

**Elizabeth Maruma Mrema**  
Executive Secretary  
Convention on Biological Diversity

**António Guterres**  
Secretary-General  
United Nations

01 December 2022

Dear Mrs. Maruma and Mr. Guterres,

Leading up to the 15th Conference of Parties (CoP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity, we wish to deliver an urgent call to world leaders on behalf of more than 40 Award winning conservationist from around the world dedicated to grassroots conservation work.

As researchers and conservation practitioners, we are concerned about the increasing habitat loss and declining rates of many species/populations due to the systemic failure of global conventions and Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs) in accomplishing conservation goals.

Nature conservation is a matter of urgency. Governments around the world continue to prioritize ecologically unsustainable development, often choosing to dilute or change current environment/wildlife laws to expedite economic growth, thereby becoming a direct threat to the sustainability of conservation initiatives and biodiversity conservation at large.

We have vast experience in developing grassroots initiatives that positively and effectively contribute to behavior changes that improve habitat and biodiversity conservation. These successful bottom-up strategies are still underrepresented and underestimated by international organizations and governments that continue to spend most of their efforts and resources on implementing top-down strategies with limited connection to an understanding of local realities.

Sustainable and effective conservation requires a systemic change in how we perceive and utilize our home planet and its natural heritage. World leaders can, and must, act as catalysts to bring about a holistic, societal approach that strives to prioritize long-term ecological sustainability of the planet.

We believe that decision-makers urgently need to recognize the many successful local initiatives whose positive impacts can be scaled up with joint efforts from international organizations and national governments. Our appeal is to support and empower grassroots approaches to effectively ensure nature conservation through sound commitments and implementation at national, international, and global scales. The inherent paradigm needs to be shifted to achieve a co-design or horizontal approach involving indigenous peoples and local communities to ensure nature conservation from local to global and vice-versa.

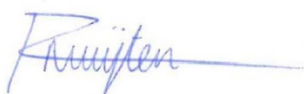
All the undersigned are united by winning the Future For Nature Award for their work on different species/habitats. We face the same common challenges all around the world and feel the inherent drive to step up and speak out by delivering the attached statement to the CBD CoP15. It states the problems we face in our daily work, the various solutions we implement locally, and makes an urgent call to the CBD Parties to include these and similar initiatives in global agreements and strategies.

We would appreciate it very much if you could submit the attached Statement for consideration at CBD CoP15 and we look forward to follow the process of the meeting with good faith that the integration of grassroots initiatives that are a critical part of the solution will be achieved.

Looking forward to your positive reply, we would like to thank you for your kind attention.

Sincerely,

On behalf of the Award Winning signatories,



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