

## Briefing – Executive Secretary highlights in the lead up to COP15 (March – August 2019)



Dear President and Members of the COP Bureau,  
Dear Chair and Members of the SBSTTA Bureau,

As we gear up towards the first Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) meeting in Nairobi, Kenya on 27-30 August 2019, I would like to provide you with an update since the last Bureau meeting in March, on developments that are increasingly placing biodiversity at the center of the global agenda and helping pave the way for a landmark Global Biodiversity Framework Post-2020 at the 15<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 15) in Kunming, China in October 2020.

Building on my earlier brief to you, this spring, a series of high-impact scientific studies and high-level stakeholder events have created a “game-changing” moment for biodiversity. This breakthrough — the result of hard work by the Secretariat, the Parties to the Convention, other experts in the community, and under the leadership of the Presidency and members of our Bureau — has created a unique opportunity that we need to leverage to further elevate our collective message of investing and safeguarding our natural infrastructure for people, the planet and prosperity. The prospects are high for us to profile broadly the suite of services and functions that nature offers, and which we all need. In addition, we must continue to bring attention and political support to nature’s transformative potential for society and the economy, through mainstreaming biodiversity into economic sectors and also through ecosystems and landscapes-based approaches, such as nature-based solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and contribute in multiple ways to human health and wellbeing, poverty eradication and sustainable development at large.

I look forward to having the chance to highlight these developments at our meeting in Nairobi, on August 26, and to continue to engage with you intensively, including through regular quarterly updates like the report attached, as we move towards CBD COP 15 and into the next decade.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Cristiana Pasca-Palmer', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Cristiana Pasca-Palmer  
Executive Secretary  
United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity

## 1. The Path to CBD COP15 in Kunming Proceeds Apace: Host Country Arrangements; Global and Regional Consultations and the 1st Open-ended Working Group (OEWG)

- The **Post-2020 process and preparations for COP 15** are swiftly moving forward. Together with a delegation from the Secretariat, I had a very successful one-week mission to China in March (after the Bureau meeting in Nairobi that same month). We met with China's Minister of Environment, Mr. Li Ganjie, the Vice Minister of Environment, Mr. Huang Runqiu, China's special envoy for climate change, Mr. Xie Zhenhua, and other government representatives in Beijing, including the governor of the Yunnan province, and the mayor of Kunming. Meetings in Kunming and Yunnan province also took place with the local authorities involved in COP 15. This had an additional strategic purpose of visiting the conference center and facilities in Kunming. The mission revealed an excellent state of preparations by our Chinese colleagues, already early on for COP 15, and resulted in fruitful exchanges and discussions around planning and delivering a successful COP 15 from both a substantive and operational standpoint. Since March, various activities have been initiated and meetings have taken place to advance on the COP host country agreement with China, as well as on hosting the 2<sup>nd</sup> OEWG in February 2020 in Kunming. On the communications front, I had fruitful exchanges with our Chinese counterparts regarding the theme of COP 15, and, I am pleased that they have selected the theme, which they will announce in due time. Immediately following the 1<sup>st</sup> OEWG, the Secretariat team on COP 15 preparations will be traveling with me to China to continue the consultations with representatives of the Chinese government, at the ministerial and working levels, in Beijing and Kunming, and to advance both strategic and logistical preparations for CBD COP15.

- The **consultations for the post-2020 process** organized by the Secretariat, under the guidance of the co-chairs for the OEWG, continued according to the scheduled plan and in the spirit of transparency, inclusiveness, and participation, as noted in decision 14/34.

- From March to June, the Secretariat organized and participated in additional regional and global consultations, including the regional consultation workshops for Western Europe and other Groups and other members of the EU (Bonn, Germany, in March); Africa (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in April), Central and Eastern Europe (Belgrade, Serbia in April), Latin America and the Caribbean (Montevideo, Uruguay in May), and the consultation workshop of the biodiversity-related Conventions (Berne, Switzerland in June). Further information, along with the summary reports, can be found:

- <https://www.cbd.int/conferences/post2020/post2020-ws-2019-01/documents>

- Between 2-5 July, the Government of Norway organized, in partnership with the Secretariat and several other organizations, the 9<sup>th</sup> Trondheim Conference on Biodiversity. The Conference opened with a Ministerial Segment hosted by Norway's Minister of Environment and provided an opportunity to informally discuss key issues relating to the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. The Conference was an important stepping stone in the consultative process, bringing together our CBD Parties, along with representatives from civil society, business, youth, women's groups, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, as well as other key partners, within and outside the UN system. The report of the Conference can be found at: <https://www.cbd.int/new/>; and my speech: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/speech/2019/sp-2019-07-16-trondheim-en.pdf>

- Additionally, together with the Secretariat's post-2020 Task Team, which I established for this process, we hosted a four-day **retreat in Montreal, in May, with the two co-chairs of the OEWG**, Basile van Havre (Canada) and Francis Ogwai (Uganda) on the preparations and workplan for the post-2020 process. The retreat provided an important and timely opportunity to receive the co-chairs' guidance on the documentation to be presented to the Parties at the 1<sup>st</sup> OEWG meeting in Nairobi, as well as for the thematic consultations that will follow.
- **Outputs to date on the post 2020 process**, drawing from the consultative meetings thus far, are captured in the document entitled "Overview of the Consultations conducted, and other contributions received, regarding the preparation of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. This document, along with other official OEWG documentation, can be found: <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/WG2020-01>
- Preparations for the 1<sup>st</sup> **OEWG** are near complete and we expect a successful meeting with high level of participation. Current estimates indicate over 500 participants from 120 Parties, along with many members of civil society, the private sector, and other key stakeholders. We have also been planning press coverage events and briefings, in Nairobi next week, to build on the OEWG meeting discussions and further raise stakeholder and public interest in the post-2020 process. Likewise, we are planning a social media campaign around the OEWG with the hashtag "#biodiversity2020". Please follow along and engage with us in person and online! Further details on the [OEWG can be found via our document](#) link.
- Ahead of the OEWG, two Global Consultation Workshops on the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework relating to biosafety and the Cartagena Protocol, and to access and benefit-sharing and the Nagoya Protocol will be taking place in Nairobi. Documentation is found: <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/POST2020-WS-2019-07>
- Advancements on other areas of work are also apace. The Informal Advisory Group on Mainstreaming has been set up and convened its first meeting remotely. In addition, work on the resource mobilization documentation and business and biodiversity portfolio is progressing.

## 2. Building the movement to COP 15: Key Missions by the Executive Secretary (March-August 2019)

In addition to overseeing the preparations on the post-2020 process and working on the implementation of COP 14 decisions and the Secretariat's overall workplan, I have continued to enhance strategic engagements with key partners and stakeholders, to raise the profile of biodiversity and foster a deeper understanding of the importance of this subject for different sectors, levels of government and society at large. I am pleased to see the emergence of high-level coalitions that CBD Parties and partners are developing in support of the process for the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, and beyond. Many of these coalitions have involved the Secretariat and have developed into collaborative multi-stakeholder partnerships, which I have continued to contribute to. Among these, I was honored to provide input into:

- **The "Nature Champions Summit"**: Convened by the Government of Canada in Montreal from April 24-25, 2019, the Summit stressed the importance of *ambition, integration and*

*partnerships*, and provided a platform for multi-partner coalitions for responsible stewardship of nature. The Summit brought environment ministers and government officials from around the world together with representatives of UN agencies and civil society organizations, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, as well as business leaders and philanthropists. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's participation at the Summit demonstrated high-level leadership from the Canadian government and in his remarks, he emphasized the interconnections among biodiversity, a stable climate, human wellbeing and sustainable development. The Summit concluded with the Nature Champions "Call to Action" that emphasized the critical role of the CBD and of a new Global Biodiversity Framework in solving major international, national, and local challenges.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/news/2019/04/nature-champions-call-to-action.html>

The Summit helped spearhead an urgent awakening on multiple aspects relating to nature and biodiversity. Among them, I want to stress remarks from the Uganda Minister of Environment who noted the "critical role of biodiversity and nature on sustainable development throughout Africa". To this rich exchange among Nature Champions, I added various points in panel discussions and the joint press conference with Canada's Minister of Environment, in which I emphasized the critical window of time we have in the next 10-15 years to stop and reverse biodiversity loss and combat climate change. I also underscored that COP 15 in China in 2020 is a critical opportunity to create a Global Biodiversity Framework that will secure our future. My message to all, was that we have the tools at hand, and with our innovation, creativity and the leadership of Nature Champions around the world, we can foster a "race to the top" on commitments for nature.

- On the occasion of the 8<sup>th</sup> session of the **UN Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues** (April mission to UN HQ) I was invited to give the opening statement in the UN General Assembly Hall, where we celebrated EarthDay together with Indigenous leaders - key stewards safeguarding our species and ecosystems. In my address, I proposed to the UNPFII to establish a UN Decade for Nature and Culture to be adopted for 2020–2030: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/speech/2019/sp-2019-04-22-UNPEII-en.pdf>. The statement on the **World Indigenous Day** is also enclosed: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/speech/2019/sp-2019-08-09-IndigenousDay-en.pdf>

- **The IPBES Global Assessment** (May mission to Paris): The landmark IPBES Global Biodiversity Assessment, launched in the first week of May in Paris, has been widely recognized as the most comprehensive analysis of the state of biodiversity and ecosystems since the 2005 Millennium Ecosystems Assessment. The report stressed both the crisis we are in and the viable pathways forward. It emphasized that since *"current structures often inhibit sustainable development and actually represent the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss, fundamental, structural change, is called for. By its very nature, transformative change can expect opposition from those with interests vested in the status quo, but such opposition can be overcome for the broader public good."* I was pleased to see the unparalleled media attention generated by the release of the report, which provides a positive indication that biodiversity is growing in importance and gaining attention within the larger public, as aimed for by Aichi Biodiversity Target 1. You can read the full report: <http://bit.ly/IPBESReport>; my statement for the closing of the IPBES Plenary: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/speech/2019/sp-2019-05-04-IPBES-en.pdf>.

- **The G7 Environment Ministerial meeting** (May mission to Metz): Hosted by France, this meeting of the G7 Ministers of Environment, 5 and 6 May 2019, centered on “Fighting Inequalities by protecting biodiversity and climate” and represents an important political effort to raise the profile of biodiversity internationally. Several non-G7 members (Indonesia, India, Fiji, Gabon, Egypt, Mexico, Chile, Niger, and Norway) also attended. For the Secretariat, this was an exceptional milestone, particularly seeing the evolution of one year of diplomatic work with our French counterparts to promote biodiversity on the G7 agenda. The Ministers adopted a “Communique” as well as the “Metz Charter on Biodiversity,” emphasizing the need to accelerate and intensify efforts to halt biodiversity loss, to encourage engagement of other actors and stakeholders, and to support the development and implementation of a post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Coupled to this, were three Declarations, namely on the “International Leaders for Biodiversity Initiative”, “Halting deforestation including through sustainable supply chains for agricultural commodities” and an “Intention of Support for Gender Responsive Environmental Action and Training” (GREAT). The meeting also received a “Concrete Initiatives – Outcome Document” and recommendations from WWF France and AXA on integrating nature into investment strategies. Another significant deliverable was the launch of the OECD report on “Biodiversity: Finance and the Economic and Business Case for Action”. Outputs from this G7 environment meeting are found: <https://www.elysee.fr/en/g7/2019/01/01/official-documents>; <http://www.oecd.org/env/resources/biodiversity/biodiversity-finance-and-the-economic-and-business-case-for-action.htm>; <https://www.elysee.fr/admin/upload/default/0001/04/96b8bf42c3f41a5919b1d9fe3034199b07877cba.pdf>

Following this meeting, I have continued to liaise and actively contribute as co-chair of President Emmanuel Macron’s One Planet Lab for Biodiversity Initiative. Ahead of the OEWG1 in Nairobi, I will be meeting with President Macron and the other representatives of One Planet Lab in Paris to discuss concrete commitments for biodiversity in the lead up to the G7 Summit and CBD COP 15 next year.

- **Eat Stockholm Food Forum** (June mission to Stockholm): The EAT annual [Stockholm Food Forum](#) took place on June 12-13, 2019, in Sweden, bringing together over 1000 representatives of government, as well as experts from the private and public sector working on food, agriculture, biodiversity, and health, among other topics. The Food Forum is the world’s leading effort to transform global food systems. In the context of this year’s theme for the UN International Day of Biological Diversity – Our Biodiversity, Our Food, Our Health – I was invited to address the importance of mainstreaming biodiversity into the agriculture and health sectors, with a special focus on the implications of sustainable agriculture, food systems, and sustainable land management in safeguarding biodiversity and ensuring a diverse diet. This event has generated a strong partnership with EAT, catalyzing growing attention to biodiversity among agriculture related coalitions. Participation at the Forum provided an opportunity to re-invigorate partnerships with other organizations, including with Bioversity International, Danone, the Food and Land-Use Coalition (FOLU) and CIFOR’s Global Landscape Forum.
- **The Helsinki EU Environment Ministerial** (July mission to Helsinki): At the invitation of the Finnish Presidency of the European Union I attended on 11 July 2019, the Informal Ministerial meeting of the EU Ministers of Environment to present information on the post-2020 process and the roadmap to COP 15. The meeting was strategic and timely as it provided a

prime opportunity to engage ministers from across Europe on their national, European-wide, and global efforts, to highlight the need for additional actions to implement the current Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, while also emphasizing the need for bold, transformative and innovative approaches for the post-2020 process and beyond, in view also of the findings of the IPBES report.

- **Outreach with the UN Deputy Secretary General and Permanent UN Mission Representatives on the road to CBD COP 15 and the 2020 UN Nature Summit** (July mission to NY). I had a very productive meeting on 22 July with the Deputy Secretary General Amina Mohamed, whom I briefed on the progress made by the Secretariat in promoting biodiversity at the heart of the international agenda and the essential role biodiversity plays for nature-based solutions to climate change, in addition to being the fundamental capital that supports the achievement of multiple SDGs. I also drew her attention to COP decision 14/34 and the UN General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution A/RES/73/234, adopted on 20 December 2018, where the UNGA decided to host a UN Nature Summit at heads of state level in 2020. I noted the value of holding the Nature Summit on the margins of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN and solicited her support to ensure high-level engagement and continuity of bold and integrated commitments from governments, private sector and all sectors of society, in follow up to the SG's Climate Action Summit this September, and in the lead up to COP 15 in China, to make 2020 a super-year for environment and sustainability. The DSG conveyed her strong support to the work of CBD and agreed that measurable, transformative, and impactful commitments are necessary in the context of COP 15 and the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework to tackle the serious biodiversity crisis. To mobilize the diplomatic corps in NY in support of biodiversity, I also met with the UN Permanent Representatives of Norway, New Zealand, Monaco, Portugal, Costa Rica, and Ecuador, and brought to their attention the 2020 UN Nature Summit. As the Summit would be hosted by the President of the General Assembly, it will require strong engagement and support from interested Permanent Missions in NY, as well as support from the Secretariat. I also delivered a briefing on biodiversity, COP 15 and the post-2020 process to the GRULAC (regional group of Latin America and the Caribbean). Finally, with colleagues from UNEP we discussed the opportunity to present biodiversity at the forthcoming meeting of the Environment Management Group (EMG) in September.

- **Exciting news on Aichi Target 11/Marine Protected Areas (Arctic mission)** – On August 1<sup>st</sup>, our host country Canada, designated by Ministerial order, the establishment of the largest Marine Protected Area (MPA) in the Arctic region. Covering an area larger than Norway, Tallurutiup Imanga (319,411 km<sup>2</sup>), is set as an indigenous-led conservation area that will be managed by the local Inuit communities. This is a win-win model for conservation and local social and economic development and is fully respecting the spirit of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). I had the great honor to witness this historic event during my mission this month to the Arctic. The event provided the Convention Secretariat with significant outputs that contribute to various thematic areas, including our work with youth organizations, Indigenous People and Local Communities, economic and sustainable development models and expanding the representativity and geographic coverage of protected areas. I am very pleased that the efforts from the political leadership in Canada together with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities have resulted in Canada surpassing its Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 for MPA, which is now at 14%. This is excellent news for the global Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 as we are approaching 2020. I hope other CBD Parties will be inspired to continue to take action to



implement the current Strategic Plan on Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. On a personal note, I was very inspired by the young leaders in Canada working with Students on Ice Foundation and have connected these leaders with our Global Biodiversity Youth Network, as well as, with the UN Youth Envoy's team and others working on the 2019 SG's Climate Action Summit. In this way we can further leverage our message of integration and encourage leadership and partnership across youth groups. I also had an opportunity to personally congratulate the Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Catherine McKenna, on this extraordinary success. This is another noteworthy signal of Canada's commitment to the Convention's objectives and to their domestic actions to continue to spearhead the Nature Champions Initiative announced in Montreal in April 2019. Further details, including map of the region, can be found on: <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans/mpa-zpm/tuvaijuittug/index-eng.html>

### 3. Continued Comprehensive and Innovative Communications

The last five months, in addition to delivering on our normal program of work, have also been an exciting time for our communications work, including International Days, promotional and awareness raising events, social media engagement, and other outreach means, including via videos, graphics, and statements.

- Among these, I was pleased that the Secretariat's in-house efforts coupled with fruitful partnership dynamics resulted in a very successful **2019 International Day of Biological Diversity (IDB), celebrating the theme "Our Biodiversity, Our Food, Our Health."** The top line messages, and positive reach of all the materials generated by the Secretariat's communication team for this year's IDB are at: <https://sites.google.com/view/uncbd-idb> These statistics surpassed our expectations. The level of engagement and interest generated by many stakeholders and partners are a clear signal of commitment and partnership. In addition, in July 2019, the UN Department for Information - Graphic Design Unit, awarded the Secretariat **as Winners in the American Inhouse Design Award 2019** of Graphic Design USA for our 2019 IDB logo! This was a remarkable achievement and one that the whole Secretariat felt proud. The 2019 IDB website is found on <https://www.cbd.int/idb/2019/>

I want to thank the whole Bureau for their contributions, guidance and for disseminating information and celebrating this Day in their countries. My gratitude to the Ministers of Environment of Egypt and of China for providing salient messages on this Day, and for leading celebrations at home as well.

On the occasion of the Day, the Secretariat communication team prepared the following video, which received over 8000 viewers:

[https://www.cbd.int/idb/2019/https://twitter.com/UNBiodiversity/status/1131313729864392706?fbclid=IwAR2dsJM5cgoXaQHjOk\\_WC1CC4lak5HLqWg01Rff97ESn1UBp-81zUxdHE1Y](https://www.cbd.int/idb/2019/https://twitter.com/UNBiodiversity/status/1131313729864392706?fbclid=IwAR2dsJM5cgoXaQHjOk_WC1CC4lak5HLqWg01Rff97ESn1UBp-81zUxdHE1Y)

We also developed a Trello Board to ensure information exchange and to broaden opportunities to promote work among all partners. <https://trello.com/b/wXldi8mi/idb2019>

- **Social media reach continues the ascending trend.** Our social media follower growth is connected to the UN Decade on Biodiversity and the post 2020 awareness raising, outreach and engagement strategy. We have been testing new products and outputs, working with new partners, and enhancing the global communication strategy, in the lead up to COP 15. See results below:

- Among the new products, the Secretariat's communications unit initiated in December 2018 **"weekly take overs"** with interested influencers in the social media field. After starting the strategy, we increased our followers by more than 50% surpassing 100K on Instagram. We have collected beautiful nature inspired images from previous takeovers and will be using the approach to also help raise awareness on the post 2020 process.
- Other highlights include: preparations of the **draft Global Communications Strategy**; the Executive Secretary's **interview with the BBC** on the IPBES release; and publication of **two op-eds on biodiversity in advance of the G7 leader's Summit** in Biarritz, France. The link to the op-eds on biodiversity can be found at: <http://www.globalgovernanceproject.org/2019/08/12/bolstering-biodiversity/> The link to the publication on the Global Governance Project is on <http://bit.ly/G7France> Also, CBD was promoted in an article from MIT's *Undark* Magazine, which includes a quote from the Executive Secretary: <https://undark.org/article/elephants-whales-cancer-clues-mammals/> In view of the IPCC Special Report on Land released in August 2019, I also prepared the following op-ed: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/speech/2019/op-2019-08-22-ipcc-en.pdf>
- The Secretariat was also deeply honored by the announcement from the Minister of Environment of Costa Rica, and Bureau member, Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, to dedicate and name after CBD a new species of insect discovered in Costa Rica, **Philtronoma cbdora**. [https://twitter.com/UNBiodiversity/status/1108390364329771009?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Eembeddedtimeline%7Ctwterm%5Eprofile%3ACristianaPascap%7Ctwcon%5Etimelinedrome&ref\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cbd.int%2Fexecutive-secretary%2Fwork](https://twitter.com/UNBiodiversity/status/1108390364329771009?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Eembeddedtimeline%7Ctwterm%5Eprofile%3ACristianaPascap%7Ctwcon%5Etimelinedrome&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cbd.int%2Fexecutive-secretary%2Fwork)



- As CBD's **contribution to many significant UN International Days**, the Secretariat's communication team prepared seven videos, in close consultation with CBD substantive officers and experts, during the March to August period.
  - **Women's Day-** [cbd.int/gender/ #InternationalWomensDay #IWD2019 @UN\\_Women](http://cbd.int/gender/#InternationalWomensDay #IWD2019 @UN_Women)
  - **Wildlife Day-** <https://twitter.com/UNBiodiversity/status/1102353459926298625>
  - **Forests Day-** <https://twitter.com/UNBiodiversity/status/1108813025610330112>
  - **Water Day-** <https://twitter.com/UNBiodiversity/status/1109201836345643008>
  - **Health Day-** <https://twitter.com/UNBiodiversity/status/1114989975299170305>
  - **Indigenous Peoples' Day**  
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=875357342845484>
  - **Youth Day-**  
[https://twitter.com/UNBiodiversity/status/1160943776535179264?fbclid=IwAR0\\_wq5tABwrg7BY61tvAA-Ak2ISNG36sNMkh9zIYIARtWUD\\_pOgesNdwk](https://twitter.com/UNBiodiversity/status/1160943776535179264?fbclid=IwAR0_wq5tABwrg7BY61tvAA-Ak2ISNG36sNMkh9zIYIARtWUD_pOgesNdwk)

#### 4. Further Engagement in 2019

The Open-ended Working Group (OWEG) is the kickoff to a series of high-profile events on the road to COP 15 in Kunming. A full calendar of related events is regularly updated by the Secretariat, in partnership with the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC), and can be found: [Strategic Planning Timeline](#). Upcoming events hosted by the Secretariat, or in which it is actively involved include:

- **Thematic consultations for the post-2020 process:** between July and December 2019, three thematic consultations will be organised on (1) ecosystem restoration (22-24 October, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), (2) Marine and Coastal Biodiversity (early November 2019 TBD, Montreal, Canada), and (3) Area based Conservation Measures (1-3 December TBC, Montreal, Canada). A briefing on accountability will also be organised on the margins of the meeting of the Working Group on Article 8J and related provisions in November 2019, in Montreal, Canada. In 2020, four thematic consultations will be organised on: Resource Mobilization (January or February 2020 TBC), Capacity Building (21-22 February 2020 TBC, Kunming, China), and Accountability (two sessions: 1 March 2020, Kunming, China and 17-20 March 2020, Montreal, Canada).
- **SBSTTA 23 and Article 8J:** Preparations are proceeding apace for **Article 8J** and **SBSTTA 23**, which will take place in Montreal, respectively from November 20 to 22 and 25-29, 2019. SBSTTA 23 will also serve as an anchor event upon which numerous related consultations and gatherings will occur in the lead up to COP 15.
- **UN Deputy Secretary General meeting in Rwanda:** At the request of the UN Deputy Secretary General, the Secretariat provided a draft speech for the ceremony to name a gorilla at Kwita Izina Ceremony 2019, attended also by the Rwanda President, Paul Kagame. We also provided background notes for the UN Deputy Secretary General's bilateral with President Kagame of Rwanda, emphasizing the importance of COP 15 and Africa leadership.

- **UNCCD High Level Segment:** The Executive Secretary has been invited to moderate the roundtable on sustainable land management and restoration, expanding on the close Rio Convention ties and on the importance of safeguarding biodiversity in soils, and of the nature, land and people nexus.
- **Meetings at the World Bank:** At the invitation of Laura Tuck, Vice-President of the World Bank, the planned meeting in September will include a presentation by the Executive Secretary to the Bank staff about the post-2020 process and COP 15 with the view of engaging and leveraging the Bank's capacity in support of COP 15. Discussions will explore with the bank leadership the potential for a "Kunming breakfast" at the World Bank's Spring Meetings in 2020. Meetings with National Geographic and other partners in the DC area will also be arranged.
- **The 74<sup>th</sup> UNGA and the Secretary-General's 2019 Climate Action Summit:** The Secretary-General is holding the [2019 Climate Action Summit](#) on September 23, 2019 with the view of mobilizing additional commitments to reenergize climate actions from leaders, activists, and other key stakeholders worldwide. Thanks to persistent and combined efforts, biodiversity is strongly represented in the Climate Action Summit, through the Nature Based Solutions track. The Executive Secretary is part of the Summit's Steering Committee, and together with the Secretariat team supports also the work of our colleagues from UNEP on the NBS track. Furthermore, we facilitated discussions for a strong focus on mainstreaming biodiversity in the agriculture sector and are pleased that the agriculture-biodiversity-climate nexus will be an area where commitments from business coalitions will be announced at the Summit. In addition, the Secretariat is also organizing an event with our partners from UNDP, National Geographic Society, and the Food and Land-use coalition (FOLU) on September 22, 2019 on nature-based solutions, "Securing our Future: People, Food and Nature Solving the Planetary Emergency". Finally, the Secretariat is working with the UN Youth Envoy and others to further connect nature and biodiversity to the discussions during the Youth Climate Summit on 21 September.
- **Pre UNFCCC COP, Costa Rica:** Aside from participating at the UNFCCC COP 25 which will take place in Santiago de Chile, Chile in December and which has a strong focus on nature based solutions, the Secretariat together with the Inter-American Development Bank has been working with the Government of Costa Rica to organize a Finance Ministerial workshop "Unlocking finance for biodiversity action and economic growth in Latin America", which will take place, on 8 October 2019 in San José, Costa Rica, on the margins of the UNFCCC Pre-COP25, hosted by the Government of Costa Rica.
- **Meeting of Africa's Environment Ministers (AMCEN)** (November, South Africa). The Executive Secretary will attend the AMCEN meeting to present the post-2020 process and the road ahead to COP 15 and mobilize African leadership for a successful outcome of COP 15.

## 5. Administrative matters since March 2019

- The high importance of the post-2020 process and the ambitious objectives set by the CBD Parties for COP 15, including the addition of a third inter-governmental body (OEWG for the post 2020 process) and the fact that the Secretariat's human capacity has not been increased accordingly, poses a number of challenges, as the workload at all levels within the Secretariat has increased many folds. We work under high pressure to continue to deliver the normal programs of work under the SBSTTA, SBI, Article 8j and the two Protocols, and also respond to the additional high volumes of work and exigency of the post-2020 process, while making all efforts to maintain the high quality of our outputs. We remain burdened by a disproportionate high amount of time spent both by management and some staff, in processing administrative matters, especially with regards to filling vacant positions. Ranging from several hundreds to over one thousand applicants for each vacancy, and the fact that the hiring manager at the Secretariat must review all applications and organize the recruitment, in addition to doing all the technical work that is part of its normal portfolio, further strains the capacity and leads to delays in the internal processing of vacancies. Adding to that, further delays occur at different steps of the recruitment process also with UNEP and UNON who deliver administrative services for the Secretariat's recruitments.
- Absence of a chief of staff function at the Secretariat, who could support daily managerial and administrative tasks at the executive and senior management level, to ensure smooth coordination within the entire staff team, leads to disproportionate amounts of time spent on administrative matters at the executive level, adding to an already very heavy workload. Insufficient human resources and capacity, coupled with complex and inefficient bureaucratic processes, have implications on staff health and motivation at all levels, and could affect the Secretariat to deliver on its growing volume of work.
- Measures had been taken by the Executive Secretary and management to address these issues, including by initiating discussions with the new leadership of UNEP and the United Nations Office in Nairobi (UNON) to explore different arrangements to ensure a more efficient delivery of corporate services to the Secretariat, and to discuss the application of the administrative arrangements, and the support that UNEP could provide to CBD meetings, as it was also requested by COP Decision 14/37, para 5. A focal point for this process was appointed at the senior management level (Ms. Jyoti Mathur-Filipp D1), and a team from the Secretariat is currently carrying out a mission to discuss these issues with UNEP and UNON in Nairobi. Review and correction of the current misalignment between the administrative responsibility attributed to the Executive Secretary and the management tools to exercise it are also addressed in discussions with UNEP in the broader context of the Secretary General's management reform. The Secretariat has been also requesting UNEP and UNON's help to reduce open vacancies, effectively, efficiently and in a timely manner. As UNEP is currently negotiating a global service level agreement with UNON, the Secretariat has requested to be included in such talks, so that a service level agreement could be signed between UNEP and the Secretariat, with specific key performance indicators, in the shortest time possible.

- The Secretariat is also in permanent contact with UNEP to finalize the extension of the lease of the Secretariat premises in Montreal. UNEP has assisted with the preparation of the procurement case to be presented to the Headquarters Committee on Contracts, which will be processed as a matter of urgency. Meanwhile, the Secretariat is also in regular contact with the Federal Government of Canada and the Provincial Government of Quebec, who have committed to continue hosting the Secretariat of the Convention. The Secretariat wishes to extend its warmest thanks to Canada and the Province of Quebec for their unfailing support as hosts of the Convention.
- Notwithstanding these challenges, together with my entire team at the Secretariat we are continuing to diligently implement our mandate for the different tracks of work - SBSTTA, Article 8J, SBI, the two Protocols, as well as the OWEG post 2020 process, and spare no efforts to support the preparation of a historical COP 15 in China and the adoption of a landmark Global Biodiversity Framework. All CBD staff members are deeply involved in their respective portfolios and we all work with a single objective: to help avert and reverse losses from the biodiversity crisis.

The outputs highlighted in this report are a product of a community of hard-working staff that believe in the goals of the Convention and together have shown the Secretariat's professionalism and collective strengths. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my staff for all their work and to specially recognize their additional efforts and resilience when asked to do more than what they were expected to during these months. Together, we have shown we can go far; moving forward, we need the Bureau's and Parties support to ensure that the necessary resources are provided in due time to continue to carry out the important and heavy agenda over the next 13 months.

