

## Statement by Astrid Schomaker Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity International Human Rights Day 10 December 2024

Theme: Our rights, Our future, Right Now

Today we celebrate the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a pillar of international human rights law. This Declaration remains our common foundation for preserving and promoting human dignity and fundamental freedoms.

International Human Rights Day reminds us of the importance of human rights in building more just, prosperous and equitable societies.

Human rights and the environment are intrinsically intertwined. Global species loss and degrading ecosystems are among the primary threats to food security, human health and livelihoods, undermining global peace and stability.

To respond to these crises, we must establish solid and coherent standards that reflect a diversity of visions, including those of indigenous peoples and local communities, women and youth. Though these groups play a crucial role in the conservation of biodiversity, they are often and disproportionally the most affected by their human rights violations.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) calls for a human rights-based approach to guide its implementation. The Framework acknowledges the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and its implementation will contribute to the fulfilment of that right.

The KMGBF calls for all to respect the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, including their rights over their traditional knowledge, lands, territories and resources.

It also promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as well as intergenerational equity. The Framework calls for access to justice and information related to biodiversity, participation of indigenous peoples and local communities, women and girls, children and youth, and persons with disabilities in decision-making. It aims to ensure the full protection of human rights defenders.

The recent decisions adopted at COP16 in Cali reflect a strong commitment towards promoting human rights within the context of the implementation of the KMGBF.

The establishment of the Subsidiary Body on Article 8 (j) and other provisions of the Convention marks a decisive step towards elevating the role of indigenous peoples and local communities and rights in relation to the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention.

The new Programme of Work on Article 8(j) and other provisions of the Convention related to indigenous peoples and local communities is founded on a human rights-based approach. The new programme of work includes specific tasks such as developing guidelines to enhance the contributions of indigenous peoples







and local communities in conservation, supporting and securing land tenure including traditional land tenure and developing guidelines on the implementation of Target 22 of the KMGBF.

Just like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the treaties that stem from it, we must build on these advancements to further strengthen the central role that human rights play in our collective efforts towards halting biodiversity loss.

Together, we can and must make human rights a tangible reality grounded in dignity and justice. Human rights must be the driving force that transforms our aspirations into concrete actions, making this world a better place for everyone.