandel, Secretary, Ministry of Forests and Environment, Nepal, urged preservation of biodiversity, ecosystems, and genetic resources, including by involving communities in biodiversity management.

Ivan Kushch, Director, Department for International Cooperation and Climate Change, Russian Federation, spoke about the management of forests and water resources, including hydropower, and stressed that the GBF must respect national sovereignty over natural resources. Per Bolund, Minister for Environment and Climate Change, and Deputy Prime Minister, Sweden, urged for addressing environmental issues, including by reducing the global ecological footprint, rather than handing them over to the next generation, who are calling for change.

Irena Vujović, Minister of Environmental Protection, Serbia, noted that biodiversity loss continues at an alarming rate and called for mainstreaming biodiversity across different sectors. Céline Tellier, Minister, Walloon Ministry of Environment, Nature, Animal Welfare and Rural Renovation, Belgium stressed the unprecedented effects of climate change, the increasing risk of disease transfer from animals to humans, and the need for solutions that preserve biodiversity, restore ecosystems, and reduce the proportion of threatened species.

Guðmundur Ingi Guðbrandsson, Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources, Iceland, said business as usual is not an option, sustainable resource management and biodiversity conservation actions need to be integrated, and perverse incentives must be reversed or cut. Samia Moualfi, Minister of Environment, Algeria, stressed the importance of capacity building, combating desertification, and preserving ecological systems and sharing benefits of genetic resources.

Zac Goldsmith, Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, UK, urged for nature-based solutions, reflecting the true value of nature in decision making, breaking the link between commodity supply chains and deforestation, and reconciling the economy and the environment. Desmond Lee, Minister for National Development, Singapore, noted that cities

worldwide are growing rapidly and recommended striving towards sustainable development to keep cities livable and weave nature more into urban environments.

Juan Cabandié, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, Argentina, said the economic, social, and environmental crisis of the world, combined with the debt crisis of many countries, challenges us to think of innovative financial solutions such as “debt for action” swaps, which would compensate for conserving important ecosystems for the benefit of the planet. Takiyuddin Hassan, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Malaysia, said that the GBF should recognize common but differentiated responsibilities, and be flexible. He welcomed initiatives taken so that economic development does not sacrifice natural resources, including financial frameworks to allow private sector investments and to ensure benefit-sharing from the utilization of biological resources.

María Luisa Albores González, Minister of the Environment and Natural Resources, Mexico, called for promoting ecological awareness to motivate sustainable development and ambitious targets in the GBF. Rubén Ramírez Mateo, Minister of the Environment, Peru, outlined national efforts to reverse biodiversity loss, including multi-sectoral and decentralized management of wetlands, and stressed that the GBF offers the opportunity to adopt global actions to help the most vulnerable, including on conservation of mountainous regions and disaster risk reduction.

Gustavo Manrique Miranda, Minister of Environment and Water, Ecuador, drew attention to national conservation efforts to realize the vision of an ecological transition towards a circular, low emission economy, and called for a transparent, science-based assessment of current and future biodiversity-related trends, and for a robust financial mechanism to foster the GBF’s implementation. Josué Lorca, Minister of Popular Power for Ecosocialism, Venezuela, expressed their commitment for biodiversity conservation through the promotion of ecosocialism; lamented challenges related to unilateral sanctions; highlighted national conservation efforts; and underscored the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, calling on developed countries to provide the necessary means of implementation.

Elba Rosa Pérez Montoya, Minister, Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment, Cuba, stressed the need to stop environmental destruction caused by unsustainable production and consumption patterns of “those that selfishly feel comfortable with the status quo,” lamenting unilateral sanctions, and highlighting nature-based solutions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore damaged ecosystems, and promote climate action. Parnel Charles Jr., Minister of Housing, Urban Renewal, Environment and Climate Change, Jamaica, highlighted the nexus between biodiversity loss and climate change, calling for employing nature-based solutions to address long-term impacts, and called for adequate means of implementation, and the development and application of a vulnerability index, including an environmental vulnerability component.

Orlando Jorge Mera, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Dominican Republic, outlined national efforts to establish and monitor protected areas, and manage invasive alien species, and called for adequate financial resources, capacity

building, and South-South cooperation to ensure implementation. Expressing his country’s willingness to act as a bridge between developed and developing countries in the efforts to curb biodiversity loss and address climate change, Han Jeoung-ae, Minister of Environment, Republic of Korea, drew attention to the Carbon Neutrality 2050 national goal, mid- and long-term cross-sectoral strategies, and the Green New Deal leading to investing USD 52 billion on lower emission policies, expanding protected areas, and strengthening research and development.

Roberto Cingolani, Minister for Ecological Transition, Italy, stressed that the GBF will only be effective if we address the way the financial system operates; called for enhancing prevention and preparedness through research, innovation, and capacity building; and emphasized that there is no one-size-fits-all solution, calling for a comprehensive approach with a solid scientific basis. Adrián Peña, Minister of the Environment, Uruguay, highlighted national efforts to reverse biodiversity loss and promote its sustainable use in the country’s unique ecosystems, including creating a financial directorate on biodiversity and ecosystem services in the Ministry of Environment.

Rashid Mekki Hassan, Secretary General, Higher Council for Environment and Natural Resources, Sudan, drew attention to its NBSAP, including initiatives on protected areas, invasive alien species, endangered plant species’ conservation, and tools for environmental and social impact assessment, stressing that local communities must be fully involved in the planning and implementation stages. Nyamjav Urtnasan, Minister of Environment and Tourism, Mongolia, highlighted the national 2050 vision, including a special section on green development, and outlined efforts on protected areas, freshwater resources, conserving biodiversity and combating desertification, and an initiative to plant one billion trees by 2030.

Outlining challenges, including destructive weather events, ocean acidification, coastal erosion, mining, and logging, Mahendra Reddy, Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment, Fiji, drew attention to: Fiji’s NBSAP 2020-2025 and relevant initiatives; the fact that it is the first small island developing state to pass climate legislation, aiming at net zero carbon emissions by 2050; and the Food Systems Summit for an inclusive pathway for local food systems’ transformation. Alexander Korbut, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Belarus, highlighted national efforts to address biodiversity loss, including: designation and management of protected areas; protection of endangered species; the establishment of a national center for the management of genetic resources; and marshlands’ protection.

Co-Chair Zhang provided a summary of the discussions, thanking participants for their contributions.

Roundtable D: Knowledge, innovation and benefit-sharing: The session was co-chaired by Zhang Yaping, Vice President, Chinese Academy of Sciences, and Carlos Eduardo Correa Escaf, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, Colombia.

In opening remarks, Co-Chair Zhang referred to the importance of generating, preserving and sharing knowledge from various sources for addressing biodiversity loss. Co-Chair Correa Escaf explained how a bioeconomy creates new products, services, and

jobs while sustainably using biodiversity, and how benefit-sharing mechanisms add value to both biodiversity and many economic sectors.

Two experts introduced the topic. Rachel Wynberg, University of Cape Town, South Africa, warned that the unprecedented loss of biodiversity comes with a loss of cultures, knowledges, and innovations that have co-evolved alongside people's relationships with nature, especially among IPLCs. She stressed that, to support conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, we must: acknowledge the importance of all knowledge systems; regularly conduct broad horizon scanning for new and emerging technologies; and recognize the changing nature of our world, which creates a permanent need for adjustment.

Ma Keping, Professor, Botany Institute, Chinese Academy of Sciences, stressed that given the majority of mega-diverse countries are developing, the success of implementation of the GBF will rely on sharing knowledge and benefits equally. He underscored the importance of international cooperation on data and technology sharing; emphasized existing gaps in knowledge and capacities, suggesting fully incorporating Indigenous and local knowledge systems; noted that innovation can occur at different levels; and highlighted the need to ensure broad stakeholder engagement and capacity building to foster a sense of co-ownership and maximize synergies.

Ministers then had the opportunity to speak. Sussan Ley, Minister for the Environment, Australia, illustrated how the international sharing of knowledge is crucial to address biodiversity loss from extreme weather events, and emphasized that the traditional knowledge of her country's Indigenous Peoples is invaluable for restoring biodiversity. Nancy Tembo, Minister of Forestry and Natural Resources, Malawi, highlighted research cooperation with traditional knowledge holders for the benefit of agriculture and other sectors in her country, and emphasized the importance of comprehensive benefit-sharing mechanisms.

Ali Apong, Minister of Primary Resources and Tourism, Brunei Darussalam, delivered a joint statement on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and underlined the importance of international cooperation and collaboration, with transfer of technologies, innovation, and knowledge. Aminath Shauna, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Technology, Maldives, outlined national efforts on biodiversity protection and climate change, drawing attention to coral bleaching, and calling for island-specific, easily accessible, and affordable innovations.

Siyabonga Cwele, Ambassador to China, South Africa, highlighted initiatives at the national level to operationalize the provisions of the Nagoya Protocol, stressing that achieving development goals requires predictable, appropriate, and accessible means of implementation. Spencer Thomas, Ambassador and Special Envoy for Multilateral Environmental Agreements, Ministry of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Climate Resilience and the Environment, Grenada, underscored the direct link between facilitating access to biodiversity, climate, and development finance, and bridging the gap related to knowledge, technology, and innovation, calling for a gap analysis, including technological capacity needs, education and public awareness, a whole-of-society approach, mainstreaming, and integration in national budgets.

Osama Ibrahim Faqeeha, Deputy Minister for Environment, Saudi Arabia, drew attention to the Saudi Vision 2030, outlining elements of the strategic framework aiming to reduce Saudi Arabia's dependence on oil, diversify its economy, and develop public service sectors, while also highlighting initiatives at the regional, local, and sub-local levels. Eskandar Zand, Advisor to the Minister of Agriculture, Iran, highlighted the need to ensure access to germplasm-related technologies according to the provisions of the Nagoya Protocol and lamented unilateral sanctions that impede conservation efforts, cautioning against politicizing environmental issues.

Andreas Riecken, Ambassador to China, Austria, stressed that agreeing on targets is insufficient as they "need to be brought to life," and drew attention to positive impacts of new technologies, including on data gathering and knowledge exchange, while warning against potential negative impacts, highlighting in that respect the precautionary approach, and relevant risk assessment and management. Edilberto Leonardo, Undersecretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Philippines, highlighted and supported proposed commitments of the draft Kunming Declaration relating to stepping up efforts to ensure fair and equitable benefit-sharing, and strengthening the management of biotechnologies.

Malcolm Noonan, Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform, Ireland, described his country's progress towards the ratification and implementation of the Nagoya Protocol, embedded in the EU's due diligence regime for the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge. Edita Djapo, Minister of Tourism and Environment, Bosnia and Herzegovina, highlighted regional instruments such as the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans in the context of national environmental strategies.

Lee White, Minister of Water, Forests, Sea and Environment, Gabon, presented solutions for integrating science, technology, and local knowledge systems to change behaviors, such as participatory landscape mapping and satellite vessel tracking systems. Sultan Al Hebsi, Undersecretary for the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, United Arab Emirates, reemphasized the importance of driving innovation, capacity building and knowledge transfer to better protect and conserve biodiversity.

Alejandro Espinosa Calderón, Executive Secretary, Inter-secretarial Commission for Biosafety of Genetically Modified Organisms, Mexico, pleaded for a recognition of the rights of IPLCs against the background of their contributions to the domestication and diversification of common global crops such as chili peppers, cotton, beans, squash, and maize, and advocated for an inclusion of biosafety considerations in the GBF. Cynthia Asare Bediako, Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, Ghana, expressed her concern about the future of the Nagoya Protocol, referring to the current state of the negotiations on DSI.

In his closing remarks, Co-Chair Zhang identified common themes of the discussion, highlighting the importance of continued research, innovation, technology and knowledge transfer, and benefit-sharing.

Closing Plenary: On Wednesday, COP 15 President Huang Runqiu opened the closing plenary of the high-level segment. Roundtable Co-Chairs Zhao Yingmin, Barbara Pompili, Zhang Zhanhai, and Zhang Yaping, reported back to plenary, summarizing

the main themes, actions, and ambitions expressed in the roundtable discussions.

COP President Huang introduced and announced the adoption of the Kunming Declaration, thanking parties and observers for their feedback on earlier drafts, and highlighting that it reflects the strong determination and political momentum of the biodiversity community. He opened the floor for regional statements.

Costa Rica, for GRULAC, said COVID-19 has widened the inequality between developed and developing countries, and that adequate means of implementation is critical for an effective GBF. She stressed that GRULAC is committed to halting the loss of biodiversity and pursuing the three objectives of the CBD in a balanced manner.

India, for the ASIA-PACIFIC GROUP, stressed that we are at a crucial moment in time when we have to act and commit to an ambitious and transformative GBF.

The EU reminded delegates that the world failed to deliver on the Aichi Targets and now needs to commit to, among others: urgent actions and transformative change; an effective monitoring mechanism; proper protection of coastal and marine environments, including the open ocean and deep sea; recognizing human rights of vulnerable groups; and removing incentives harmful to biodiversity.

Iceland, also on behalf of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Israel, Monaco, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Switzerland, the UK, and the US, members of the JUSCANZ GROUP, said there is much to do to achieve an ambitious and effective GBF, and reminded delegates that the hard work comes in implementation, which is not done in conference rooms but on the ground.

Senegal, for the AFRICAN GROUP, urged mobilizing the necessary resources to reverse the trend of biodiversity loss, including establishment of an international biodiversity fund.

The IIFB called on parties to go beyond protected areas and recognize Indigenous lands, based on the principles of self-identification, self-determination, self-governance and free, prior informed consent by Indigenous Peoples. SUBNATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS said they are at the frontlines of addressing biodiversity decline, which requires a whole-of-government approach engaging all levels of government.

The CBD ALLIANCE urged addressing corporate capture and the global finance architecture, and implementing equitable governance relying on human rights and an ecosystems-based approach, rather than the misleading concept of nature-based solutions. The CBD WOMEN'S CAUCUS called for building an enabling environment with women at the center of future biodiversity protection. INTERNATIONAL NGOs urged for a strong GBF with clear and measurable milestones and targets, noting it is unacceptable to wait 10 years before undertaking a review, and then look surprised if the targets are not met.

NATURA & CO, representing the business community, called for an agreement to ensure nature is properly valued, with clear targets for countries and companies, just as is the case for climate protection under the Paris Agreement. The MENGNIU GROUP, representing Chinese businesses, acknowledged increased environmental pressures due to increased standards of living, but felt confident that economic development and environmental protection can and should be complementary. AMUNDI, representing the finance sector,

supported an ambitious GBF, and further regulation to address biodiversity loss with explicit and clear guidelines to mobilize financial resources.

The CONSORTIUM OF SCIENTIFIC PARTNERS, representing academia and research, committed to be at the forefront of innovation, creativity, and discovery to support transformative change with a vast array of expertise, data, tools, and techniques; and called for enhanced international and cross-sectoral collaboration, including sufficiently funded career opportunities, particularly in taxonomy. GYBN reflected on what it means to be courageous and urged leaders to look at the root causes of the biodiversity crisis, and to listen to the voices of future generations.

CBD Executive Secretary Mrema emphasized the overall objective to reduce, halt, and reverse biodiversity loss, putting biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030 and achieving the 2050 vision of living in harmony with nature. She drew attention to encouraging commitments made during the high-level segment by China, the EU, Japan, philanthropic organizations, intergovernmental organizations, and others. She noted the Kunming Declaration points to the right direction, highlighting biodiversity mainstreaming, redirection of subsidies, and full and effective participation of IPLCs, and called for the delivery of an ambitious GBF.

COP President Huang highlighted the rich discussions during the high-level segment, and the smooth launching of the Kunming Declaration. He thanked all participants for their commitment and flexibility, and closed the high-level segment on Wednesday at 4:51 pm Kunming time (UTC+8).

Kunming Declaration

The Kunming Declaration was adopted by the high-level segment of COP 15 Part I on Wednesday, 13 October. The Declaration:

- emphasizes that biodiversity, and the ecosystem functions and services it provides, supports all forms of life on Earth and underpins our human and planetary health and wellbeing, economic growth and sustainable development;
- expresses deep concern that progress has been insufficient to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets;
- recognizes that the unprecedented and interrelated crises of biodiversity loss, climate change, land degradation and desertification, ocean degradation, and pollution share many underlying drivers of change;
- stresses that urgent and integrated action is needed for transformative change across all sectors of the economy and all parts of society;
- notes the call from many countries for a 30-by-30 target; and
- declares that putting biodiversity on a path to recovery is a defining challenge of this decade.

Ministers and other heads of delegations commit to:

- ensuring the development, adoption and implementation of an effective GBF, including providing the necessary means of implementation and appropriate monitoring, reporting, and review mechanisms;
- working across their respective governments to promote biodiversity mainstreaming, including into policies, regulations, planning processes, poverty reduction strategies and economic accounting;

- accelerating and strengthening the development and updating of NBSAPs;
- improving the effectiveness and coverage of area-based conservation and management, including recognizing the rights, and ensuring the participation, of IPLCs;
- stepping up efforts to ensure the aims of the Nagoya Protocol, taking into account the context of DSI;
- strengthening the development, assessment, regulation, management, and transfer of relevant biotechnologies;
- increasing ecosystem-based approaches to ensure benefits across economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, including to address biodiversity loss, degraded ecosystems, resilience, climate change mitigation and adaptation, sustainable food production, and health;
- stepping up actions around coastal and marine ecosystems;
- ensuring post-pandemic recovery policies address biodiversity; and
- working with ministries of finance and economy to, *inter alia*, eliminate, phase out or reform subsidies and other incentives harmful to biodiversity.

A Brief Analysis of the UN Biodiversity Conference (Part One)

Are we who we need to be?

Josefa Cariño Tauli, Youth Indigenous Leader

The biodiversity crisis combined with other environmental crises poses an existential threat for humanity. Efforts so far have been inadequate and fragmented, and have not changed the path of destruction; we are losing biodiversity faster than ever before in human history. The post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF) is supposed to address this crisis and put humanity on a path to recovery by 2030, moving towards the 2050 vision of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) of living in harmony with nature.

COVID-19 has affected the development of the GBF. The framework was supposed to be adopted in October 2020, but will now only be agreed in May 2022, if everything goes according to plan. Work has continued virtually despite challenges and delays, and parties celebrated the efforts that led to convening the first part of the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP 15) and the relevant meetings of the CBD's protocols.

Part One of COP 15 was introductory. The plenary primarily addressed the necessary order of business, including ensuring that an interim budget is in place for 2022 for the smooth operation of the Convention. Nevertheless, the meeting was also important to maintaining momentum and attracting political attention. The latter was realized through the high-level segment.

As the CBD community moves on towards two very important meetings—the first in January in Geneva for the resumed meetings of the CBD subsidiary bodies and the Working Group on the GBF, and the second in April in Kunming for the culmination of the second part of the UN Biodiversity Conference—the focus will be on the GBF. Two overarching issues stand out: the GBF's level of ambition, which will be determined by the content and relevant targets; and its implementation, which must start on 9 May 2022, the

day after COP 15 ends, as implementation has already been slowed by COVID-19. Part One of COP 15 provided useful clues on both issues.

Ambition

The high-level segment's content allows for ample optimism if one focuses on the variety of conservation initiatives around the world, which indicates that we are moving towards the right path. Still, all data, including the recent fifth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO-5), shows that this is not the case. Thus, while the multitude of environmental initiatives are steps in the right direction, they are simply not enough when added together. As one delegate noted, this is why the Aichi Targets failed, or at least most of them, and why other processes, such as the climate negotiations, are faced with a similar challenge.

Even more concerning for many long-standing observers of biodiversity negotiations, the interventions at the ministerial level were far “greener” than those at the GBF negotiations. If there is strong political will and understanding of the urgency to address the issues at stake, the inconsistency between the content of the high-level interventions and pragmatic negotiating realities needs to be bridged if governments are to adopt an ambitious GBF. Whether this will happen remains in question. In addition, while a global environmental governance system based on consensus is a noble concept, and one that ensures no one is politically left behind, the system, as one participant noted “inherently produces outcomes representing the lowest common denominator”—a far cry from the necessary level of ambition.

There are also additional challenges. The 30-by-30 target, aiming to conserve 30% of Earth's land and sea areas by 2030, attracts considerable attention and support. Many delegates noted that such a target can capture the visual imagination and function as a “branding motto” for biodiversity. Other participants, however, emphasized that while 30-by-30 is a good and ambitious target, it is just one of 21 aspects we should be focusing on in the GBF, and addressing the biodiversity crisis, unfortunately, is not this simple.

First, as the representative of the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) said, conserving 30% of the planet is not going to matter if we destroy the other 70%. Second, and more significantly, focusing on simple conservation goals is not enough. As one veteran pointed out, the Aichi Targets on protected areas were almost achieved, but this fact did not change our overall destructive patterns over the last decade.

Not only is focusing on conservation goals alone not enough, but it may also create a path to failure. Achieving, for example, an ambitious target on cutting species' extinction rates, as one participant noted, will be decided by activities, policies, and behavioral change well beyond the biodiversity community and the GBF. She added that no matter how many protected areas are designated, if average temperatures increase due to the failure of the Paris Agreement and insufficient nationally determined contributions (NDCs), the extinction drama will intensify. As another delegate concluded, the need for an integrated approach is evidenced by the fact that almost no targets can be achieved by focusing on the remit of the CBD alone.

In their interventions, many participants agreed that to reverse biodiversity loss, we need to attack both its direct and indirect drivers. Some stressed that the ability to address indirect drivers, including the structure of our economies and sociopolitical dimensions, will be decisive for the overall level of ambition in the GBF. In that respect, they highlighted the importance of future decisions on mainstreaming biodiversity concerns in all economic sectors, including agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, and especially relevant subsidies. Ambition can further be raised by addressing unsustainable consumption and production patterns, financing, and incorporating economic valuation of ecosystem services in all decision making.

The CBD alone cannot change the status quo, which is what influences the negotiating positions and explains part of the disconnect between negotiators and environment ministers. Final positions and red lines of negotiators in CBD discussions may often be the result of balancing competing interests between different ministries. Thus, as one veteran observed, the vision expressed by a minister of environment during a high-level segment and the national negotiating positions of the same country hardly coincide. He noted that, in this respect, the outcome of ongoing negotiations, like the ones on fishery subsidies under the World Trade Organization, may provide clear signals regarding the GBF's potential overall ambition.

Implementation

Adopting an ambitious GBF, however, is only part of the battle. Without effective implementation, the GBF could go the way of the Aichi Targets.

As a participant from a developing party noted, we are all well versed in what successful implementation requires: we need capacity building, technology transfer, technical support, South-South and other forms of cooperation, gender mainstreaming, incorporation of traditional and local knowledge, public awareness and participation, and transparency, to name a few. While the list is long, when developing countries talk about means of implementation, one of the main considerations remains financial resources.

On that front, the meeting offered both good and bad news.

The good news is that Chinese President Xi Jinping announced the Kunming Biodiversity Fund of CNY 1.5 billion, approximately USD 232 million. Japan announced the second phase of the Japan Biodiversity Fund, with an additional USD 17 million. The donation of USD 5 billion from nine leading philanthropic organizations was also confirmed.

Other pledges were made for investment in nature at the national level. Some announcements will need further clarification, such as France's announcement that 30% of climate finance would be devoted to biodiversity conservation. This would be significant for biodiversity, a participant noted, if it happened at the international level, but it wouldn't be a win for overall environmental protection because it is not new money coming in, rather just a redirection of existing funds. In the same vein, the UK said that USD 3 billion of its climate contribution, would be invested on nature and nature-based solutions.

In other related good news, an open letter from 12 global business CEOs to world leaders shows some movement in the private sector. As a delegate noted, if the four steps contained in the letter are

taken (embed the value of nature in decision making and disclosure; eliminate and redirect all harmful subsidies; align all financial flows towards a nature-positive world; and ensure production and consumption footprints are within ecological thresholds), this would be significant progress towards implementing most of the GBF's goals and targets. Relevant interventions from the private sector welcoming additional regulation also pointed in the right direction.

More good news came from the Global Environment Facility, the UN Development Programme and the UN Environment Programme, who all committed to fast-tracking financial and technical support to developing countries for GBF implementation, which is essential as there is no time to be lost due to lengthy bureaucratic procedures.

The bad news is that this money is hardly enough. The 2020 report "Financing Nature: Closing the Global Biodiversity Financing Gap" estimates that USD 700 billion is needed annually to halt biodiversity decline. Removing all agricultural, fisheries, and forestry subsidies that are harmful to nature would account for more than USD 500 billion. Still, an additional USD 200 billion would be needed.

As a participant emphasized "we are nowhere near these numbers." She urged for additional efforts, noting that USD 700 billion annually is "less than 1% of global GDP" and that "annual fossil fuel subsidies exceed USD 5 trillion." Another observer further reflected on the same question in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic: if the international community grasped the urgency of the biodiversity crisis and deployed funds and investments in the same manner as it responded to the pandemic, would financing still be an issue? But like in climate, he lamented, the time horizons are too long, going beyond election cycles, making it much harder to make real financial commitments.

Is the GBF Half Full or Half Empty?

The GBF is gaining momentum, and, in many ways, it can be seen as half full. 30-by-30 and other targets are gaining traction; governments are making commitments, including financial ones; the private sector is increasingly supportive; and political momentum is building, as is the sense of urgency.

On the other hand, the GBF is half empty. The level of ambition is not high enough and there is no clear indication that sensitive issues, such as subsidies, will be incorporated into the final text. In addition, the means of implementation are not adequate, predictable, or guaranteed. A delegate noted that in order to achieve the integral, holistic solutions that are needed in the GBF, a restructuring of the global environmental governance system may be needed, moving towards common goals and visions, strongly interrelated programmes of work, and shared means of implementation.

No one knows what will happen in the next six months, and nothing is cast in stone. The negotiations and decisions taken in the coming months will determine the path humanity will take over the next decade. As an observer noted, from what we have seen so far, there is no reason to be overly optimistic, both in terms of ambition and implementation.

It is up to those taking the decisions, and those that may influence these decisions, to change this uncomfortable reality.

Upcoming Meetings

World Health Summit: The Summit is a strategic global health forum convening leaders in politics, science, medicine, the private sector, and civil society, with the SDGs at its core. Central topics in 2021 are: vaccines, the role of the EU in global health, mental health, artificial intelligence, lessons learned in pandemic preparedness, and the World Health Organization (WHO) Council on the Economics of Health for All. It is convened under the patronage of Germany, France, the European Commission, and the WHO. **dates:** 24-26 October 2021 **location:** Berlin, Germany and virtual **www:** worldhealthsummit.org

Twelfth World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference: The 12th Ministerial Conference was originally scheduled to take place in June 2020 in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Conference will touch on issues pertaining to the World Trade Organization, including plastic pollution and fisheries subsidies. **dates:** 30 November – 3 December 2021 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **www:** wto.org

UNFCCC COP 26: The 26th session of the COP (COP 26), the 16th meeting of the COP serving as the MOP to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 16), and the third meeting of the COP serving as the MOP to the Paris Agreement (CMA 3) will convene. **dates:** 31 October – 12 November 2021 **location:** Glasgow, Scotland, UK **www:** unfccc.int

57th Session of the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC) and Associated Sessions of the Committees: The ITTC is the International Tropical Timber Organization's governing body meeting once a year to discuss issues related to the legal trade of tropical timber and the sustainable management of tropical forests. **dates:** 29 November – 3 December 2021 **location:** virtual **www:** itto.int/council_committees/documents/

61st meeting of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council: The Council, the GEF's main governing body, meets twice annually to develop, adopt and evaluate the operational policies and programmes for GEF-financed activities. It also reviews and approves the work programme (projects submitted for approval). **dates:** 6-10 December 2021 **location:** Washington, D.C., US **www:** thegef.org/council-meetings/gef-61st-council-meeting

Resumed sessions of the CBD Subsidiary Bodies and Working Group-3 on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF): The resumed sessions of SBSTTA-24, SBI-3 and the third meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the post-2020 GBF are scheduled to reconvene as face-to-face meetings and address, as a core topic, outstanding issues in regard to the post-2020 GBF. **dates:** 12-28 January 2022 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **www:** cbd.int/meetings

Resumed Fifth Session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA 5.2): UNEA 5.2 will take place under the theme "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the SDGs." Its aim will be to connect and consolidate environmental actions within the context of sustainable development and motivate the sharing and implementation of successful approaches. At this Conference, UNEA will also discuss whether to establish an intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC) towards a new agreement on marine litter and plastic pollution. The in-person session of UNEA-5 will be followed by a Special Session of the UNEA, on 3-4

March 2022, to commemorate UNEP's 50th anniversary. **date:** 28 February – 2 March 2022 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** unep.org/environmentalassembly/unea5

CITES SC 74: The 74th meeting of the Standing Committee to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora will meet either in person or hybrid format to prepare for the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties. **dates:** March 2022 **location:** TBD **www:** cites.org/sites/default/files/notifications/E-Notif-2021-056.pdf

Second Part of the UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP 15): The second part of CBD COP 15, the 10th meeting of the COP serving as the MOP to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, and the 4th meeting of the COP serving as the MOP to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing are scheduled to reconvene in a face-to-face meeting in Kunming, China. COP 15 is expected to take a final decision on the post-2020 GBF, as well as decisions on related topics, including capacity building and resource mobilization. **dates:** 25 April – 8 May 2022 **location:** Kunming, China **www:** cbd.int/meetings

For additional upcoming events, see sdg.iisd.org/

Glossary

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of the Parties
CP	Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety
DSI	Digital sequence information
GBF	Post-2020 global biodiversity framework
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GRULAC	Latin American and Caribbean Group
GYBN	Global Youth Biodiversity Network
IIFB	International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPLCs	Indigenous Peoples and local communities
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MOP	Meeting of the Parties
NBSAPs	National biodiversity strategies and action plans
NP	Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing
SBI	Subsidiary Body on Implementation
SBSTTA	Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change