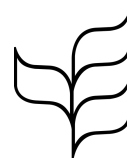


# ELEVATING BIODIVERSITY ON THE INTERNATIONAL AGENDA - THE ROAD TO 2020 AND BEYOND



Convention on  
Biological Diversity

REFLECTIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF  
THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY WITH  
THE OCCASION OF COMPLETING THE 2017-2018  
BIENNIUM

MARCH 2019



# DELIVERING ON THE 2017-2018 BIENNIUM - LEADING TO A SUCCESSFUL COP 14 IN EGYPT

As acknowledged by many Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), at the start of 2017, the Convention faced a difficult reality: despite significant achievements in over two decades since the Convention's establishment at the Rio Earth Summit, neither the Convention itself nor, more importantly, the issue of biodiversity had received the attention it merits on the global stage, or the focus it deserves at national and local levels. While attention focused on building technical and programmatic areas under the Convention, political attention and stakeholder engagement

While attention focused on building technical and programmatic areas under the Convention, political attention and stakeholder engagement outside our core sector, were largely absent. This fragmented political focus on the biodiversity agenda, isolated its interconnected relevance and impact across other social-political agendas. Moreover, many voices inside and outside the Convention indicated that the Convention had fallen behind its peers, particularly the UNFCCC, even though biodiversity itself is intrinsically linked to the climate agenda. This link is evident through ecosystem-based climate mitigation and adaptation, as well as the nature-based solutions track, because biodiversity is the infrastructure that supports life on Earth and human development and well-being. With only two years left before the completion of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, evidence indicates that the ambitious global biodiversity targets, namely the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, will largely not be met.

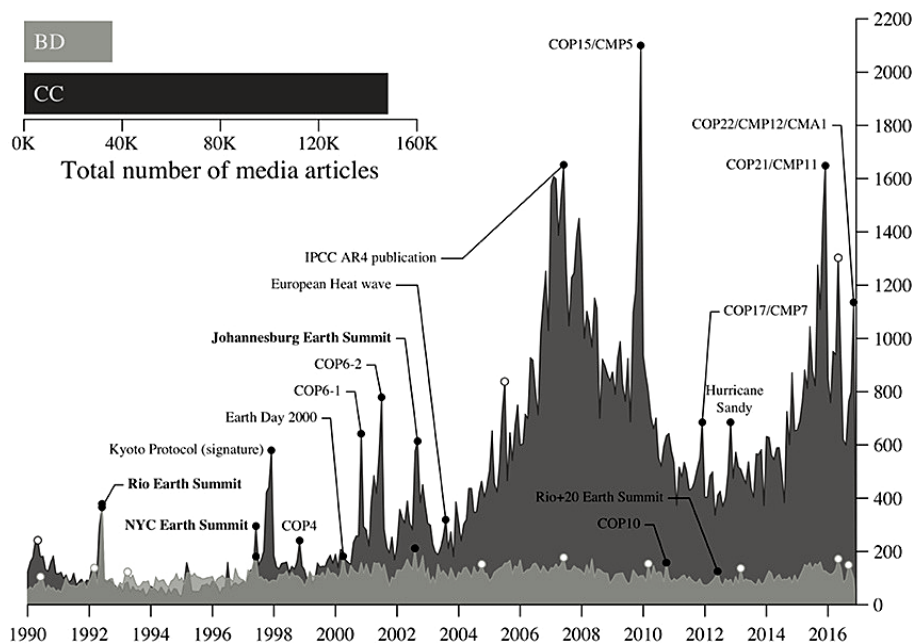
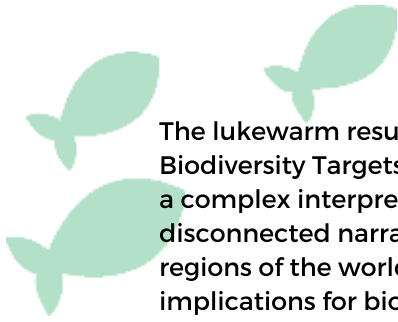


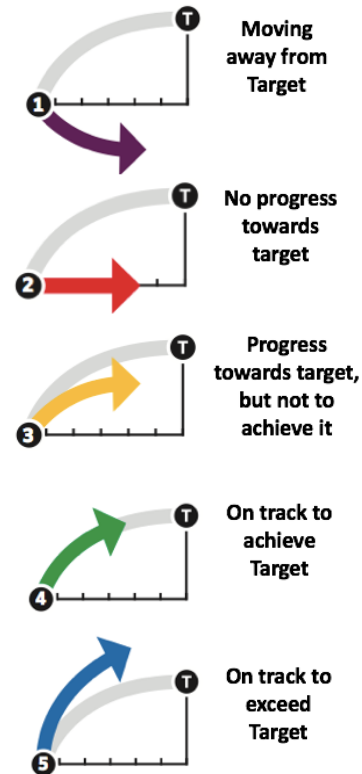
Figure 1: Biodiversity (BD) media coverage vs. Climate Change (CC) media coverage

Legagneux, Pierre, et al. "Our house is burning: discrepancy in climate change vs. biodiversity coverage in the media as compared to scientific literature." *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution* 5 (2018): 175.

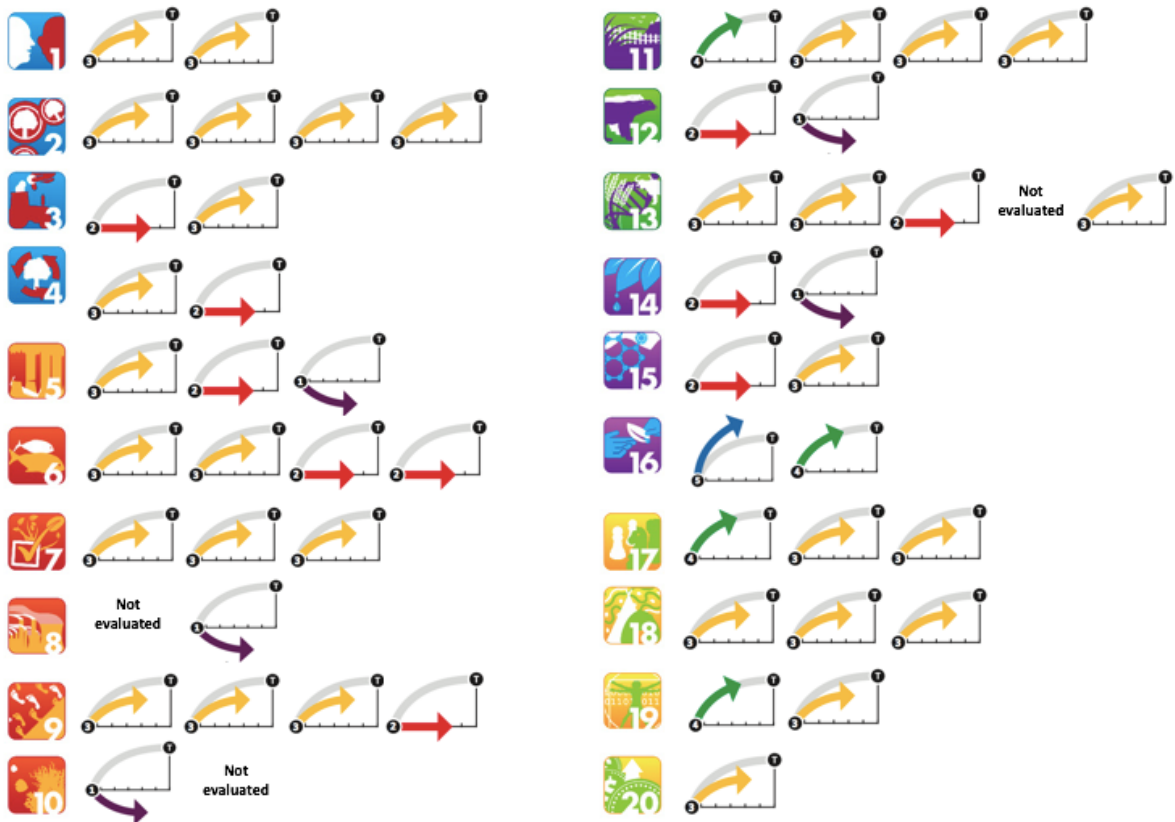


The lukewarm results in reaching the Aichi Biodiversity Targets by 2020, combined with a complex interpretation of the agenda and a disconnected narrative to society, in many regions of the world, has had cascading implications for biodiversity and for a myriad of public goods that it underpins.

The science is clear - biodiversity continues to be lost at alarming rates with a steep sloping down curve of biodiversity loss to 2050, affecting Earth's capacity to continue to provide an array of services and provisions relating to food and water security, human health and sustainable development, that ultimately we all depend on. Notwithstanding important progress, particularly in Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 on protected areas, the biodiversity agenda continues to be mired in crises.



## Progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (GBO-4 Assessment)





As Executive Secretary to the Convention, I have sought to build on the past achievements carried out by my colleagues at the Secretariat and by the Parties to the Convention, along with other actors and stakeholders, while endeavouring to respond in an agile and comprehensive manner to the Parties' request to invest my efforts not only to raise the profile and relevance of the Convention and its work, but to also integrate biodiversity into the center of the global agenda, akin to the climate agenda.

My first two years in office coincided with a unique opportunity and growing momentum for the Convention, as CBD Parties were to embark on a roadmap to prepare for the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 14), in Egypt, in 2018 and the development of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework to be adopted at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15), in China, in 2020. My prime objective was to support the Parties on this journey, working closely with the Mexican and Egyptian Presidencies, and the past Bureau. Together with my team at the Secretariat, we successfully delivered on the CBD COP14, facilitating the Parties' achievement of strong outcomes at COP14, CP-MOP9, and NP-MOP3, in Sharm-El-Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2018, constituting a key milestone on the road to COP 15.

During 2017 and 2018, I also focused on building dynamic new partnerships as well as mobilizing and revitalizing existing partnerships, including with political and business leaders, the science community, the NGO community, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, subnational governments, youth and women, and UN organizations at large. For example, the Secretariat has actively engaged in supporting youth efforts. With support provided by the Japan Biodiversity Fund and other donors, we contributed to "Youth Voices", a project implemented by the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN), aimed at developing the capacities of youth to engage at the political level.

Through "Regional Youth Capacity-Building Workshops, the project trained hundreds of youth around the globe to participate in the decision-making processes under the Convention. In addition, the publication "CBD in a Nutshell" developed by GYBN has become a flagship publication under the Convention. A second edition of the guidelines was released in 2018.

As a Secretariat, we have emphasized that the biodiversity agenda requires a whole-of-government approach, one that integrates shared values from the conservation community and other traditional partners, typically associated to environment ministries, with actors in other fields linked to finance, economic development, health, agriculture, among other service related industries, to support a more comprehensive approach and deeper understanding of the benefits and opportunities resulting from the mainstreaming of biodiversity into their sectors. We have also been advocating the urgent need to make the economic and business case for biodiversity, and to show the grave cost of inaction on biodiversity, akin to the Stern Report on Climate Change. Advancing public outreach campaigns, have also contributed in a variety of ways, including through thought leadership, traditional and social media, and by working with partners in the advocacy community.

This two-year period culminated in a successful CBD COP14 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt and in securing key policy outcomes, including high-level commitments to accelerate the implementation of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, among many other decisions. Furthermore, COP 14 framed the process to develop an ambitious, parties-led post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework to be adopted at COP 15 in China in 2020, and among many other important issues to work on between 2019-2020, the COP also requested the UN General Assembly to convene for the first time a Nature Summit at the Heads of State level, at the 2020 UN General Assembly.

Our journey forward to COP 15 and beyond, set to end the destruction of our natural ecosystems and living species, will require a combination of measures, including leadership, strategic engagement and high-level buy in, public awareness, and meaningful delivery pathways for all stakeholders to mark progress and inspire humanity to reach the 2050 Vision of the Convention, to “Live in Harmony with Nature”. Such timing also marks an exceptional period, as the United Nations celebrates its 75th Anniversary in 2020. Supporting the Parties to the Convention in the adoption of an ambitious post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and activating

an impactful post-2020 implementation phase remains key priorities of my mandate moving forward.

As we gear up to COP 15 in China in 2020, and towards a new decade, I wanted to share with you my reflections on our past achievements and key challenges for the journey ahead. In working with the Parties to the Convention, I look forward to your leadership and partnership at this critical moment for biodiversity, the planet, and all peoples, and would be honoured to continue to work with you to lead the Secretariat and support you, the Parties, and all stakeholders on this journey.

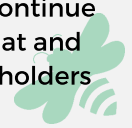


Photo: IISD

## I. RAISING THE PROFILE OF BIODIVERSITY ON THE GLOBAL AGENDA

Our strategy for elevating the profile of biodiversity on the global agenda has made significant progress in the last two years, through simultaneous engagements on multiple tracks, including:

**1. Parties Track** – Throughout my first two years in office, I have emphasized the Secretariat’s main role in serving the Parties’ agenda to implement the three objectives of the Convention.

To better understand the landscape at national and regional levels, I reached out directly with visits to numerous Parties across every region, engaging both at the national and local levels with ministers and key stakeholders in Asia, Africa, the Americas, Europe and the Middle East. Developing close relationships with the Governments of Mexico, as the COP 13 Presidency, and the Government of Egypt, as the COP 14 Presidency, as well as the Government of the People’s Republic of China, as the future Presidency of COP 15 in 2020, represented an important strategic objective to also ensure continuity of actions and approaches from one COP to the next, especially with regards to the mainstreaming agenda which was a key theme for both COP 13 in Mexico and COP 14 in Egypt.





Furthermore, together with my team at the Secretariat, we engaged actively with the Government of Canada as the host country of the Convention in the preparation of the 25th Anniversary of the CBD, and also to leverage the political leadership in Canada in support of the global agenda for biodiversity.

The response has been encouraging, with increased engagement from these governments, as well as continued support from traditional donors, including Australia, Austria, Canada, Egypt, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Republic of Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, to whom we are very grateful. Champions from all regions have also been contributing further to the agenda on various substantive issues.

Several intersessional meetings were successfully accomplished in 2017 and 2018 for the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technological and Technical Advice (SBSTTA), the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI) and the Working Group on Article 8J, drawing on inputs from many substantive analyses as well as capacity development workshops, trainings and other outreach events organized by my team at the Secretariat with support from various sources of funding, especially the Japan Biodiversity Fund.

For example, in 2018, the Secretariat, in partnership with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, CBD Parties and international agencies, implemented four

regional training workshops relating to the project “Capacity Development Programme on national arrangements for achieving traditional knowledge elements of Aichi Targets 18 and 16 of Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020”. This was carried out with the financial support from the Japan Biodiversity Fund (JBF) and other donors and partners. The aim of the workshops was to train trainers from indigenous peoples and local community’s organizations and Parties to develop possible elements for national action plans for traditional knowledge. An online course was developed for each workshop to maximize the face-to-face component of the training.

Capacity development workshops are also offered routinely on the margins of meetings of the CBD’s subsidiary bodies. In addition, to maximise cooperative working modalities with other biodiversity related conventions, along with other partners and stakeholder, the Secretariat co-organizes many side events to inform, engage new actors and support ideas and participation. Further operational work has been carried out to support Parties, through programmatic areas of work, as well as cross-cutting areas relating to monitoring, assessments and national reporting on implementation; sustainable development; resource mobilization, innovative finance and macro-economics; gender mainstreaming, traditional knowledge; among other fundamental portfolios associated to the work of the Protocols and the Convention, and its knowledge platforms under the Clearing House Mechanisms.







Photo: UN



Photo: CBD

**2. UN Track** – I have also strengthened our working relationships within the United Nations at all levels. At the leadership level, I have enhanced our relation and garnered increasing interest from the UN Secretary General, the Deputy Secretary General, and the President of the UN General Assembly. With the support of my team, we have enhanced cooperation and strengthened synergies with our sister Rio Conventions, the Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG)[1] and with other multilateral environmental conventions

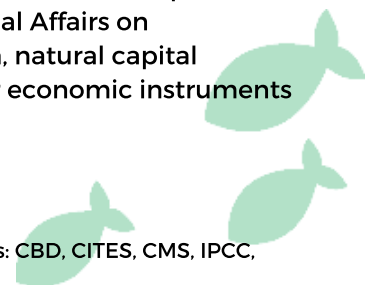
We have also reached out to other UN agencies, funds and programs, through our active working modalities and strong presence at various meetings, including at the UN General Assembly, in New York, both in 2017 and 2018, and through the UN Environmental Management Group. Moreover, we developed innovative partnerships with other key UN agencies. For example, with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), we are closely supporting the platform for mainstreaming biodiversity in the agriculture sector, as mandated by CBD COP 13. With the World Health Organization, we have continued to implement the recommendations of the 2015 State of Knowledge Review: Connecting Global Priorities, Biodiversity and Human Health. Our partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was also reinforced through, amongst other things,

Nature4Life, a program addressing critical narratives and scientific and economic facts about biodiversity's role in sustainable development.

Our partnership with UNDP also led to the CBD's Executive Secretary being invited to join the board of "The Lion's Share", a breakthrough innovative initiative of UNDP which engages with the corporate community to safeguard species and ecosystems, through contributions each time an animal appears in corporate advertisements, to raise resources for wildlife conservation, habitats, and animal welfare.

The CBD Secretariat is also working closely with UN Women on the interlinkages between biodiversity, gender equity, and women's empowerment. To our partners from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), I proposed to develop an "International Alliance for Nature and Culture", further building on the constructive work jointly done by the CBD Secretariat and UNESCO on culture and traditional knowledge. Additional work has been reinforced with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank and UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs on biodiversity, valuation, natural capital accounting and other economic instruments and tools.

[1] The Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG) are comprised of eight biodiversity-related Conventions: CBD, CITES, CMS, IPCC, ITPGRFA, IWC, RAMSAR, UNESCO/WHC.



Our enhanced presence inside the UN family was also captured at the 2017 and 2018 High Level Political Forums (HLPF), when the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 "Life below water" and SDG 15 – "Life on Earth", respectively, were under review.

At the Oceans Conference in 2017, together with my team, we established a very strong presence that has continued to grow and contribute to the 2020 Ocean Action tracks. As a co-lead of the marine and coastal ecosystems management track, one of the nine tracks of the Ocean Action Agenda, I have strengthened the cooperation with the Community of Ocean Action and expanded working ties with the UN Ocean's Envoy. I also used the 2018 HLPF week as an opportunity to strategically leverage the CBD at the heart of the UN with a series of high-level events, including by hosting a high-level dinner in 2018, featuring Heads of State and Government, business leaders and principals of partner UN agencies (UNEP, UNDP, FAO). Additionally, a high-level reception among the Biodiversity Liaison Group focused on enhancing synergies between the members and optimizing the group's high-level presence at the Forum to speak on SDG 15 with one voice.

These high-level engagements were first of their kind for the CBD to showcase its strong presence at the UN headquarters in New York and seize an important opportunity to build the biodiversity agenda's global profile together with ministers, governments, and the UN diplomatic corps. Linking CBD with the Secretary General's 2019 Climate Summit in a more visible way was another area of strategic work in 2017 and 2018, which continues in 2019. This has materialized with the CBD Executive Secretary being invited to be part of the Secretary General's Steering Committee for the SG's Climate Summit in 2019 and contributing to the Nature Based Solutions track for the Summit.

**3. Political Track** – The activities on this track were informed by the Parties', and other stakeholders' call on the Convention to gain more political visibility and relevance in sectors other than the environment. Thus, my efforts in 2017 and 2018 also focused on strengthening broad high-level political engagement on the biodiversity agenda. This has resulted in breakthrough collaboration, including by emphasizing the role of biodiversity as solution for climate change and oceans in the context of the 2018 G7 hosted by the Government of Canada, and also working with the French leadership to integrate biodiversity as a key component of the 2019 G7 themes hosted by the French Government. The One Planet Summit and One Planet Lab established by President Macron of France demonstrate visionary leadership in advancing global commitments on biodiversity, climate change and oceans, in an integrated manner, building strong coalitions of multi-sector actors and actions. Through President Macron's invitation for the CBD Executive Secretary to co-chair the biodiversity track of his One Planet Lab initiative for the G7, biodiversity and the CBD are gaining further recognition in key global fora.

I am also encouraged with the continued leadership of the Government of Canada, driving ambition within Canada and aboard, to champion the biodiversity agenda. The recent political announcement of the Nature Champions Summit, hosted by the Minister of Environment of Canada, in Montreal, in April 2019 signals the Government's continued strong commitment to the road to COP 15, in 2020.

Another positive result of enhanced engagement through political channels was viewed in Argentina, with the dedicated theme on biodiversity at the UN Ministerial meeting of Latin American and Caribbean Ministers of Environment, in the context of G20, hosted by the Government of Argentina in November 2018.





Further work in 2017 and 2018 on the restoration agenda, and the promotion of COP 13 Decision on the Short-Term Action Plan on Ecosystem Restoration also supported political traction and visibility on biodiversity, both to rewild areas that were degraded by human impact, as well as to connect fragmented areas within a landscape approach. My work with Latin American countries, including the Minister of El Salvador, and the Bonn Challenge Initiative helped bring greater policy coherence and attention on ecosystem restoration challenges and opportunities, to support implementation of Aichi Biodiversity Targets 14 and 15. I am very encouraged by the UNGA Resolution to establish 2021-2030 as the UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration and congratulate El Salvador and other governments, for their continued commitment and further positioning of ecosystem restoration within the UN global agenda.



Bogis-Bossey Dialogues

**4. Scientific Track** – The CBD Secretariat has increased scientific cooperation with key partners, strengthened our engagement with the scientific and academic community, and organized several brainstorming workshops to discuss innovative approaches to address the biodiversity crisis in the context of the preparations for the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. I proposed the first-ever IPBES-IPCC dialogue and worked closely with the French government and colleagues in UNFCCC and IPBES to make it happen; the event was hosted by the French Government in October 2018.

Our working relationships with numerous organizations also expanded throughout the biennium, enriching our understanding of the issues, solutions and options, based on science and leading us towards actions needed to bend the curve of loss of biodiversity. Through the year we have worked with many experts to garner and distill further insights to shape the fifth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook and provide a status update on the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. We contributed to several science-based discussions in 2018 to address future area-based conservation targets and to evaluate implications from various policy options. For instance, the International Symposium in the UK on "Safeguarding space for nature and securing our future: developing a post-2020 strategy" in 2018 provided evidence to help raise awareness of the need for a more ambitious, holistic, and effective strategy to safeguard space for nature.

In addition, I have recurrently been invited to present the Convention's work at several universities, for example last year at Cambridge University and this coming month at the University of Toronto, among many other events in different regions of the world. Our scientific work and systems thinking approach also benefitted from two brainstorming meetings on transformational change for biodiversity that I spearheaded in 2017 and 2018, known as the "Bogis-Bossey Dialogues", generously hosted by the Government of Switzerland.



Photo: WEF 2019

This complementary work helped us expand our thinking to understand what success would look like in 2020 and possible transformative pathways to achieve the 2050 Vision. Our scientific network also expanded with active engagement among CBD traditional partners - IPBES, IUCN, TNC, CI, UNEP/WCMC, FAO, UNDP, UNCCD, UNFCCC, CMS, CITES, Ramsar, World Bank, GEF, Biodiversity Indicators Partnership, WCS, PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, WWF, WRI, CONABIO, SANBI, CCI, Humboldt Institute, among others. New partnerships were developed with organizations such as the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, the Food and other Land Use coalition (FOLU), EAT Foundation, the National Geographic Society, the Wyse Foundation, the Tropical Forest Alliance (TFA), The Dutch Research Institute for Transitions (DRIFT), the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation, UN Foundation, and the Ocean Action Agenda - Community of Ocean Action.



**5. Economic, Finance and Business Track –** We have emphasized the role of biodiversity on both the macro level, particularly in its contribution to poverty eradication and sustainable development, and on the opportunities it directly offers to the private sector, small and medium scale enterprises and community based management.

I have made the case that a key narrative change, especially in interacting with the economic, finance and business community, must demonstrate that biodiversity is not a challenge or a cost to development, but that investing in conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity is an essential part of the solution. Investing in biodiversity provides opportunities and multiple benefits both for business and society. It impacts everything, from our health and well-being to our surrounding and development prospects. But, the reality is that biodiversity is a topic little known or understood by the mainstream economic, business and finance communities. To mobilize engagement and commitments, and to further enhance the second objective of the Convention related to sustainable use, I spearheaded new partnerships and collaboration. In 2017, the CBD Secretariat worked with the World Economic Forum (WEF) to engage CBD in the discussions of the WEF's 2018 Annual Meeting, as a first step towards raising the profile of the CBD with high-level stakeholders at the Forum.

Building on emerging and shared interests in support of COP 14's Business and Biodiversity Forum and further work to COP 15, in 2020, we also worked with the WEF throughout 2018 to prepare a strategic profiling of nature and biodiversity at the WEF 2019 Annual Meeting.

For the first time in the Forum's history, nature and biodiversity were represented as core programmatic themes, and CBD was recognized for its lead role in mobilizing this community. Several high-level events engaging biodiversity champions, such as the President of Costa Rica, the President of Colombia, the Crown Prince of Norway, the Prince of Monaco, Former presidents of Chile and Costa Rica, as well as former Vice-President Al Gore and Secretary of State of the US John Kerry, among many UN principals, corporate CEOs, heads of NGOs and philanthropists gathered in support of the biodiversity agenda, showcasing their commitments and actions to safeguard and sustainably use biodiversity to rebalance our relationship with our ecological system.

In parallel, in 2018, a Global Council on Biodiversity and the Economy was created under the WEF to explore ideas for a report referred to as 'The New Nature Economy', which aims to demonstrate the economic case and the cost of inaction on safeguarding biodiversity.

That same year, the French Network "Entreprises pour l'Environnement", launched Act4Nature receiving over 70 pledges from French companies to support biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. Individual corporate champions such as Danone, Unilever, Kering International, Yara International, and major international insurance firms also engaged closer to the CBD process and biodiversity agenda. Their commitments have been supported through a Nature Action Coalition under the WEF established in September 2018.

As requested by CBD Parties, I am committed to continue to develop additional champion groups and to work with existing coalitions, drawing from all regions of the world, as part

of the road to CBD COP15 in 2020, building on the CBD's Business and Biodiversity Partnership Initiative, our mainstreaming Informal Advisory Group, joint workplans with UNTCAD, and others, as well as with new partners through the WEF Nature Action Coalition. I have also strengthened ties with international development entities, including the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the Global Environmental Facility to mobilize investments into biodiversity from the finance sector. With the Inter-American Development Bank, we are exploring options to develop a first of its kind Ministerial Meeting on biodiversity and natural capital with Finance Ministers in the Latin American and Caribbean region. I am extremely grateful to the Costa Rican Government for supporting these ideas and carrying them forward since our first Bogis-Bossey Dialogue in November 2017.



**6. Public and Media Track** – Engaging in active communication, raising the profile of biodiversity in the media, including social media, and enhancing public awareness about biodiversity remains a key priority. Our aim is to build on this positive momentum and to generate a critical mass of outreach to stimulate action, at individual and community levels, to foster behavior change to help reconnect with nature. CBD's media presence was limited in 2017, and the Convention's role and work was unknown to the general public. Over the last two years, the Secretariat has engaged with new partners that have highlighted the importance of biodiversity to diverse audiences around the world. We have partnered with key voices and platforms, including Sir David Attenborough, Sir Paul McCartney, astronaut Roberta Bondar, our partners from Bird Life International, Fauna



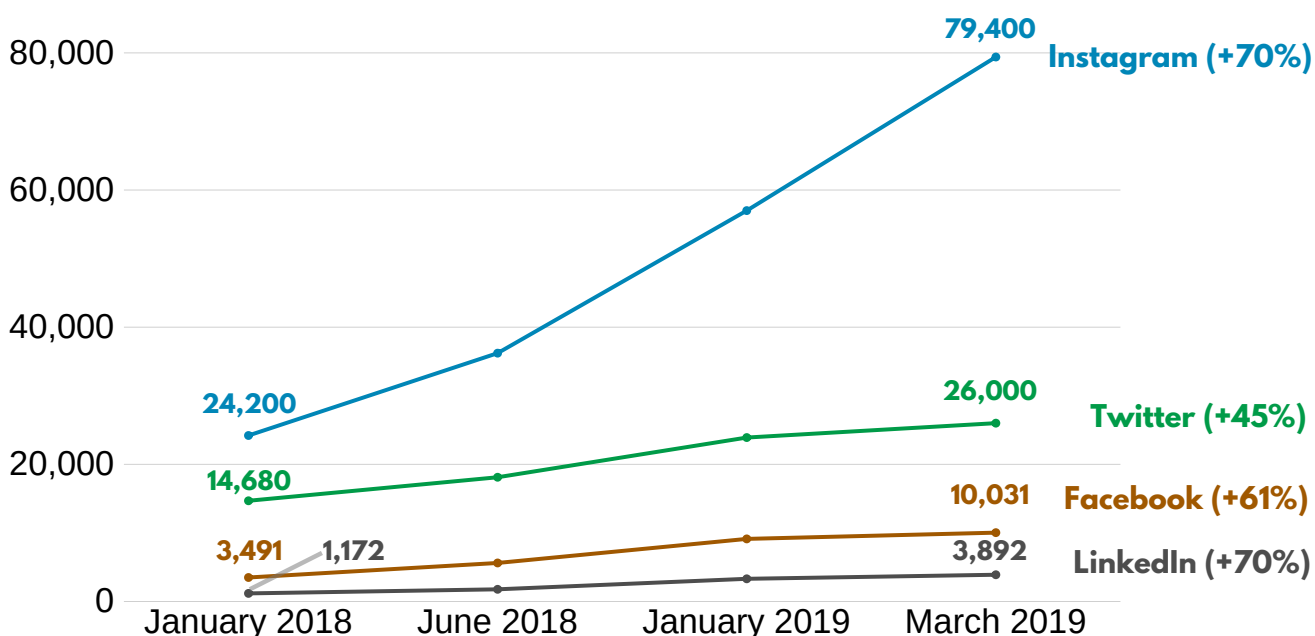
and Flora International, World Conservation Society, Conservation International, The Nature Conservancy, WWF and many unheard heroes and champions through our social media platforms.

We have signed a new Memorandum of Understanding with the National Geographic Society to increase collaboration in the lead up to 2020, through different means ranging from Earth observation systems as a source of evidence-based data, to enhanced communications, including branding and defining a media strategy, as well as exploring the potential of a Film Festival in China, among other media activities, during COP 15 in 2020. Likewise, our traditional and social media outreach has seen significant growth, enabling us to empower new voices and actors to contribute to the biodiversity agenda. In his regard, I have contributed to articles, opinion pieces and blogs with the aim of amplifying the importance of biodiversity.

In addition to interviews in newspapers of large circulation (e.g. The Guardian), other interviews have been featured in national media during official missions in different countries, for instance while visiting Mexico, China, Argentina, Japan, France, the Republic of Korea and Egypt, as well as on thematic issues closely relating to biodiversity and food, health, the economy and the need for a safe operating space for nature. Such high-level outreach contributed directly to the success of the 2018 UN Biodiversity Conference in Egypt and also offers a critical platform for even greater achievements as we prepare for 2020 and beyond.



Social media follower growth, @UNBiodiversity



## II. RESULTS OF 2018 UN BIODIVERSITY CONFERENCE IN EGYPT 2018

The biennium 2017-2018 concluded with the successful 2018 UN Biodiversity Conference in Egypt, hosted by the Government of Egypt, in Sharm El-Sheikh, with the theme “Investing in Biodiversity for People and Planet”. A gathering of nearly 4,000 delegates, the Conference marked a key milestone on the road to COP 15, in 2020, and the last opportunity for Parties to engage in bold actions and commitments during the last two years of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, and the UN Decade on Biodiversity. Continuing the focus on mainstreaming initiated at COP 13 in Cancun, Mexico in 2016, the 2018 UN Biodiversity Conference in Egypt, included the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention (COP 14), which adopted 38 decisions, the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CP-MPO9), which adopted 16 decisions, and the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing, (NP-MOP3) which adopted 16 decisions.

Opened by the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, the 2018 UN Biodiversity Conference, featured numerous high-level forums and nearly 324 parallel events. These events helped to increase support for biodiversity among political leaders, and elevate public awareness, building on scientific reports, to mobilize further the engagement of all actors of society. Such events included the engagement of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities,

United Nations organizations and programmes, other multilateral environmental agreements, subnational governments, cities and other local authorities, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, women’s groups, youth groups, the business and finance community, as well as representatives of sectors related to, or dependent on, biodiversity, along with many others.

The **High-Level Ministerial Segment (HLS)** at the start of the Conference, featuring 90 ministers and deputy ministers from environment, and other sectors (infrastructure, health, mining finance, and trade) led to the adoption of the Sharm El-Sheikh Declaration, which, amongst other things, invited the UN General Assembly to convene a Nature Summit for Heads of State in 2020.

A dedicated **African Ministerial Summit** culminated with a ministerial declaration in support of biodiversity, as well as a Pan-African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration for Increased Resilience.

The **Business and Biodiversity Forum**, now at its eighth edition, featured 330 participants, and demonstrated growing attention and corporate engagement in support of biodiversity in relation to the mainstreaming agenda.

As a new initiative, the **Nature and Culture Summit - Biological and Cultural Diversity for Biodiversity and Human Resilience** was organized by the Secretariat in collaboration with UNESCO and IUCN to further enhance the Convention’s work on Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities and emphasize the tight interconnections between nature and cultural heritage as pillars of local sustainable development and growth. The outcomes of this Summit were the adoption of the Sharm El-Sheikh Declaration on Nature and Culture.

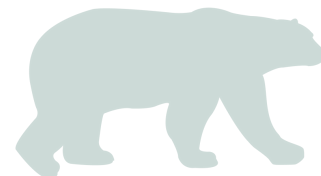




Photo: IISD

The **6th Global Biodiversity Summit of Local and Subnational Governments** adopted the Sharm El-Sheikh Communiqué for Local and Subnational Action for Nature and People. The Communiqué is an urgent call to all levels of government, and partners, for strengthened commitment to multi-level integration, collaboration and action, to stem biodiversity loss and restore biodiversity health for the sake of people and nature.

Among the additional summits, forums, and side events organized by the Secretariat in collaboration with other partners, or carried out by participants at the Conference, I note constructive outputs from the 2nd Wildlife Forum organized by the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management, the Science Forum, the Global Taxonomy Initiative Forum, the Law Forum, a Sustainable Ocean's Day, the CEPA Fair, the Rio Conventions Pavilion, and an Innovations and Solutions Fair.

Overall, 2018 UN Biodiversity Conference adopted key decisions to pave the way for the biennium 2019-2020 and lay the preparatory groundwork for COP 15 in China in 2020. Amongst them, it is important to note the Parties' agreement for a participatory, inclusive, transformative and catalytic preparatory process for the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework led by the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG), newly established for this purpose.

Equally, Parties agreed to accelerate actions to make progress on the Aichi Biodiversity Targets in the remaining two years before 2020.

Other key decisions focused on the development of a comprehensive, coherent, and innovative communications strategy to engage all stakeholders and raise awareness among the global public, as well as a mainstreaming strategy, and a resource mobilization strategy. Actions to implement the three objectives of the Convention, including decisions on pollinators; sustainable wildlife management; climate change and biodiversity; health and invasive alien species; together with the establishment of Ad Hoc Technical Expert Groups to provide scientific advice for issues including synthetic biology and digital sequence information, as well as a procedure for avoiding conflicts of interest in expert groups under all three bodies of the Convention, were equally important outputs of 2018 UN Biodiversity Conference. Additionally, actions to implement the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, including on risk assessments and risk management, socioeconomic considerations, specialized international access, and on a Global Multilateral Benefit Sharing Mechanism were also adopted.



**UN BIODIVERSITY  
CONFERENCE**  
Investing in biodiversity for people and planet  
**COP 14 - CP/MOP9 - NP/MOP3**  
Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, 2018





### III. LOOKING FORWARD: THE 2019-2020 BIENNIUM - PREPARATION FOR COP 15 AND THE POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

As we enter the final two years of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the UN Decade on Biodiversity, the agreements enshrined at 14 offer an important basis for accelerating progress and developing an ambitious, party-led post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. The next biennium is of critical importance for biodiversity in the lead up to COP 15 in China. In addition, the biennium provides ample opportunity to connect the biodiversity agenda with other important processes at international and national levels, notably relating to climate change, oceans, sustainable development, chemicals, transformation in health and food systems, and also to amplify the political momentum and capture the attention and actions of the global public and key stakeholders. Together with my team at the Secretariat, we are developing a comprehensive work plan for the biennium for the Convention and the Protocols.

Central to the work plan is to provide support to our Parties and the Open-Ended Intersessional Working Group (OEWG) for the development of the post-2020 framework. Under the guidance of the OEWG co-chairs, we have embarked on a comprehensive consultation process

including regional, thematic, and global consultations and began to define the agendas and schedule of dates for the formal process.

Strategic engagements and high-level buy in from political leaders in this field, as well as efforts to effectively reach out to stakeholders beyond the environmental community will continue to expand and build to COP 15.

Several political and high-level events, including some outlined above, can contribute to raising political attention at the highest levels. Most immediately, the Nature Champions Summit hosted by Canada in April 2019; the launch of the IPBES Global Assessment, hosted by France in May 2019; the G7 Environment Ministers Meeting hosted by France in May 2019 featuring biodiversity high on the agenda, together with oceans and climate change; the Trondheim Global Conference in July 2019, hosted by Norway; the G7 Summit hosted by France in August 2019; the Secretary General's Climate Summit at the start of the 74th UN General Assembly in September 2019; the IUCN Congress hosted by France in June 2020; and the 2020 UNGA Nature Summit in September 2020.



Meeting between the OEWG Co-Chairs and the post-2020 task team, Montreal, January 2019

Beyond this intensive process, however, I wanted to give you my perspective of the high-level considerations I believe will be key to success:

**Mobilize further support from all bases.**

We increasingly have the scientific and technological know-how necessary to build ecologically-based sustainability pathways, but we need to build the political will and public support, as well as the economic, business and opportunity-based cases for engagement, investment and action. There is still time, but the window for action is narrowing. By 2020, we must accelerate achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and adopt a post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. By 2030, we must bend the curve of biodiversity loss and by 2050, we must achieve the Convention's long-term vision of "Living in Harmony with Nature".

**Working with COP Presidencies.** We must engage strategically in particular with the current Egyptian Presidency of COP 14, and the future Chinese Presidency for COP 15, but also continue to engage the support of championing countries, past COP Presidencies and other high-level actors, and key influencers at all levels, to maximize the mobilization of engagement, commitment and action towards 2020 and beyond.



**Levers of transformative change.** The magnitude of the biodiversity and humanity's crises is such that requires integrated and innovative solutions that address in a comprehensive and holistic way the drivers of biodiversity loss and ecosystem destruction. Key levers of change include systems approaches to mainstreaming biodiversity into key economic sectors, as per the decisions of COP 13 and COP 14, thus forging transformation and transitions in different sectors (food systems, health, energy systems, infrastructure, forests, tourism, etc). A strong focus on conservation and actions to implement the first objective of the Convention remains a priority. Furthermore, the UN Decade on Ecosystems Restoration 2021-2030 provides the relevant framework to accelerate further actions at local, national and global levels to meet the CBD conservation, sustainable use and restoration targets. Emphasizing the nexus biodiversity-food-health, removing and repurposing pervasive subsidies, integrating biodiversity values into natural capital accounting and adapting the economic development and growth models to the reality of our planetary and social boundaries, corroborated with new messaging and narrative changes which link biodiversity in a deeper way to the sustainable development agenda, are also important levers of defining realistic and pragmatic targets and actions to define a safe operating space for nature and humanity.

**Reconnecting people and nature.** Beyond the intrinsic value of biodiversity, our work must always relate back to individual human beings, their families, and their communities. We must emphasize that nature and biodiversity are not an elite good or something "set aside" from their lives and concerns. We must make the case – and more importantly, we must deliver on the case – that biodiversity can achieve sustainable economic development that is inclusive, equitable, and respectful of peoples' cultures, traditions, lifestyles, and livelihoods. Several events organized in consultation with multi-stakeholder groups are also providing further inputs and proposals for possible elements to be considered in the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

## IV. CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Delivering these results over my first two years in office would have not been possible without the commitment, hard work and expertise of my team in the CBD Secretariat. I am grateful for their support and very proud of everything we managed to achieve together as a team. Above all, I am pleased that despite a very heavy workload and a dynamic working environment, demanded by the implementation of our work programmes and strategic directions requested by our Parties, we managed to successfully deliver both a successful COP14 and also to raise the profile of biodiversity on the global arena.

I am also mindful of the considerable challenges and constraints that we face, both in the larger system and internally. As with all public agencies, we must continuously strive to innovate, to do “more with less”, reduce bureaucracy, ineffective processes, and improve performance. With that goal in mind, over the past year we have carried out an internal organizational adjustment at the Secretariat to tackle recurrent operational challenges and increase our capacity and efficiency, while preparing ourselves for the ambitious work programme of the biennium 2019-2020, to deliver meaningful outcomes at COP 15. The reorganization responded to the Parties' request for considerable enhancement, efficiencies and effectiveness of the Convention's capabilities.

- **New cross division working modes and a new management team** to provide leadership, as well as, to strengthen political support, communication, partnerships and business engagement, scientific analyses and reporting, and other key functions prioritized by the Parties.

- **A more comprehensive transdisciplinary approach** and engagement of all staff across the Convention Secretariat and its Protocols.
- **Organizational changes** to break down silos and promote effectiveness, efficiency, and a culture of cooperation.
- **Enhanced alignment of the CBD Secretariat's operations within the UN rules and procedures** and responsiveness of the Secretariat in addressing forthcoming changes under the Secretary-General's UN reform.
- **Management Retreats** in 2018, and at the start of 2019, to further enhance and reinforce inter-organizational practices and secure even greater alignment among the management team and CBD staff to achieve the Secretariat's vision, and carry out the Parties' guidance and priorities.

Challenges, however, do remain. Among them we are heavily impacted by administrative issues and lengthy processes, that frequently disrupt and slow down our activities, impacting the speed and taxing our operations and performance. Moving forward and learning from the administrative challenges from these past two years, I am working with my counterparts in UNEP and UNON, who provide the administrative services to the CBD Secretariat, to find solutions to improve efficiencies in administrative processes, including recruitment and human resources management, procurement and financial processes, and to eliminate to the extent possible the administrative bottlenecks.





In completing these two years, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you - the Parties, the Bureaux, our donors and the many partners I have interacted with, and mostly to thank and recognize my team at the Secretariat, for their support and dedication in taking on many challenges, looking for solutions and going the extra mile in what we do.

It has been an honour to serve at the helm of the Biodiversity Convention and I remain fully committed to carry forward my mandate and to work closely with the Bureau, our Parties and all partners to implement the ambitious programme for the 2019-2020 biennium leading to a successful COP 15, while preparing the grounds to support the implementation of the new Global Biodiversity Framework post-2020 in all its dimensions.



**Cristiana PASCA PALMER, PhD**  
**Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations**  
**Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity**