

**STATEMENT BY ELIZABETH MARUMA MREMA
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at the

**2022 UN OCEAN CONFERENCE
INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE 2: MANAGING, PROTECTING, CONSERVING AND RESTORING MARINE
AND COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS**

3:00-6:00PM, 28 June 2022, Altice Arena, Tejo Hall, Lisbon, Portugal

*Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

I greatly appreciate the opportunity to address you all here today. It is my great pleasure and honor to speak among such esteemed experts at such a momentous occasion.

Biodiversity, in a word, is life. In its simplest terms, it is the abundance and diversity of species on this planet. But, what it gives us is so much more. It is the basis for human well-being and one of the core foundations for sustainable development.

Biodiversity, like the ocean, does not recognize national boundaries. When governments drafted the Convention on Biological Diversity, they affirmed in the text of the Convention that the conservation of biodiversity is a common concern of humankind. Governments recognized that a collective response was needed to address growing trends in biodiversity loss and that we needed to act urgently to live up to our responsibility to preserve nature for future generations.

It is hard to understate the broad-reaching importance of biodiversity. Nature, through its ecological and evolutionary processes, sustains the quality of the air, water and soils on which humanity depends, distributes fresh water, regulates the climate, provides pollination and pest control and reduces the impact of natural hazards.

But, nature has been sounding its alarms. The rate of global change in nature during the past 50 years at all spatial scales is unprecedented in human history. More food, energy and materials are being supplied to people than even before, which is coming at the expense of nature's ability to continue to provide such contributions. Thus, biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation undermine progress on nearly all of the Sustainable Development Goals.

These trends are all the more pronounced in the ocean. Approximately half of the live coral cover on coral reefs has been lost since the 1870s, with accelerating losses in recent decades due to climate change acting in synergy with other drivers. Marine plastic pollution has increased tenfold since 1980, affecting at least 267 species, including 86 per cent of marine turtles, 44 per cent of seabirds and 43 per cent of marine mammals.

Nearly 3,400 square kilometers of mangrove forests were lost between 2000 and 2016 with around 62 percent of this due to direct human causes, such as farming and aquaculture. There are few parts of the ocean that we have not affected and overall 66 per cent of the ocean area is experiencing increasing cumulative impacts from multiple pressures.

The cause of this decline is no secret. In the past 50 years, the human population has doubled, the global economy has grown nearly fourfold and global trade has grown tenfold, together driving up the demand for energy and materials. This is putting enormous pressure on biodiversity. It has been estimated that we would require 1.6 Earths to maintain the world's current living standards. Substantial biodiversity loss as a result, greatly alters the structure and function of ecosystems and compromises the provision of services that support poverty eradication, economic growth, food security and sustainable livelihoods. The consequences of biodiversity loss are often most severe for the poor, who are extremely dependent on ecosystem services for their livelihoods.

Growing trends in biodiversity loss motivated the development of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets more than 10 years ago. These Targets, which were adopted by the Parties to the CBD in 2010, provided a clear encapsulation of our ambition for where we wanted to be by 2020. They catalyzed incredible attention, efforts and investments in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. And, they helped to reframe the discussion around biodiversity and its importance for a broad range of issues that were once considered outside of the biodiversity realm. Between 2010 and 2020, protected area coverage expanded dramatically, with the greatest rate of expansion being in marine protected areas, where 68% of MPA coverage was less than 10 years old.

Despite these bright spots, we were unable to fully achieve the Aichi Targets by their 2020 deadline. However, the achievements and momentum built since 2010, combined with the clear recognition of the need for urgent action, is driving CBD Parties in the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

This framework will be comprised of a new set of global goals and targets aimed at reducing biodiversity loss, strengthening the ability of ecosystems to continue to provide their services and setting us on path towards a better future for nature and people. Negotiations on this framework are at a critical point. Just a few days ago, we wrapped up the 4th and final meeting of deliberations under the post-2020 working group and now we look to CBD COP 15 and towards the adoption of this framework.

We have learned valuable lessons from the Aichi Targets which are framing the approach to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. We need to more directly address the drivers of biodiversity loss by better engaging those actors and sectors that directly use, depend on and impact biodiversity. The increasing focus on biodiversity mainstreaming speaks directly to this need, and approaches such as *other effective area-based conservation measures*, or "OECMs", are just one of many tools to productively engage sectors in actions to benefit biodiversity.

We need to better empower effective stewards of biodiversity, including indigenous peoples and local communities. We have seen that nature is generally declining less rapidly in the territories of indigenous peoples than in other areas, and many of these communities have time-tested approaches on ways to live in harmony with the natural world.

We also need to treat biodiversity as the valuable asset that it is. The Dasgupta Review showed that biodiversity can be viewed as an asset portfolio that requires careful management and investment, and for which we not only need abundance, but also diversity. Recent developments in the World Trade Organization to address harmful fisheries subsidies are a great step in the right direction, but we need to go further.

The good news is that it is not too late to slow, halt and reverse trends in biodiversity loss. And, we have seen clear signs of progress when action is taken and ecosystem approaches are applied. Increased efforts in protection and restoration have led to decreases in the rate of mangrove loss worldwide. In places where good fisheries management policies have been introduced, involving stock assessments, catch limits, and enforcement, the abundance of marine fish stocks has been maintained or rebuilt. And, there has been a surge in projects to restore coastal ecosystems, including mangroves, seagrasses, kelp forests, and coral reefs.

Importantly, we need to move past piecemeal interventions and implement a portfolio of actions that tackle, in a cohesive manner, conservation and restoration, reducing the drivers of biodiversity loss, sustainable production and consumption, and action on climate change. Only by addressing all of these together can we bend the curve of biodiversity loss. In the ocean, this will likewise entail a package of approaches that span across sectors, disciplines and communities, and focus on improved marine spatial planning, sustainably managing fisheries and aquaculture, protecting critical habitats, reducing pollution and controlling the spread of invasive alien species.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have, at our fingertips, an unprecedented level of attention on oceans and many proven tools and approaches ready and waiting to be scaled up. We simply need to put the puzzle pieces together.

Our historic gathering here in Lisbon will be crucial to set the tone for the final stages of the negotiations and adoption of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework at CBD COP 15. Let us not lose this once in a lifetime opportunity to make things right for our blue planet.
