

## UN Biodiversity Conference Highlights: Saturday, 17 December 2022

A stocktaking plenary was the highlight of the day. Delegates heard reports from ministerial consultations on the global biodiversity framework (GBF), resource mobilization, and digital sequence information (DSI), and a plan on the way forward as proposed by the Presidency of the Conference of the Parties (COP). Contact groups continued their work on mainstreaming and on the financial mechanism. Working Group (WG) I met in an evening session to address conference room papers (CRPs).

### High-Level Segment Closing Plenary

COP President Huang Runqiu reiterated the call to finalize and adopt an ambitious, robust, and implementable GBF. Valérie Plante, Mayor of Montreal, said cities are essential partners for biodiversity protection. Liu Jiachen, Mayor of Kunming, reported on the Kunming center of excellence, which aims to work with cities globally to strengthen local governments' commitment to GBF implementation. Participants heard reports from major events held parallel to COP 15, including the fifth Science-Policy Forum, and the Nature and Culture Summit, as well as from different constituencies who outlined their contribution to implementation of the GBF. Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, Chair of the Sharm El-Sheikh to Kunming to Montreal Action Agenda for Nature and People, reported on activities under the Action Agenda and the momentum created for a whole-of-society implementation of the GBF. In an intergenerational dialogue, elder Lucy Mulenkei, International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB), and Hector Alan Valdés Suárez, Global Youth Biodiversity Network, pleaded for an inclusive and restorative GBF, which fosters collaboration between living generations and looks after future generations.

### Plenary

WG I Chair Rosemary Paterson (New Zealand) reported on progress, calling for ministerial or presidential guidance on: the GBF and its monitoring framework; DSI; resource mobilization; planning, monitoring, reporting, and review; and capacity building. WG II Chair Helena Brown (Antigua and Barbuda) noted the group had concluded its mandate, emphasizing the importance of the decisions for the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols. Chair of the Budget Committee Hamdallah Zedan (Egypt) reported on progress on the budget for the 2023-2024 biennium.

**Ministerial Consultations:** Maisa Rojas, Minister for the Environment, Chile, and Espen Barth Eide, Minister of Climate and Environment, Norway, presented their proposal on DSI, formulated following consultations with all interested parties, envisaging: establishment of a multilateral benefit-sharing mechanism at this meeting, including provisions on respecting existing national arrangements; and creation of an intersessional Working Group to address the mechanism's modalities.

Jeanne d'Arc Mujawamariya, Minister of Environment, Rwanda, and Jochen Flasbarth, State Secretary, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany, discussed

progress in consultations on resource mobilization. They highlighted that regional groups were largely in agreement with the overall amount of USD 200 billion annually by 2030 regarding global financial resources for biodiversity from all sources, including international, domestic, public, and private ones, and underscored the need to increase flows to developing countries. They emphasized divergent views on the funding structure, including potential creation of a standalone fund or improvement of the existing funding mechanism, drawing attention to a third, middle-ground proposal on establishing a dedicated biodiversity fund administered by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

Regarding the GBF, Yasmine Fouad, Minister of Environment, Egypt, and Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Canada, reported progress on Goal A (conservation of ecosystems, species, and genetic diversity) and a set of targets, noting that, following consultations, they will forward recommendations to the Presidency.

**Statements:** The EU urged strong and measurable 2030 targets, including a 50% reduction of chemical pesticides, the conservation of 30% of land and sea areas (30x30), and a 30% reduction of humanity's ecological footprint, with new and additional resources from all sources. Antigua and Barbuda, for SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS), with Saint Lucia, for the ORGANISATION OF EASTERN CARIBBEAN STATES, pleaded that the COP remains faithful to the wording and spirit of the CBD and to take SIDS' vulnerabilities into account. CHILE, also on behalf of Colombia, Costa Rica, Peru, and Mexico, highlighted the role of their countries as guardians of biodiversity, and called for ambition on all fronts and regarding all three objectives of the CBD.

Calling for a "net zero, nature positive world," AUSTRALIA announced plans to increase international public finance for nature up to 2030, building on their commitment to double development assistance funding to AUD two billion. SWITZERLAND called for an ambitious, effective, and fair COP 15 outcome, cautioning against unrealistic finance-related demands. The DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO urged adoption of a bold framework, including a new biodiversity fund, and strong resource mobilization, scientific cooperation, and technology transfer components. CANADA called on parties to choose collaboration, compromise, and consensus over disagreement, delay, and risk for nature.

Drawing attention to the health of the ocean, NEW ZEALAND expressed readiness to target support where it is most needed to ensure a nature positive future. The UK urged an ambitious GBF, including nature restoration, a 30x30 target, and commensurate finance. Noting steady progress in the negotiations, BRAZIL said the core elements of DSI and resource mobilization are key to completing and adopting the GBF, and urged alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. COSTA RICA emphasized that 30x30 with contributions of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) is key to ambition, further calling, with SOUTH AFRICA, for strengthening the GEF, and establishing a global biodiversity fund. A youth delegate from NORWAY remarked that "the current discussions will set the tone for our relationship with nature for the rest of my life."

ARGENTINA called for a quantitative target for official development assistance and quick access to resources to enable implementation. INDONESIA and INDIA noted that GBF goals and targets must be based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR). INDONESIA further opposed any numerical target regarding harmful subsidies and INDIA highlighted that support for agricultural production in developing countries cannot be shifted. IRAN called for effective and inclusive GEF funding. COLOMBIA called for recognizing the collective land rights of Indigenous Peoples, noting that Indigenous governance has ensured better protection, and for fair distribution of benefits from DSI, warning against commodification of life. BOLIVIA urged for recognizing the rights of Mother Earth and for financial resources in solidarity with developing countries.

JAPAN underscored the importance of resource mobilization from all sources for effective GBF implementation, involving all stakeholders, and being innovative regarding a successful mechanism for DSI. NIGERIA noted that an ambitious GBF must be matched by ambitious funding commitments, defining priorities from the bottom up, and addressing the needs of low- and middle-income countries. The IIFB stressed that the 30x30 target needs to reflect the role of IPLCs. The INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE (IUCN) noted inconsistency between high-level interventions and negotiating realities, underscoring that “an impasse or a watered-down agreement will not be accepted as the world is watching.” Calling on developed countries to right the wrongs on their ecological debt, the CBD ALLIANCE emphasized that there can be no biodiversity or ambition without justice, stressing that the principles of CBDR and equity are at the heart of the Convention. The WOMEN’S CAUCUS called for a human rights-based, gender-responsive GBF.

**Way Forward:** COP President Huang Runqiu announced that a President’s text will be available at 8 am on Sunday, for consultation with heads of delegation, in an attempt to forge consensus on: the GBF and its monitoring framework; resource mobilization; DSI; planning, monitoring, reporting, and review; and capacity-building, and technical and scientific cooperation.

### Contact Groups

**Mainstreaming:** The contact group worked on the basis of a revised non-paper. Parties agreed to refer to the long-term strategic approach to mainstreaming biodiversity as “voluntary and interim,” to reflect that it will be further developed for consideration by COP 16. A paragraph recognizing that the approach provides a framework to support national and local actions remained unresolved. Heated debate ensued regarding an invitation to parties to consider the approach and its complementary action plan to support GBF implementation. Some objected to using interim and incomplete tools when reviewing national biodiversity strategies and action plans. Contention also arose on the role of stakeholders in reporting case studies and other relevant experiences in implementing the approach and action plan. Delegates also disagreed on whether these reports should be used in the global review of collective progress in GBF implementation. The paragraph remained unresolved. Delegates tentatively agreed on the establishment of an *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) to conclude the approach and action plan. They also agreed that the outcomes of the AHTEG shall be reviewed by parties before being forwarded to the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI). Finally, it was agreed to note in the draft decision that the annexed draft long-term strategic approach has not been negotiated. A CRP will be prepared.

**Financial Mechanism:** Delegates considered bracketed provisions in Annex I on the four-year outcome-oriented framework of CBD priorities for the eighth replenishment of the GEF (GEF 8). Delegates agreed that: GEF 8 should explore ways to improve access to funding for IPLCs; and GEF should further interact and cooperate with multilateral development banks and others to integrate the CBD and GBF within their activities and report on funding contributing to their implementation. They could not agree on a reference to measuring the co-benefits of biodiversity across all relevant GEF activities, with some insisting

it could result in double accounting. Delegates agreed to a standardized reference to developing countries, in particular “least developed countries and SIDS, and countries with economies in transition, and also taking into consideration the special situation of developing countries, including those that are most environmentally vulnerable, such as those with arid and semi-arid zones, coastal and mountainous areas.” Delegates then addressed the annex on consolidated previous guidance on the financial mechanism, and agreed to it with minor amendments. They also discussed the annexed terms of reference for the sixth review of the effectiveness of the financial mechanism, focusing on sections on objectives, criteria, and methodology.

### Working Group I

In the evening, delegates considered a CRP on **engagement with subnational governments** (CBD/COP/15/WG/1/CRP.9), including a draft decision and an annexed action plan, and approved it with the addition of a request to the Secretariat to undertake a review of the role of subnational governments for SBI 5 consideration.

On a CRP on **cooperation with other conventions** (CBD/COP/15/WG/1/CRP.8), delegates agreed, after some debate, to a preambular reference taking note of the resolution of the UN Environment Assembly on nature-based solutions; and a reference to the work to establish a world coastal forum. On strengthening cooperation and synergies among relevant conventions and multilateral agreements, delegates agreed to: encourage the UN Development Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, and other relevant organizations to support parties in GBF implementation, and the UN Environment Programme to build on the Bern process on cooperation of biodiversity-related conventions; and to request the Secretariat to encourage parties to engage in the Bern process. On a decision regarding linkages with the World Health Organization, delegates debated an EU proposal that collaboration entails “links between pandemics and health.” BRAZIL, ARGENTINA, and COLOMBIA objected and the paragraph was bracketed. The WG approved the CRP with these and other, minor amendments.

Delegates then addressed a CRP on the **gender plan of action** (CBD/COP/15/WG/1/CRP.2). An engaged discussion developed around the terminology used in the draft gender plan of action, including on “women and girls in all their diversity,” “sexual orientation and gender identity,” and “multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination,” with several parties indicating that such terminology would not align with their national culture, religion, policies, and legislation. By compromise, it was agreed that reference be made to “all women and girls” and “all forms of discrimination,” and that the reference to “sexual orientation and gender identity” be deleted. The gender plan of action and respective draft decision was approved with these and other, minor amendments. Discussions continued into the night on the **communication strategy**.

### In The Corridors

Dashing through the snow to the conference venue was a pleasant reminder of the upcoming holidays, and the mood of delegates was markedly improved. It might have been due to the beauty of the snow, the announcement of the winners of the first-ever CBD snowman building competition, or the news that progress was achieved in ministerial consultations on some of the “big six” core issues: the GBF, its monitoring framework, DSI, resource mobilization, capacity building, and planning, monitoring, reporting, and review. On DSI in particular, many were pleasantly surprised to hear about a clear ministerial proposal to establish a multilateral benefit-sharing mechanism at this meeting. Following the announcement that a President’s text will be tabled early Sunday morning, “as if drawn from under a blanket of snow,” an observer welcomed developments as the only chance of reaching agreement on the core issues. Others warned of the risk of linking everything in one package. “If one falls, they all fall,” one delegate cautioned, and they were not making an analogy to the pretty snowfall, but rather to the slippery slope underneath it.