



Government of Samoa

PACIFIC PREPARATORY MEETING OF THE 16TH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD Pre-COP16)

9 – 14 September 2024, at 9am, Pacific Climate Change Centre (PCCC) at SPREP

Welcoming Remarks

Hon. Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Lands

Director General of SPREP,
Permanent Secretary, Directors and CEOs,
Senior Government Officials,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Talofa lava and warm greetings to you all.

It is my honour to welcome you to Samoa for the Pacific Preparatory Meeting for the 16th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD Pre-COP16). As one of the Ministers from the Pacific that attended COP15 and witnessed the passing of the landmark Kuming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, I look forward to how far we've come, and what can be done at COP 16 to accelerate its implementation.

The Pacific region is home to some of the most diverse and unique ecosystems in the world. From the coral reefs to the rainforests, these ecosystems are not only vital for the survival of countless plant and animal species, but more importantly for the livelihoods and well-being of our people and cultures.

The theme for COP16 is "**Peace with Nature**" and is viewed as the "**first implementation COP**". This highlights the need for us to adopt a long-term

perspective and consider the interconnections between economic development, social equity, and environmental sustainability.

At COP 16, Governments will be tasked with:

- reviewing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework implementation status.
- showing the alignment of their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) with the Framework.
- further developing the monitoring framework and advance resource mobilization for the Global Biodiversity Framework.
- and to finalize and operationalize the multilateral mechanism on the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources.

I see from your meeting agenda that these along other wider issues of concern to the region will be discussed and positions developed for our Pacific region. For this I congratulate the organisers and look forward to the outcomes from this preparatory meeting.

Personally, I would like to see the push for immediate actions on the GBF targets:

- Target 2: Effective conservation and management of at least 30% of the world's lands, inland waters, coastal areas and oceans
- Target 3: restoration completed or underway on at least 30% of degraded terrestrial, inland waters, and coastal and marine ecosystems
- Target 18: Progressively phase out or reform by 2030 subsidies that harm biodiversity by at least \$500 billion per year, while scaling up positive incentives for biodiversity's conservation and sustainable use
- Target 19: Mobilize by 2030 at least \$200 billion per year in domestic and international biodiversity-related funding from all sources – public and private
- *Raise international financial flows from developed to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States, and countries with economies in transition, to at least US\$ 20 billion per year by 2025, and to at least US\$ 30 billion per year by 2030*

Why? Because we have done most of the planning but are lacking fit for purpose technical and financial resources to implement these plans.

I am especially interested to learn how the countries of our region have implemented the GBF and made the NBSAP alignment. I tried looking on the CBD website for which countries have done so, and it appears that only Vanuatu has done the alignment. If this is wrong, let me congratulate the other countries along with Vanuatu that have done so. But it poses an important question, of why is it not happening quick enough for us when we advocated for this in the GBF, and what can be done at COP 16 to enable the countries to fulfil these obligations.

I hope for stronger involvement of our regions Bureau members to the COP and SBSTTA in the meeting, informing us of how to best engage. So hopefully, the agenda does allow for more opportunity to engage with Fiji as our COP and Marshall Islands as our SBSTTA Bureau members.

Another under-utilized opportunity that warrants engagement at COP 16 is forging alliances and partnerships with various groups, especially private sector and philanthropic groups. Attending the COP plenary alone, is missing out on many opportunities that can accelerate your countries actions, as there are numerous groups with technical and financial resources attending as well. So make time to listen and if suitable join some of these programs and groupings. My experience from the last COP 15, is that so much funding and opportunities were left on the table because our countries were not engaged in some of these discussions.

It is critical that we do not just turn up at meetings and push for decisions that are supposedly to benefit our countries, but do not seriously do something at home. Let us stop using the global meetings as junkets, but make sure you take something back that you and your country can immediately implement, and ones that will make a difference in the future.

During this meeting, you will have the opportunity to consolidate our efforts, share our experiences, and strengthen our collaborations. It is also a chance to build the capacity of the new negotiators, ensuring that they are well-prepared to represent your country and the Pacific with confidence at COP16.

As one of the organisers and facilitators for the initial CBD Pacific Pre-COP meetings, it is comforting to see this forum growing in its importance.

I extend my gratitude to all the delegates, experts, and partners who have travelled from near and far including those who are connecting virtually to be part of this important event. Your dedication and expertise are invaluable.

The decisions we make today will determine the fate of our planet and its natural resources for generations to come. Let us rise to the challenge and demonstrate our commitment to protecting the biodiversity of the Pacific and ensuring a better future for all.

I wish you all a productive and inspiring meeting.

God bless and Soifua ma ia manuia le fonotaga