

Web Annex 4:
UN Summit on Biodiversity (30 September 2020)

1. As reported to the last Session of the Council¹, the UN General Assembly decided on 20 December 2019 to convene a Summit on Biodiversity at the level of Heads of State and Government before the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 15). The Summit was scheduled to highlight the urgency of action at the highest levels in support of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework that contributes to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and places the global community on a path towards realizing the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity.²

2. The United Nations Summit on Biodiversity at the level of Heads of State and Government, convened by the President of the General Assembly, was held on 30 September 2020, in accordance with the General Assembly Resolution 74/269³ and decision 74/562. The theme of the Summit was “Urgent Action on Biodiversity for Sustainable Development”. The Summit was also guided by the theme of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations; “The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism”.⁴ The Summit consisted of an opening segment, a plenary segment for general discussion, two Leaders’ Dialogues on “Addressing biodiversity loss and mainstreaming biodiversity for sustainable development” and “Harnessing science, technology and innovation, capacity-building, access and benefit-sharing, financing and partnerships for biodiversity”, and a brief closing segment. Over 100 Heads of State and Government and Ministers, as well as numerous intergovernmental organizations, the UN System and stakeholder representatives engaged in the Summit via pre-recorded statements, livestream or in-person presentations to build political momentum for CBD COP 15 to be held in Kunming, China, in 2021.

3. The Director-General of FAO, speaking at the Summit on behalf of several sister UN entities, joined the call for urgent action on biodiversity for sustainable development. He stressed the commitment of the UN System to support Members in making biodiversity an integral part of strategies on green development, innovative approaches and disaster risk management, and in implementing international agreements and policies to ensure food security, livelihoods, and sustainability. He also pointed out the important links between the Summit and the UN Food Systems Summit 2021, stating that the future of agri-food systems depends on biodiversity and the future of biodiversity depends on food systems transformation, green economic development and reverence to nature.⁵

4. The Summit demonstrated commitment to and highlighted the need for urgent action at the highest levels in support of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework that contributes to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The common themes across the segments of the Summit included:

- The connections between biodiversity, societies and economies, as well as **linkages with the 2030 Agenda** and other biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements, especially those related to climate change, which acts as an accelerator to various drivers of biodiversity loss. Biodiversity targets should become a central component of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation strategies of all countries and be fully reflected in the Voluntary National Reviews prepared annually for the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.
- Most speakers referred to **the detrimental effects of biodiversity loss to people and environment**, noting that if current trends of biodiversity loss and degradation continue, this

¹ [CL 164/INF/4](#), paragraph 3.

² [Resolution A/RES/73/234](#).

³ [A/RES/74/269](#).

⁴ [A/RES/75/1](#).

⁵ <http://www.fao.org/director-general/speeches/detail/en/c/1310694/>

could jeopardize global food security, water supplies and livelihoods; weaken human ability to fight diseases and face extreme weather events; and exacerbate geopolitical tensions and conflicts. The Covid-19 pandemic has further highlighted the planetary emergency of inter-related global challenges of biodiversity loss, climate change and health crisis. A green recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic presents an opportunity to build a more sustainable, resilient world; it would require efforts to mobilize public and private financing to support socio-economic recovery that embraces nature-based solutions and disaster risk reduction.

- Speakers lamented the **insufficient progress and efforts on biodiversity goals and targets**, especially those with a 2020 maturity date. Biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history, with growing impacts on people and the planet. It was noted that activities in sectors including agriculture, forestry and fisheries can negatively affect biodiversity, and those activities must change to contribute to biodiversity conservation. Without a transformative approach to food production and distribution, there is a high risk of damaging biodiversity and global food security. The 2021 UN Food Systems Summit and the second UN Oceans Conference may galvanize action.
- There are many local examples of success, and **accelerated actions and initiatives in providing benefits and solutions to people from biodiversity**, as well as measures undertaken for **facilitating access to genetic resources and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilization**.
- The role of **science, technology and innovation** in preventing biodiversity loss was stressed by many speakers, as well as the need for incentivizing scientific research, capacity building and technology transfer and the need for education and science to include indigenous peoples and integrate local and indigenous knowledge.
- It was noted that **political will and leadership** are needed to integrate biodiversity into national sustainable development plans and include means of implementation, particularly finance and monitoring mechanisms. Countries should undertake **whole-of-society responses** for biodiversity, and engage relevant businesses and consumers, youth, women, indigenous peoples and local communities. Initiatives and coalitions like the Leaders Pledge for Nature⁶ with 77 signatories were welcomed.
- The importance of strengthening **multilateral action and cooperation** and creating synergies for global governance of the environment were also highlighted.
- As gross natural product and per capita income do reflect the value of nature or natural capital, it was stressed that **effective and new financing instruments** are needed to change global financial and trade flows and ensure they are positive for nature. Governments should include biodiversity as a criterion in financial decision-making, including the process of **economic recovery** after Covid-19. **Circular economy** and sustainable public procurement present opportunities in this regard.⁷

5. In September, FAO contributed to the virtual thematic consultation on sustainable use of biological diversity for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, CBD COP 15 and various meetings of subsidiary bodies leading up to it have been postponed.

FAO continues to engage in biodiversity related international processes. The UN High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP), at its 40th Session, requested the HLCP biodiversity task team to take the Committee's contributions into consideration in further elaborating the draft UN System Common Approach to integrating biodiversity and nature-based solution for sustainable development into the UN's policy and programme planning and delivery, to be considered by the HLCP at its 41st Session.

⁶ <https://www.leaderspledgefornature.org/>

⁷ The summary of the Summit by the President of the General Assembly is available at: <https://www.un.org/pga/75/wp-content/uploads/sites/100/2020/11/Biodiveristy-Summit-Summary-Letter.pdf>