UN Biodiversity Summit Supports 2030 Agenda-aligned Post-2020 Framework & Statement of the Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands, Martha Rojas Urrego

30 September 2020

The first UN Biodiversity Summit highlighted the urgency of action at the highest levels in support of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework that contributes to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and places the global community on a path towards “living in harmony with nature” – the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity.

The high-level event convened in the margins of the 75th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on 30 September, with Heads of State and Government and ministers joining virtually. The Summit focused on the theme, ‘Urgent Action on Biodiversity for Sustainable Development.’

UN Secretary-General António Guterres said degradation of nature spans economics, social justice, and human rights, and can result in geopolitical tensions and conflicts. Speakers warned that biodiversity loss threatens food security, water supplies, and livelihoods, as well as our ability to fight diseases and face extreme events.

A plenary session followed, during which participants highlighted the connections between biodiversity, societies, and economies.

In the Summit’s segment “Voices for Nature” the Secretary General, Martha Rojas Urrego, delivered a statement on behalf of the Convention on Wetlands:

“I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for hosting this timely UN Biodiversity Summit. One of the lessons that we are learning from the current pandemic is that the health of nature and people are intricately connected and interrelated.

As we approach the end of the UN Decade on Biodiversity, progress towards global biodiversity targets has been insufficient. While there are local examples of success, biodiversity is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history, with growing impacts on people and our planet.

Recent scientific assessments have concluded that we have lost 85% of the global area of wetlands, which include freshwater and marine and coastal ecosystems, such as lakes, rivers, marshes, mangroves and coral reefs, which harbour rich biodiversity. We lose wetlands three times faster than forests, they are the most threatened ecosystems in the planet.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, to which 171 States are now Contracting Parties, provides the global legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of all wetlands. At this UN Biodiversity Summit, I would like to highlight key messages from the Convention, to contribute to the urgent action on Biodiversity for Sustainable Development:

- We need to ensure that the post-2020 biodiversity framework has the necessary ambition to reverse the current loss of biodiversity, as a precondition to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.
- The post-2020 biodiversity framework needs to provide a common scheme for the biodiversity-related conventions to leverage existing work under the Conventions mandates, maximizing their impact and promoting synergies and joint efforts to achieve multiple benefits. Such collaboration is particularly important at national level.
- As part of this framework, wetlands can provide nature-based-solutions to address the current biodiversity loss trends, while ensuring water availability, contributing to filtering pollutants, storing carbon and protecting coasts.
and communities.

- The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands has a key role to play through Parties’ efforts to designate and manage more than 2400 Wetlands of International Importance, to use wisely all wetlands and to provide data to measure indicators under the SDGs.

This Summit is an opportunity to scale up actions to reverse the loss of nature and to ensure that biodiversity continues to provide nature-based solutions to climate change, to build-back better and to achieve the sustainable development agenda for all."