

## Media Brief

### International Day for Biological Diversity

May 22, 2023

The United Nations (UN) International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) is commemorated annually on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues.

Threats to biodiversity continue to be matters of discussion on many tables since the survival of humans is closely linked to it: we depend on it for food, medicine, energy, clean air and water, security from natural disasters as well as recreation and cultural inspiration, and it supports all systems of life on Earth. Simply put, biodiversity is the living fabric of our planet, one which underpins human wellbeing in the present and in the future, and its rapid decline threatens nature and people alike.

It is for this reason that the global community is being called to re-examine our relationship with the natural world and be part of the solution to conserve biodiversity.

This year, IDB is celebrated under the theme, "**From Agreement to Action: Build Back Biodiversity**". This theme builds on the results of COP 15 to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. With the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (agreement) readily made available, the focus must quickly shift to its implementation (action).

#### **What is the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)?**

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) contains four visionary goals (Goals A-D) for 2050 and 23 interim targets for 2030 to preserve and restore nature, protect biodiversity and prevent extinction of species.

On the long-term goals expected to be achieved by 2050, **Goal A** stipulates that the integrity, connectivity and resilience of all ecosystems should be maintained, enhanced, or restored, substantially increasing the area of natural ecosystems. In order to achieve this, it is expected that human induced extinction of known threatened species is halted.

The **Goal B** envisages the sustainable use and management of biodiversity and that nature's contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services, are valued, maintained and enhanced, with those currently in decline being restored, supporting the achievement of sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations by 2050.

In **Goal C**, the monetary and non-monetary benefits from the utilization of genetic resources, and digital sequence information on genetic resources, and of traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources, be shared fairly and equitably with indigenous people and local communities. The goal also proposes that traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources is appropriately protected, thereby contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

The last **Goal—D** expects that adequate financial resources, capacity-building, technical and scientific cooperation, and access to and transfer of technology to fully implement the GBF are secured and accessible to all Parties, especially developing countries.

## **Our seven-year target**

In seven years, we are expected amongst 23 targets to ensure at least 30 per cent of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water, coastal and marine ecosystems are under effective restoration, in order to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity and connectivity.

It is also incumbent on us as party to effectively conserve and manage at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, coastal and marine areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem function and services.

## **Is Ghana committed?**

Ghana, through its Minister for Lands and Natural Resources, Samuel Abu Jinapor, has pledged full commitment to biodiversity protection and preservation for a healthy planet but the question is, “Is our commitment reflective in our actions?”

Contradictory policy and legal frameworks are derailing needed consistent action to secure forests and biodiversity in Ghana.

We have seen the constant depletion of major biodiversity havens all in the quest to exploit the nation’s mineral wealth. As recently stated by the Forestry Commission of Ghana, close to 400,000 ha of the forest reserves have been affected, with over 4000 ha confirmed as completely destroyed—obviously threatening the biodiversity that depended on these forests.

The ‘Nicodemus’ passing of LI 2462 granting mining access to all forest reserves in Ghana in principle, a month before a delegation left Ghana to participate in the CBD COP 15 in Montreal is scandalous, inimical to sustainable forest and biodiversity conservation and above all lacks intergenerational considerations. This is nail in the coffin for our forests and biodiversity in Ghana.

The state of our waterbodies, which contain edible and endemic species, is deteriorating rapidly. We are consistently recording the loss of aquatic species due to irresponsible mining and lack of proper management in and around our rivers.

Our Ramsar Sites are quickly becoming a sorry sight to behold due to illegal development. Currently, the Sakumo Ramsar Site looks nothing like we purposed it to be. If care is not taken, it may soon be removed from the list of international Ramsar Sites.

## **Action now!**

As we reflect on the theme for IDB, we take this opportunity to share some invaluable policy interventions that are crucial to securing what is left of our Biodiversity.

- The Ministry of Lands must **REVOKE** licences already given out for mining purposes in **Forest Reserves** and other **protected areas** and ensure no further exploitations in these areas. This will go a long way in preserving the sanctity of our forests which serve as homes to many of our fauna and flora.
- Parliament must take steps to **AMEND or even better REPEAL LI 2462** as it was passed without stakeholder consultations and contrary to the guidelines on mining in production forest reserves which had been in existence since 2001.
- We have over the years consistently asked that the Atewa Forest be designated as a National Park. The forest is a crown jewel of biodiversity and is home to more than 1,000 species of plants, 230 species of birds, 570 butterfly species, and at least 50 species of mammals. It is a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA), meaning, it is critical to the persistence of global biodiversity and the overall health of the planet.

- Strengthen monitoring and enforcement of Protected Forest Reserves, Ramsar Sites, and other protected areas to stop mining, illegal logging, illegal farming, poaching, and other damaging activities.
- Restore all lost mangrove forests and build communities' capacity for their sustainable use and management.
- Protect green spaces and trees in urban areas and reverse the degazetting of part of the Achimota Forest Reserve. It serves as habitat for urban biodiversity, providing invaluable wellbeing services to people in Accra.
- Train farmers to use natural methods of pest control to minimise use of chemical pesticides that are so damaging to biodiversity, especially bees and other insect pollinator species.

**For businesses** we encourage them to:

- Take steps to preserve and create spaces for wildlife while endorsing environmental causes. Companies can consider the supply and distribution of binoculars to replace catapults used by kids in rural areas to kills birds.
- Source raw materials from local and deforestation free producers.
- Choose business partners that share your sustainable goals and raise awareness of biodiversity conservation.

**For Individuals**

We encourage individuals to be active in the protection and conservation of biodiversity in the following ways;

- Do not patronize species that are endangered and protected under law e.g. Pangolins
- Take action against plastic pollution
- Reconnect with nature and biodiversity.

Thank you.

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For further Information

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