



**Statement by Astrid Schomaker, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity on
International Mountain Day (11 December)**

“Mountain solutions for a sustainable future – innovation, adaptation and youth”

Mountains cover one-quarter of Earth’s surface and host many global biological diversity hotspots. Half of the world’s population depends on them for water, energy and other critical ecosystem services. Recognizing the unique value of mountain ecosystems, Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) have established a Programme of work on mountain biodiversity. The activities it includes are articulated around the protection of crucial mountain ecosystem services, including supporting genetic and cultural diversity, as well as the livelihoods of highland and lowland communities.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) supports the restoration, protection and sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, including mountains. Climate change is driving biodiversity loss on the world’s peaks and upsetting their natural equilibrium. Mountains are warming up more quickly than other terrestrial ecosystems, causing their vulnerability to spike. The loss of glaciers is pushing species to migrate to higher altitude habitats, thus affecting mountain-dwelling communities.

Set against the background of the Farallones mountain range, discussions at CBD COP 16 in Cali resulted in the adoption of two landmark decisions that can help deliver progress on mountain biodiversity. One addresses the linkages between climate change and biodiversity loss. It urges action to integrate nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches in national policies and plans. The other decision established the permanent subsidiary body on Article 8(j) of the Convention, which will elevate indigenous voices and make them part of the institutional functioning of the CBD.

Under the leadership of the Colombian Presidency, COP 16 also served as a stage for the [dialogue between global and regional mountain platforms](#) in a bid to develop a joint agenda and strengthen linkages between biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation in mountain-ecosystem settings. The dialogue is set to continue before culminating with the observance of the International Year on Glacier’s Preservation in 2025.

Biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in mountains will remain high on the global biodiversity agenda. COP17 of the CBD in Yerevan will see the first global stocktake of the KMGBF which will assess collective progress against the 23 targets. Halting and reversing biodiversity loss may be as arduous as climbing, but—as mountaineers would attest-- reaching the summit is worth the effort. Taking over from the Colombian Andes, the majestic snow-capped peaks watching over Yerevan will serve as the perfect natural backdrop to the world’s 2026 United Nations Biodiversity Summit.