



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

**Second resumed sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention,
eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to
the Cartagena Protocol and fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the
meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol**

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to Rome. We are very pleased to see you all here.

I would like to start by expressing our sincere gratitude to the Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and to the local authorities, as well as to all the colleagues and staff members who have been working hard to set the stage for the resumed sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol and fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol.

I would also like to thank all of you for adopting our budget under silence procedure, allowing the Secretariat to work full steam towards this event and many others in 2025 and to push forward with the many other tasks that we were given. And thank you too for allowing us to use our reserves to finance these meetings.

We always have many donors that help us to support the participation of developing countries and countries with economies in transition, as well as that of indigenous peoples and local communities. I do not want to repeat all their names, but I do want to acknowledge four in particular that have already this year stepped forward to make additional contributions to the funds: Austria, Finland, Germany and Japan. Thank you very much. This is an important support for our work.

This is also not a formal opening statement, because we are just continuing our work started in Cali and we need to move on quickly, but I do want to say that what we saw in Cali, and what we achieved there, under the leadership – the unparalleled leadership – of our President, was an unprecedented whole-of-society mobilization for biodiversity, and we must not let people down.

We heard the voices of the representatives of indigenous peoples and local communities, we have heard youth and women groups, cities and local authorities, civil society, we have heard businesses and financial institutions, all looking to us, to you, to take decisions that matter for their future.

They got together to discuss practical approaches, while we were in negotiating rooms and moved forward with decisions that we still had to adopt. And we did adopt many, many important decisions, and that was reflected in media reports around the world.

Of course, I do not want to enumerate all the decisions, because you took them, and you are therefore very well aware of them, but some truly stand out.

I do want to mention the decision on indigenous peoples and local communities, finally giving them the space and the voice in our Convention commensurate with their role in the protection of biodiversity.

I also want to mention the decision on the Cali Fund, which has made it clear that you cannot take from nature without giving back to nature, and back to those who protect it. And I am very pleased to say that, in just a few hours from now, in a small press conference, we will declare the Cali Fund open and ready to receive contributions.

The decision on ecologically or biologically significant marine areas is also a very important decision, which, after long negotiations, allows us to identify the areas in the oceans that are most in need of protection, which is so important as we move towards the United Nations Ocean Conference, in a just a few months' time.

There are many other decisions, including on synergies, and I think that we have heard how important it is that we look at the biodiversity crisis and the climate crisis in tandem.

Of course, there are many other conventions and international players that need to come together, and we have an important decision on cooperation still to adopt at this meeting.

And there are many others.

The first part of the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in Cali, gave us very, very important tailwind to progress with the implementation of our collective endeavour to live in harmony with nature and to live in peace with nature. Yet much more remains to be done.

Parties need to finalize their national biodiversity strategies and action plans, aligned with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and then turn policy to action. We have reached a total of 46 of national biodiversity strategies and action plans. I appeal to all countries, all Parties, that still have to adopt national biodiversity strategies and action plans aligned with the Framework to accelerate this work and, of course, that is why we are here. We have to complete the unfinished business of Cali in the next few days, here in Rome.

I would just like to highlight that our agenda this week is not about agreeing on fresh commitments. It is about agreeing on how commitments that you all made two years ago in Montreal will be implemented. Those were joint commitments, and implementation is in our joint and common interest. It is about walking the talk, including by ensuring the necessary resource mobilization, clear guidance to the Global Environment Facility ahead of its ninth replenishment and, of course, reliable mechanisms for planning, monitoring, reporting and review to support implementation. How else will we be able, next year in Yerevan, to see how far we have advanced? The President has reminded us that 2025 is just five years from 2030. We need to be able to see where we are and whether we need to correct course.

I would also like to mention and bring to your attention the fact that, since Cali, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services has adopted two groundbreaking assessments that remind us that, to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, we have to move forward, that the window for action is closing, that we must act across silos and that transformative change is a must, while actually generating significant business opportunities.

Ladies and gentlemen, in conclusion, the ask is simple: please give this remarkable Framework that you have adopted a chance to reach its aims.

We all need to acknowledge that, while perspectives, responsibilities and capacities differ, we are in this together and must act in solidarity, and we must show today more than ever that there is

simply no alternative to multilateralism. This we believe should be the clear message we send from Rome around the world.

Thank you.