



**Statement by
Elizabeth Maruma Mrema
Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity
on the occasion of International Day of Rural Women 2022
15 October, 2022**

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On this International Day of Rural Women, we acknowledge the vital part women and girls play in maintaining sustainable, healthy rural households and communities and improving rural livelihoods, overall health and wellbeing.

Rural women, and their quality of life, are pivotal in the fight against poverty and hunger. Globally, less than 15 per cent of landholders are women. While 164 countries recognize women's rights to own, use, make decisions and use land as collateral on equal terms with men, only 52 countries guarantee these rights in law and practice. (Source: [OECD 2019](#))

Giving women the same opportunities as men can increase agricultural production in the poorest regions. Women already account for a substantial percentage of the agricultural labour force and contribute significantly to agricultural production, food security, land and natural resource management, and building climate resilience. As such, they need to be held in high regard as masters of their craft and true experts in their field. Ensuring land ownership and rights for women in both law and practice enables women to have more substantive engagement in decision-making processes and strengthens their capacity and incentive to invest in sustainable practices.

Still, with so many factors working against them, rural women are driving efforts to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity all over the world. And they are doing this all while facing the impacts of biodiversity loss, climate change and economic shocks daily. These women are critical in building and maintaining community resilience to stresses and shocks from environmental disasters and degradation. Simply put, they are needed by both the land and the people.

This December, at the 15th meeting of the Convention of Parties in Montreal, Canada, global leaders will gather to affect change by adopting the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The draft framework acknowledges the need for appropriate recognition of gender equality, women's empowerment, youth, gender-responsive approaches and the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in the implementation of the framework.



The full and effective involvement of women and indigenous peoples and local communities is essential to achieve global biodiversity targets and ensure a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. The implementation of the framework cannot be successful without it.

With that in mind, may we not just speak the words, but may we be allies to rural women around the world, acknowledging their contributions to our planet and people, and may we continue to advocate for their rights.