



**Statement by the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity,
Astrid Schomaker**

**at the opening of the eleventh session of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy
Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
(10 December 2024, Windhoek)**

Distinguished delegates, colleagues and friends,

Two years ago, in December 2022, Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, promising to set the world on a path to halting and reversing biodiversity loss.

On the Framework's second anniversary, it is an honour to be among you today at the opening of the eleventh session of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) with its highly relevant agenda.

The IPBES seminal work on assessing the state of biodiversity on our planet paved the way for the adoption of the Framework, its four goals and its 23 action-oriented targets.

IPBES provides knowledge that CBD needs to ground its processes and work with robust evidence on biodiversity and its interactions with socioeconomic systems.

I was thus very happy to see David Obura ably represent IPBES at the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, in Cali. I had the impression he was kind of omnipresent and certainly made sure that the voice of science was clear and the messages persuasive.

The Framework has been a game changer for biodiversity in terms of moving biodiversity loss up the political agenda.

But with just five years to the end of this decade, we clearly are not where we want and need to be.

Many countries still need to finalize the revision or update of their national biodiversity strategies and action plans, companies must step up efforts to measure and account for their impacts and dependencies on nature, finance needs to be scaled up as a matter of urgency, among many other fields for urgent action.

But the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Cali gave us reason to be sanguine.

The Cali meetings witnessed unprecedented civil society mobilization and equally unprecedented opportunities to network, discuss what is holding us back and how to overcome these challenges, and strengthen and develop new partnerships and communities of practice.

As you are aware, the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties was suspended after quorum was lost in extra time. But before then, momentous decisions were adopted.

Parties elevated the role and participation of indigenous peoples and local communities by establishing a permanent subsidiary body dedicated to Article 8(j) of the Convention and agreeing on an ambitious new programme of work.

They also operationalized the groundbreaking multilateral mechanism to share benefits from the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources, complete with a global fund named after the city where it saw the light of day, the “Cali Fund”.

Parties also adopted important decisions on the identification of ecologically or biologically significant marine areas, on the linkages between biodiversity and climate change and biodiversity and health, and on sustainable wildlife management and invasive alien species, among many other important issues.

In their deliberations and the decisions that they adopted, Parties made several references to IPBES contributions, including proposing five potential topics for future assessments under the IPBES rolling programme of work.

So, yes, encouraging progress is being made on many fronts. But from the negotiating rooms in Cali to boardrooms and Cabinet meeting rooms, it is hard to detect a sense of urgency commensurate with the crisis afflicting the planet.

Too often nature’s distress call is being ignored, a singular focus on the energy transition overlooks the crucial role of ecosystems in climate change mitigation and adaptation, the absence of agreed metrics serves as an excuse for delaying business action, and vested interests take centre stage as they warn about transition costs, ignoring both investment opportunities and medium- to long-term benefits.

IPBES work is key to ensuring that Parties continue to have access to up-to-date, relevant and sound science for informed policies and decision-making. But are these data actually being used in daily decision-making?

Not enough, I think, despite the fact that the suite of IPBES assessments that the Plenary will consider in the next few days, and those that the Plenary considered at previous sessions, seek to fill knowledge gaps that Parties themselves have identified.

The assessments you will be considering this coming week go a long way in helping us to understand and tackle the remaining gap between the policies that the world needs and those that it currently gets.

The nexus assessment unpacks the complexity inherent in system approaches, helping policymakers to implement actions for biodiversity together with action for health, food, water and climate action, moving away from siloed implementation.

The transformative change assessment not only instils a sense of urgency and inevitability, but it also gives a sense of “yes, we can”, helping Parties to embark on the comprehensive changes needed to fulfil the promise of the Framework and the Sustainable Development Goals.

And the second global assessment is expected to make a massive contribution to the final review of the Framework at the nineteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Thus, getting it right at this scoping stage is critical.

Distinguished delegates,

As some of you may know, I have started as Executive Secretary of the Convention just five months ago, but there is a long history of cooperation between the CBD and IPBES Secretariats, reflecting the way our intergovernmental processes interact for nature and for people.

On behalf of the CBD Secretariat, I pledge to continue to work in partnership with IPBES to support national action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, to explore all avenues for closer cooperation and to team up in

ensuring that policy is science-driven and that private and corporate citizens become our allies in this endeavour.

At this critical juncture, the much-anticipated global assessment will have to deliver on a number of crucial aspects that will determine success further down the road. Let us use this scoping exercise to shape the global assessment that we need, that the world needs.

I would like to encourage the Parties and the authors that are in this room today to ensure that, together, the Framework and the IPBES conceptual framework form the backbone of the analytical work under the global assessment and the other assessments that are planned for adoption at future IPBES sessions.

We need to think already today about what will be the critical body of knowledge that countries will need when it is time to develop the post-2030 biodiversity Framework, and we need to work even harder to ensure that, when that time comes, we can build on the successful achievement of the targets of the Framework.

But before then, a decisive milestone beckons. The seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in Armenia, will include a midterm global review of collective progress in the implementation of the Framework that will offer opportunities to take stock and corrective action, where required.

The monitoring assessment planned for the thirteenth session of the IPBES Plenary will also be highly relevant to this exercise.

But for now, as we mark the second anniversary of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, I want to repeat that acceleration is the order of the day.

The world needs a global surge of implementation of what Parties adopted in snow-clad Montreal two years ago.

With IPBES assessments firmly tethered to the goals and targets of the Framework, the world can count on science as an ally in the vital endeavour to address the biodiversity loss crisis.

Thank you.