

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY SYMPOSIUM ORGANISED BY THE GREEN INSTITUTE

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MS DINAH AWINO: Post Graduate Researcher, Kenyatta University, Kenya.

DR. SUSAN GARDNER: Director, Ecosystems Division, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

Dr. SUSAN GARDNER: BIODIVERSITY CONVERSATION AND PROTECTION

Dr. Susan Gardner: Happy world environment day. Thank you so much. It's a pleasure to speak on this world environment day, and I really do want to congratulate you for this vision and this ambition and pulling together this conference. You're covering so many excellent topics in such a holistic manner. It's really great. As you know, I think that world environment day has been led by UNEP since 1973 and it's such a great opportunity to drive Global action for our planet. Right now is particularly a good opportunity to be speaking on biodiversity conservation and protection. So thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to share some remarks. Just last December that caught 15 of the convention on biological diversity, there was over 180 countries that came together in Montreal to adopt the combining Montreal, Global biodiversity framework and this was such a major milestone in the international efforts to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity. So what I like to do for the time that I have with my remarks is to start by talking about why we should all care about global biodiversity than Framework? Because right now the stakes could not be higher. Now I'm not sure if you have my slides or not. I'm going to pause here for a second.

Okay, if you give me one second, I'm going to need to share my slides. Is that okay?

I am going to continue assuming you can see my slides. So the so we'll start by talking about this major milestone. In terms of the combining Montreal, global biodiversity frame work and why biodiversity matters. There is at least one million plants and animals species that are currently threatened with an extinction and this matters for all of us because loss of biodiversity results in the loss of valuable services that healthy ecosystems can provide when you think about, for example, the value of forest it not just the surprising word it not the just trees that can be sold as a commodity but rather it is the full in value services that enforce ecosystem provides and this includes clean air, it includes capturing carbon, Crop protection, Pollination and stabilizing temperature. You know I can give you an example of just thinking about the Congo basin which span 6 countries and provide critical harbor tap for endangered species. It also provides food, water, Shelter and Medicine for 75 million people. In addition it's the world's largest crop carbon sink so t has a massive important in terms of preventing global climate change. But meanwhile, every day the transpiration from the massive tree actually contribute to rain fall in the sahel in the horn of Africa so therefore the health of the Congo basin and the decision to protect the forest literally determine the survival of people of Ethiopia and Somalia thousands of kilometer away. So my message here biodiversity matters globally for all of us, for people, for community and for planet. And now I can give some concrete example. For example biodiversity is essential for our foods. Our foods system deeply is dependent on nature for ecosystem services if that like soil quality, irrigation, Pest control and pollination. Pollinators are responsible for 87% of the leading food crops worldwide and yet our global food systems are the primary drivers of biodiversity loss. They threatened 86% of species that are at risk of extinction.

Similarly biodiversity also secures our health Studies have shown that exposure to Nature. Reduces blood pressure and relieves stress levels. It actually enhances children's cognitive development when they have time and nature. The science is also clear that destroying ecosystems and the barriers that they provide between wildlife and human population increases the risk of zoonotic diseases. And therefore, the next pandemic by enabling viruses to jump from animals to humans. Another example is that there's an estimated four billion people, which is half the global population that rely on natural medicines as part of their primary source of healthcare so biodiversity is essential for health. And it's essentially, the foundation of our economies more than

half of the global GDP, is either moderately or highly dependent on nature and its services. And more than 70% of people who live in poverty or dependent on nature for their livelihoods. This includes things like agriculture, fisheries and Timber.

There's a growing awareness of these links more and more. The world economic forum's, Global risk report tracks. The perception among risk experts and various World Business Leaders who just last year said that biodiversity loss ranks among the top three Global risks to society along with extreme weather events and failing to act on climate. So now That we've talked about why biodiversity is important. Let's talk a little bit about the key drivers of biodiversity loss. According to the International Panel on biodiversity and ecosystem Services, the direct drivers of biodiversity loss with the largest global impact are these on the slides. It's changes in land and sea use so that for example, is deforestation for livestock or grazing or destroying coral, reefs for aquaculture, it's the direct exploitation of organisms when the Harvest rate is more than What nature is able to regenerate? Then we see the over-exploitation. So for example, overfishing or trafficking of endangered Wildlife, its climate change and pollution. Now ecosystems have an extraordinary capability of being able absorb excess nutrients as well as our excess carbon, but these processes are overwhelmed when we use nature, as or Dumping Ground for toxic emissions or massive amounts of plastic pollution, and finally invasive species, especially species. That once they're introduced to an area, they're able to out-compete or become predators of native species. These drivers are all exacerbated by the underlying human behaviors and consumption patterns. Our chainsaws, our nets are plows that destroy ecosystems and biodiversity are powered by our diets are consumption and production patterns or financial systems are systemic inequities and biodiversity can only be conserved and sustainably used and restored by addressing these underlying drivers. So, let's go back to today and the theme of this year's World environment day on, beat plastic pollution because it's a real reminder that people's action matters. Now, the global biodiversity framework Target 7 includes reducing negative impacts of pollution Floating working towards eliminating plastic pollution. Currently there's an estimated 11 million tons of plastic waste that flow into the ocean, every year. Today almost half the group's, almost every species actually or species group in the ocean and counters plastic pollution at some point, half of the world's endangered sea turtles have ingested plastic because they mistake it for food, 90% of sea turtles have been reported to have Plastics in their stomach. So to truly beat, Pollution, we need transformational change.

And that means we need whole government and whole society approaches. And the global biodiversity framework is the roadmap to achieve this, it recognizes that to address the drivers of biodiversity loss, we need to accelerate action across sectors and across Society. This decision, this Global biodiversity framework decision established. This roadmap to ensure that biodiversity is valued conserved and restored and wisely used by 2050. It lays out Reaction oriented targets. Describing what we need to do this decade before 2030 in order to be able to achieve this vision and these include 30% conservation of land and sea. 30 percent restoration of degraded ecosystems reducing by half the introduction of invasive, species of nutrient, pollution a pesticide and hazardous chemicals and reducing harmful subsidies by at least five hundred billion dollars a year which can then be invested instead to scale up positive incentives. That actually protects biodiversity now. Yes, this is a lot. There's a lot of work to be done. So now we all need to roll up our sleeves.

There's many things we know we need to do, but what I'd like to do is highlight five key issues. Starting with the global biodiversity framework Target 10 calls to ensure that areas under agriculture, aquaculture and Fisheries are managed sustainably. And to do this, we need a food system transformation. Food production is responsible for about 60% of the global biodiversity loss. So we need to start farming in more nature, friendly, biodiversity, supportive ways, UNEP supports countries to develop, agro-ecological, approaches that work with nature to support genetically diverse crop species, and livestock, and soil microbes, which contributes to improving the long-term productivity, Resilience and ultimately to food security. Second, we need to move away from a linear model where we just take and then make we use it. And then we disposed to something that's more of a circular approach that continually reuses products and materials.

Research has shown that a comprehensive circular Shifts in financing. What will biodiversity Target? 19 calls for increasing the levels of financial resources from all sources, that's domestic, International public, private, all resources to be able to mobilize at least 200 billion per year by 2030. But we know by 2030 investments in nature based Solutions alone will need to at least triple. If the world is to meet its climate change, biodiversity

and land degradation targets. And number four, we need to promote quality as well as quantity in our conservation efforts and this can only be done when everyone can participate in. Everyone has ownership and GBF Target 13 envisions that by 2030. We will have ensured the fair and equitable sharing of benefits that arise from the use of genetic resources, and traditional knowledge. Target 2022 actually calls for inclusive and gender-responsive participation in decision-making. So this means ensuring gender equal rights and access to land and natural resources. It's full protection of environmental human rights Defenders; it's safeguarding and empowering the leadership of indigenous peoples and local communities in order to incorporate the traditional knowledge that has been distilled over me. Millennia through their direct connection with nature.

And the fifth area we need to not only conserve and sustainably manage what we have. But also restore what we've lost. The UN decade on ecosystem restoration, is a true call to action. This has been led by UNEP and FAO. This decade aims to prevent Halt and reverse degradation of ecosystems on every continent. And in every ocean, because we know that restoration works. For example, one of the ten UN decade flagships is an initiative that's rejuvenating and protecting part of the two countries, Basin, by removing plastic, pollution returning, vegetation promoting sustainable farming and it's already seen 1,500 kilometers of river restored. Its Reviving Wildlife species, including things like river, dolphin, and soft-shell turtles others. It's real proof that we can heal our relationship with nature and there are so many other great examples from around the world. If we invest in nature based Solutions, that's our forests. Our grasslands include mangroves estuaries sea grasses and coral reefs, when we protect their ability to retain Nature's biodiversity, then in turn, they actually protect and provide for us in our communities.

So in conclusion, these next seven years represents an unparalleled opportunity to advance biodiversity conservation. It's really critical that we get this right. It depends on each and every one of us GBF Target 16 calls for improving education and access to information so that people are able to make sustainable consumption choices. So that we can all choose. What industries do you want to support based on the environmental future that you want? We can choose how we consume and throw away and for those who live in areas with food security, Must make sustainable dietary choices, including demanding sustainable food packaging. We together can raise our voices for others to join in making a real impact. We can do this because we have to the future of humanity depends on our Collective efforts, and we all have a role to play. Thank you.

Ms Dinah Awino: Thank you so much. Amazing Dr. Susan, and we are so honored to have your in this world environment day. So, we just have a few questions. I'll just go very quickly. Can you provide a examples of marine lead to issues of the efforts, undertaken, by UNEP to combat them. I know you talked about them but maybe just highlight in a minute. Let me also add check the comments as well. Thank you, go ahead.

Dr. Susan: Well, yes certainly I'll say one really clear example is that UNEP serves as the Secretariat to the Inc., the negotiating committee that just met Last week in Paris to discuss how to end plastic pollution. This meeting was a result of a historic resolution that was adopted last year at the UN environment assembly right here in Nairobi. And it calls for negotiating an international legally binding instrument to address the full lifecycle plastics, its perfect part of the theme of be plastic pollution. This is exactly the type of comprehensive approach that we need to beat plastic pollution.

We do a lot of Important work in terms of supporting member states for Effective policy decision by giving them the science whether that's through our assessments are reports that provide information, provides Solutions and help give action to businesses and governments that want to take real concrete steps. With impact, we work through partnership. For example, hosting the global partnership on Marine litter and plastic to ensure that there's areas where everyone who As information knows how to share it, we can share experiences, best-case scenarios, great, examples of things that have worked and ensure that everybody has access to the best available science. And I'll give one more example, the UNEP and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation launched the new plastic economy, Global commitment that has over. 500 signatories of businesses, governments, and other organizations that have come together with a common vision. For circular economy for Classics, this kind of work together with leading on programs, like the UNEP type Turner's, which is something that actually helps engage young people to become activists to get involved to work across one platform. This is the kind of thing that unep has done a lot of to bring voices together in terms of any plastic pollution.

Ms Dinah Awino: Thank you so much for those tips. I have the second question, which is as a parting message. What would you like to convey to the world regarding the importance of environmental sustainability and fighting plastic pollution?

Dr. Susan: Well, I'm glad to be able to have the opportunity to sort of the overarching message and this year's theme of plastic pollution. It really does remind us that we all have a role to play. As informed consumers, it's important to know the environmental costs of the different alternatives that are available to you so that we can avoid making the wrong decisions. We can avoid using single-use plastic, for example, that would have a significant impact on demand signals from markets. We can make real efforts to refuse plastic to reuse and recycle. We can speak up about the importance of protecting nature of Biodiversity or get involved and restoration efforts so you know look at the ecosystems around you and see what you can do to try to help with healing whether that's cleaning up a beach or a local park or a community Forest, everybody can do something and I won't environment day I think is a good time to remember that we all have a role and we all have a responsibility to leave the environment better for the next generation.

Ms Dinah Awino: Thank you so much just last one Charles is asking how can we ensure gender inequality and inclusivity in the field of biodiversity conservation? Why is it important to have diverse perspectives in tackling the challenges faced by our ecosystems just respond to that question?

Dr. Susan: Thank you. So, very good question and really important question to me, first of all, Why would anyone want to try to Fat, try to tackle Global problem using only half of your resources half of your people? And so telling half of them, they can stay home. So we need everybody. We need everybody. And so when you have policies or laws or Frameworks that aren't inclusive, then you're leaving part of your strength out of the process. And we know that women are major Agents for change, they are essential for a lot of our food production, whether that's Fisheries or Agriculture and so they can be there on the ground, ensuring that the change happens and in too many places where women don't have access to be empowered stewards of the environment, either through lack of Rights and ownership of land or opportunities to engage. Then you lose your voices and you lose their power and you lose the ability to have the best Solutions, actually taking hold. So it's a fantastic question and enormously important, it's clearly articulated as one of the Targets in the global biodiversity framework as something that's essential for ensuring that we have that. We meet our full vision for Global. Biodiversity

Ms Dinah Awino: Thank you so much for the answer and lastly, what does officially green mean to you. This is the theme of the green Institute and maybe you could say something as a Parting Shot. Thank you so much.

Dr. Susan: Thank you. It's important to think about for all of us. What is officially green mean to all of us to me? It's about understanding your environmental footprint. It's about recognizing the impact of your personal existence. My personal existence in the World, my behavior, the choices that each one of us make when we have option and it's about the efforts that we make to leave the planet better for the next Generation. I think, for all of us, being officially green is about caring and understanding how the world is influenced by the cumulative impact of all the decisions that we make throughout our lifetime. And some of those will be positive. And some of those will be negative. There's an African proverb that says that the Earth is a treasure that we hold in, trust the Next Generation and future Generations after that. So to me being officially green means authentically. Caring about whether your actions have a net positive or negative effect on the world that we leave behind for Generations. Thank you for the opportunity to share these Reflections.

Ms Dinah Awino: Thank you so much. It's a lot of admiration.