



**Statement by  
David Cooper  
Acting Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity**

**At the Closing Plenary of the Twenty-Sixth Meeting of the Subsidiary Body on  
Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice**

**18 May 2024**

.....

*Thank you very much, Madam Chair.  
Distinguished delegates, dear colleagues, friends,*

I think this has been an incredibly busy and successful meeting of SBSTTA. And as we have just heard from Daniel, this is very much thanks to the great leadership, Senka, that you have provided this past week, these past months in preparing for this meeting.

We have had some very important outcomes of this meeting, that now will help COP 16 ensure that we have the tools and guidance we need to support the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, what we've also referred to as The Biodiversity Plan; and of course, to monitor progress so that we can see if we can stay on track to those ambitious goals and targets that we all established in Montreal in 2022.

We have also had some incredibly important work in the area related to modern biotechnology, synthetic biology, risk assessments and risk management of LMOs containing engineered gene drives, the detection and identification of LMOs – really challenging issues at the science-policy interface but, as I said in my opening remarks, important issues that illustrate the continued relevance of the Convention and of the Protocol. And of course, important outcomes on health and on oceans.

All of these have been due to the preparations for the for these items and I really want to, in particular, thank the Co-Chairs and Chairs of the various Ad Hoc Technical Expert Groups. The work of this Body in supporting the Convention, is based on drawing upon the best evidence, the best science, and also drawing upon the work of partners. To James Williams and Maria Cecilia Londoño, to Kishma Primus-Ormond and Florian Rabitz, and to Marja Ruohonen-Lehto, thank so much to you and to all the members of these AHTEGs for this really impressive work. And I'd like to invite the room to express their appreciation to the AHTEG.

Of course, we should also thank all of the Chairs and Co-Chairs of the Plenary, and of the various contact groups; Jan, Marina, Erica, Jahedul, Hesiquio, and Barbara, Gaute, Jane, and Osama, for their amazing work this week.

I would also like to thank all the colleagues working behind the scenes, of course, in particular my colleagues on the CBD team; to Jihyun and the entire team in organizing this meeting, in preparing



for this meeting, and for the really hard work over the past week, in providing documents, providing support to the Chairs and to you all. And thanks also to the registration team, the editorial team, the translators. Yes, we did manage to get most of these documents done and available to you on time, despite the very tight timetables just this week. To the report writers, to the interpreters, to all the support staff, to the security here, to those that have been looking after us in the venue, the cleaners, catering, everyone.

I would like to give special recognition to one of my colleagues, to Veronique Allain, who has been serving SBSTTA, and serving the CBD for 25 years, supporting the organization, in fact, of 23 meetings of this Body.

I would like to thank our hosts, here at the UN Office in Nairobi, our colleagues in UNEP, the UN Department of Safety and Security for facilitating our work here, and, of course, to all our Kenyan colleagues for receiving us always, especially in these challenging times. I would like to thank again all the donors, whom I listed in my opening statement, for supporting the participation of delegates from developing countries and from indigenous peoples and local communities.

And I would like to thank all of you, of course, for your hard work this week. Of course, special thanks to our Chair. I've worked with many SBSTTA chairs. I've had the privilege of working twice with Senka; and as already expressed, so eloquently by Daniel from DRC, we really have benefited enormously from your work here. Thank you so much.

Thanks to Jean Bruno, and to all the members of the SBSTTA Bureau. We also welcome the incoming members and congratulate them on their election.

*Distinguished delegates, ladies, and gentlemen,*

Not quite as many as Veronique, but I think this is my 20<sup>th</sup> SBSTTA, since SBSTTA 5 in 2000, as a member of the Secretariat. This is going to be my last SBSTTA, as a member of the Secretariat.

I think we have seen over these many years, the value of this Body in providing much of the substance, much of the ideas that have driven this Convention forward. Taken science, drawing upon the science community through Technical Expert Groups, like we have experienced this week. During this time, we have also seen the establishment of IPBES, and this Body, making use of those assessments from in IPBES to develop policy guidance. This Body has overseen the preparation of many technical reports, a number of issues of the Global Biodiversity Outlook, the Secretariat's flagship publication.

I think we all; you all, should be proud of this Body and the work that has that has been achieved through it. It really has been working effectively, I believe, the science-policy interface. I know, it is often frustrating. Translating science into policy is not straightforward. But this Body, I think, does it. It supports the Convention; it supports the two Protocols. We have also seen increasingly, a greater voice given to other communities, to indigenous peoples and local communities, to women, to youth, to the business community, to academia, to subnational entities; and this has also been incredibly important.

A lot of the work here supported the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, The Biodiversity Plan, and I think this is an incredible culmination of the work over many years. I would really like to express my admiration for the work that has been done in this Body.

Many of you will be staying for SBI 4, and some of your colleagues will be coming also. Let us continue the strong spirit of cooperation that we have seen this week, and that we've seen over many years. For those who are concluding the work in Nairobi, a safe trip home. We look forward to seeing you all in Cali, Colombia for COP 16. We're very excited about COP 16, where we will clearly demonstrate momentum in the implementation of The Biodiversity Plan and advance the biodiversity agenda further.

Thank you so much.