

Statement of NGOs on Conservation of Biological Diversity and Protection of Soils.

Thank you Mr / Madam Co-Chair, Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates,

My name is Cicilia W. Githaiga from Natural Justice. I am delivering this statement on behalf of several NGOs present here with regard to item C of the Secretary General's report addressing conservation of biological diversity and protection of soils.

Of the 85,000 species listed by the IUCN, more than 24,000 are in danger, including lions, rhinos and giraffes, whose numbers have fallen by nearly 40% over the last 40 years. 70% of wildlife has been wiped out since 1970 and collectively, 32% of mammals reptiles amphibians, birds and fish are in decline.

Granted, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is the central multilateral instrument for the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of utilization of genetic resources. A key component that needs to be in this section is the fact that there several protocols responsible for implementation of different aspects of the CBD. They include the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and its Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress, the Nagoya Protocol on access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilization and the ongoing discussions and work on synthetic biology (Ref: CBD/COP/DEC/14/19) and, digital sequence of information on genetic resources (Ref: CBD/COP/DEC/14/20). All these legal instruments have commonalities and have areas where they differ and that is why they address separate matters under the CBD.

Similarly, several NGOs here would like due recognition to be given to the interconnectedness among global environmental systems and the potential of failure in one to affect the others with the resultant collapse of global environmental systems. We emphasize that this very interconnectedness is the reason that we must, with urgency, achieve coordination of environmental legal regimes and processes in a manner that creates harmony that is not only consistent with, but is also necessary for achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It is reported in the UN's Global Land Outlook (GLO) report that a third of the planet's land is severely degraded and fertile soil is being lost at the rate of 24 billion tonnes a year. Further, we note that the report of the Secretary General has at paragraph 48 acknowledged the lack of legally binding instruments on conservation, improvement and rehabilitation of soil. The GLO identifies activities that have led to the degradation of soil, including agricultural practices. We must therefore as of necessity re-examine the very basis of the existence of our fauna and flora and human life and put in place appropriate legally binding mechanisms for conservation, improvement and rehabilitation of soil.

We have an urgent responsibility to take action to reverse the loss of biodiversity by dealing with the fragmentation and governance gaps in the international law regimes such as the silos between the CBD, UNFCCC and the UNCCD and, lack of synergy among many other biodiversity related instruments such as the ITPGRFA, CITES, CMS and the RAMSAR

Convention. We also have the responsibility to deal with lack of political will and resources, and support monitoring and implementation through this platform.

Member states should take advantage of this timely opportunity presented by **this Ad-hoc Working Group to :**

- Deepen and broaden approaches to global environmental protection, with the inclusion of **new perspectives** from non-environmental sectors, for example those related to **human health, migration and human mobility, human rights, finance and cities**.
- Include new and emerging principles and concepts such as just transition, sustainable production and consumption, rights of future generations and indigenous people and local communities, etc.
- Include a commitment by all Member States and all stakeholders to the **right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment**, building on the two existing United Nations international human rights covenants, but also insisting on full implementation.
- Ensure strong, implementable, measurable and universally applicable measures to ensure **effective compliance with international environmental laws**, including civil, criminal and administrative enforcement, dispute resolution, as well as duties for State responsibility to protect the global biodiversity as part of the Global commons for present and future generations.

It is therefore strongly recommended that in view of the urgencies to act and to protect biodiversity ecosystems, member states ought to cooperate to develop a road map on how to reach a legally binding Global Pact for the environment.

Thank you for the floor.