



**STATEMENT BY MS. ELIZABETH MARUMA MREMA
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ON THE OCCASION OF THE
GLOBAL TAXONOMY INITIATIVE FORUM 2020 VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM
ONLINE, 2 DECEMBER 2020**

Distinguished delegates,
Collaborating taxonomists and partner organizations,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI) Forum 2020.

Taxonomy and systematics are crucial areas for advancement in biological science. In recent years, new technologies applied to taxonomic research have opened the door for Parties to observe previously unknown organisms, both those that are beneficial and those that may be harmful to human societies.

Today, we are meeting online as a result of the novel coronavirus pandemic, a crisis that also teaches us that early detection and rapid response to new pathogens using new technologies and robust bioinformatics are necessary to build a better and safer future.

It is clear to the global community that we need more experts in this critical domain to build our knowledge of biodiversity and our understanding of the impacts of human activities on ecosystems that threaten human health and socio-economic development.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of Germany and to the Museum of Natural History, Berlin, for organizing and co-hosting this year's GTI Forum in this critical time. I also thank the Japan Biodiversity Fund for supporting important capacity-building activities in taxonomy over the last decade.

My sincere appreciation extends to the many experts, institutions and partners that have contributed to the Global Taxonomy Initiative and engaged numerous young taxonomists, citizen scientists, civil society organizations and industries in the implementation of the Convention.

This is a critical time indeed. The recently published fifth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook* noted that Aichi Biodiversity Target 12 (reducing the risk of extinction) was not met, with nearly one quarter of species threatened with extinction unless the drivers of biodiversity loss are drastically reduced. According to the 2019 IPBES *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*, around one million plant and animal species are threatened with extinction, many within decades, and more than ever before in human history.

Many species are disappearing faster than we can document and record their existence. The IPBES report also alerts us to the reality that slowing species loss by 2030 and beyond may only be achieved through transformative change across economic, social, political and technological sectors.

We are in a process to develop a global framework to realize such transformative change. The draft post-2020 global biodiversity framework proposes to put forward renewed and enhanced enabling activities for Parties to meet ambitious targets for species conservation and to ensure the integrity of natural ecosystems.

In this context, taxonomy and its related technologies are important for Parties to advance biodiversity management in the next decade. The tools, technologies and knowledge made available by you, as scientists in this Forum, need to be in the hands of people protecting and valuing biodiversity, and must be applied effectively on the ground.

To do so, actions such as the upscaling of training on species identification, the facilitation of access to biological specimens and data, and collaborative research on biodiversity, should be continued and enhanced.

The good news is that the fifth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook* showed good progress on Target 19 (knowledge sharing, transfer and use). There has been a substantial increase in the data and information on biodiversity available to citizens, researchers and policymakers.

By advancing capacity development and taking scientifically sound actions, we can move towards the 2050 vision of “Living in harmony with nature”.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is an urgent time for biodiversity, as the evidence shows that the pressures of human activities are threatening the resilience of the very ecosystem services on which we depend. It is time to promote and support the research and use the knowledge on biodiversity accumulated in taxonomic institutions, and enhance capacity development, drawing on the excellent work of dedicated taxonomists and developers of new technologies and innovations.

I have no doubt that our shared curiosities for nature and discovery will continue to grow, and that the Global Taxonomy Initiative will continue to play an important role in supporting Parties to develop and implement the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

I wish you a productive Forum and look forward to learning its outcomes, which will be shared with the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its third meeting, in 2021.

I thank you for your continued support for the work of the Convention.
