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ESG UQAM

## **Event Report**

# **30 Years of Biodiversity: A Legacy from Rio to Future Generations**

**June 15-16, 2022**

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## Foreword

The year 2022 marks the 30th anniversary of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and the adoption of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). To mark the halfway point of the goals up to 2050, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD) and the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Montreal present the event: *30 Years of Biodiversity: A Legacy from Rio to Future Generations*.

The event, which took place on June 15 and 16, 2022, brought together a host of experts, dignitaries and students united in a reflection on the protection of biodiversity. The purpose of this research notebook is to record for posterity these exchanges and the reflections stimulated by these enriching days of discussion.

The report will begin with a summary of the opening cocktail, where we were fortunate to welcome Dr. Sangdo Kim, Consul General of the Republic of Korea in Montreal, the Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change of the Government of Canada, and Ms. Nadine Girault, Minister of International Relations and La Francophonie of the Government of Quebec. This will be followed by a summary of the June 16 conference, which begins with opening remarks from Dr. Kim and Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Executive Secretary of the SCDB. This is followed by a compendium of two roundtables, one on the history and achievements of the CBD and the second on the future of the Convention and the objectives for 2050. The research notebook will conclude with a speech by Ms. Marie-Christine Bellemare, President of the Association des biologistes du Québec, as well as a closing address by Ms. Corinne Gendron, Professor in the Department of Strategy, Social and Environmental Responsibility at ESG UQAM.

## **Our Biological Diversity: What Assessment for what Commitments?**

Towards a New Era of Biodiversity Protection

*When the Convention on Biological Diversity was adopted, hopes were high; the targets that participants had managed to negotiate were greeted with a great deal of joy. But since then, year after year, reports show that the desired results have not been achieved. Of course, the situation would have been worse had the Convention not been adopted. But can we be satisfied with such a meager record? What should we do in the face of this failure, given the ambitions behind the Convention?*

*We must answer these questions because, as the convention's executive secretary, Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, has said, we cannot afford to fail. So how do we do it, and where do we start?*

*First, we must stop certain behaviors: dumping contaminants, eliminating habitats, overexploiting resources... which begins with chasing the waste inherent in our overproduction, but also by making better investment choices. We must urgently stop financing our own loss: fossil fuels, the alteration of natural environments, the destruction of wetlands, the contamination of natural habitats. Before even trying to finance the restoration of ecosystems, let's start by stopping financing our destruction.*

*We must also change our regulatory approach. Soft law and voluntary approaches are clearly not enough and must give way to legal regimes commensurate with the challenges and threats we face. Even if a jurisprudence of the Earth is developing today, the legal framework for environmental protection remains too fragmented in relation to the realities it concerns: oceans, atmosphere, fauna, flora... The environment cannot be*

*apprehended in fragments, and the connectivity of the natural web must be restored.*

*Emblematic of a new generation of texts, more global, the Convention on Biological Diversity certainly embraces the problem in a holistic way, which is unavoidable when talking about biodiversity or the environment. But this is not enough to overcome the fragmentation of the legal regime of environmental protection, and especially the split that exists between this legal regime and economic rules. Indeed, our environmental protection frameworks do not take into account economic realities, and our major economic principles do not take into account the functioning of ecosystems. How can we integrate ecological imperatives into the structure of our economies?*

*Even if it is initially fuelled by science, every round of negotiations involves political agreements; how can we ensure that the necessary political consensus does not hinder firm commitments to biodiversity? How can we ensure that through these negotiations, our ambitions remain intact and that biodiversity is preserved? How can we use democracy to respond to ecological imperatives, rather than relegating them to economic priorities?*

*A paradigm shift is needed, based on the participation of all social actors, including youth and indigenous peoples, but more generally all citizens. In this respect, citizen science seems to be a promising avenue: not only does it allow for the collection of fine data on a very large scale, but it also promotes knowledge and stimulates commitment to environmental protection. Knowledge is developed through action, because people learn best when they feel concerned and involved.*

*But action on biodiversity must also take social justice into account: it is up to the most affluent to finance the protection of the environment, knowing that they are not the ones who will suffer the most from the consequences of its degradation. A commitment to biodiversity cannot be made without a commitment to social justice. In this regard, the international environmental cooperation between Mexico and the United States, and more specifically the initiatives regarding the protection of the Monarch butterfly, can inspire other partnerships.*

*Among those partnerships, action on biodiversity challenges the finance sector, as initiatives will not work without its input. Even if it is seen primarily as a tool for enrichment, finance is first and foremost a means to an end. As Marie-Christine Bellemare, President of the Association des biologistes du Québec, reminds us, biodiversity is not just another budget to be planned, it is a project to be financed. We must invest massively in projects to maintain and restore biodiversity, but also start by stopping financing the destruction of our environment.*

*May images like these intertwined giraffes lying in northern Kenya, captured by photojournalist Ed Ram, inspire a strong action plan to slow the alarming rate of species extinction we are currently witnessing. And that through the COP15 discussions, partnerships can be forged to implement a new approach. The earth should not be a big city dotted with gardens, but an infinite nature welcoming islands of benevolent humanity.*

- Ms. Corinne Gendron

June 15, 2022



## **Opening Cocktail**

To open this celebration of the 30th anniversary of the CBD, a cocktail was organized at the Montreal Biosphere on June 15, 2022. This event brought together the organizers of the event, namely: the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Montreal and the SCBD, as well as the event's main partners: Espace pour la vie Montréal, Fonds de recherche du Québec, David Suzuki Foundation, Ernst and Young, Ville de Montréal, Desjardins, ESG UQAM, Chercheur.e.s en responsabilité sociale et développement durable de l'ESG UQAM, Institut d'études internationales de Montréal de l'UQAM, Institut des sciences de l'environnement de l'UQAM, Faculté des sciences humaines de l'UQAM. At the invitation of Dr. Kim, several guests gathered to hear speeches by Minister Guilbeault and Minister Girault.

### **Introduction by Ms. Corinne Gendron**

*Professor, Department of Strategy, Social and Environmental Responsibility, School of Management Sciences (ESG), Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)*

The cocktail started with a welcome address by Ms. Gendron. Her speech opened with a thank you to the main partners of the event, the organizers (Consul Jae-Woo Kim and the candidates for the Master's degree in Social and Environmental Responsibility at ESG UQAM, Sébastien Côté, Élisabeth Durand and Pierre-Luc Fortier), the college of young generations (Lilly De Cotret, Sara Jacques and Rémy Billette from CEGEP de Maisonneuve, as well as Sara Maourouri, Sara Roux from ISE UQAM, and Zeynep Torun from ESG UQAM), as well as all the guests. Ms. Gendron emphasized that the event is part of the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the CBD. She went on to give a brief overview of the current state of biological diversity, marked in particular by an acceleration in the rate of species extinctions. She went on to

emphasize that the purpose of the two-day celebration was to bring together and engage representatives from the policy sector, research, activism and youth to reflect on the future of the Convention. Before closing her speech with an introduction of Dr. Kim, Ms. Gendron reminded us that the socio-ecological challenges we face require commitment and transformation at both the individual and institutional levels.

### **Welcome Address by Dr. Sangdo Kim**

*Consul General and Ambassador, Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Montreal*

*I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Minister Guilbeault. It is a special honour for me to welcome you to the first event that the Korean Consulate General has organized in Montreal since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

*I would especially like to thank Espace pour la vie and the FRQ for their support of this evening's cocktail. I would also like to acknowledge the excellent organization of the reception by Professor Corinne Gendron and her team.*

*Thirty years ago, we accomplished a very significant feat in our efforts to conserve nature by establishing the Convention on Biological Diversity at the Rio Summit. It is therefore my great pleasure to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the CBD at the Biosphere, a museum renowned for its commitment to the environment.*

*Considering the events of the past two years, I view today's reception with particular gratitude. While we had to stand apart from each other at the onset of the pandemic, a catastrophe caused in part by the destruction of biological diversity, we are gathered here tonight to mark the CBD's achievements and its future.*

*The fact that the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework is being developed makes this anniversary even more significant. When the framework is adopted at the upcoming COP15, it will provide the guidelines for the next decade of global efforts to implement the CBD. It is unfortunate that Ms. Elizabeth Mrema cannot attend today's reception due to preparations for upcoming CBD meetings, but I would like to wish her great success in her work.*

*Apart from the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing post-2020 framework, the CBD deserves our attention as it enters a new generation.*

*Tomorrow we will learn a lot about the CBD from leading academics, government officials, CBD staff and civil society activists. I look forward to broadening and deepening our understanding of the CBD. I hope you enjoy tonight's cocktail reception before tomorrow's exciting discussions.*

**Speech by Ms. Nadine Girault**

*Minister of International Relations and La Francophonie,  
Government of Quebec*

Ms. Girault began her speech with a few words in Korean. She then greeted Dr. Kim, the main partners, the organizers of the event and all those present. Ms. Girault continued her speech by emphasizing the challenges posed by environmental degradation and the importance of protecting biological diversity. She recalled that the Government of Quebec declared itself bound to the Convention as soon as it was published and that the province hosts the Secretariat of the Convention. Ms. Girault listed various measures taken by the Government of Quebec to protect biological diversity, including the creation of several protected areas, in partnership with Indigenous communities.

## **Speech by the Honourable Steven Guilbeault**

*Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Government of Canada*

Mr. Guilbeault was introduced by Ms. Line Beauchamps, former Deputy Premier and former Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks of the Government of Quebec, who highlighted through several anecdotes the Minister's commitment to environmental protection. After greeting Dr. Sangdo Kim, the main partners, the organizers of the event and all those present, Mr. Guilbeault continued his speech by highlighting his career as an activist until he became Minister. He then spoke about the Government of Canada's commitments to protect the environment and biological diversity, and to fight climate change. Among these commitments, he highlighted the steps the federal government is taking to green our economy, including electrifying various economic activities. He highlighted as an example the replacement of the internal combustion vehicle fleet with electric vehicles. Mr. Guilbeault stated his government's commitment to curb the degradation of ecosystems by 2030 and to fully restore degraded environments by 2050. To achieve this, he stressed the importance of the federal government working with various national and international partners, including Indigenous communities.

## **Questions from the College of Future Generations**

Mr. Guilbeault's speech was followed by a series of four questions from the College of Future Generations. The first question was asked by Rémy Billette, who wanted to know if it is possible to reconcile environmental protection with economic development. Mr. Guilbeault answered that the time when the economy and the environment were in opposition to each other is over, because today, we must work to protect the environment while developing

the economy. For the minister, this dual effort is necessary to meet the challenges of our contemporary society.

The second question was asked by Lilly De Cotret. She wanted to know how the Department of the Environment and Climate Change works with other departments that may have differing priorities. Mr. Guilbeault responded that environmental protection is now a cross-cutting objective across the Government of Canada. In this sense, he pointed out that the Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, has included in the mandate letters of each federal minister the obligation to take the necessary measures, within their authority, to protect the environment and fight climate change.

The third question was posed by Sara Jacques. She asked Mr. Guilbeault what would be the best advice he would give to a young person who wanted to get involved in the fight against environmental degradation and what would he tell a younger version of himself. He answered that the most important thing is to get involved and never give up. For him, the key is to take action, regardless of the scale of that action.

The fourth and final question was posed by Zeynep Torun, who wondered how we can continue to have hope in the face of the magnitude of the ecological challenge. In response, Mr. Guilbeault stated that we cannot give up hope, reminding us that despite the complexity of the problem, we cannot afford to fail.

## **Opening Remarks**

### **Introduction by Ms. Corinne Gendron**

Ms. Gendron opened the conference by welcoming the participants and thanking the partners and the organizing committee. She then introduced Dr. Kim.

### **Welcome Address by Dr. Sangdo Kim**

Dr. Kim reminded participants that 2022 marks the 30th anniversary of the CBD and is a good time to review the achievements and future of the CBD. He noted that the Republic of Korea supports several CBD initiatives, including its forest initiative and its ocean sustainability initiative.

Dr. Kim also noted that the objective of the day is to enrich the knowledge of the CBD and to reinforce the commitments to protect biodiversity.

After his welcome address, Dr. Kim ceded the stage to Mr. Jae-woo Kim, Consul in Montreal. Mr. Kim reiterated his thanks to the organizers of the event before introducing the next speaker, Ms. Mrema.

### **Congratulatory Remarks by Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema**

*Executive Secretary, SCDB*

In her speech celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Convention, Ms. Mrema recalled the three objectives enshrined in the CBD, a treaty that recognizes the essential dimension of biodiversity for humanity. After reviewing the history, additional protocols and achievements of the CBD, she emphasized that much remains to be done and that biodiversity loss is still a reality that compels us to act more and faster. There is a roadmap and strategic plan for 2050 that calls for valuing, conserving and restoring biodiversity.

Ms. Mrema reminded the audience that the participation of all is necessary in the face of important challenges and to achieve the future we desire. We all depend on biodiversity and ecosystems that are threatened today. The solutions to be put in place to enhance, conserve and restore biodiversity are the responsibility of everyone, both locally and globally. She invited us to rethink our relationship with the oceans, to rethink the way cities must evolve and to redefine our food system. We need to start a paradigm shift in the way we consider nature and our relationship to it, according to Ms. Mrema.

Her message was imbued with the urgency to act, but also with optimism. Her call “We can’t afford to fail” was particularly memorable, delivered in a tone that was determined, calm and optimistic.

Finally, Ms. Mrema highlighted the global inequalities we have witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic and called for the consequences of biodiversity loss not to be borne by marginalized or vulnerable groups. She concluded her speech celebrating the 30th anniversary of the CBD by inviting us to roll up our sleeves and work together to live in harmony with nature.

## **Panel 1 - History and Achievements of the Convention on Biological Diversity**

Ms. Gendron welcomed the first panel of the day by returning to the essential issue of equity and indicating that efforts should not be the same between those who have the means to act and those who suffer the majority of the consequences of biodiversity loss.

Ms. Gendron then introduced the panel moderator, Ms. Janice L. Bailey.

## **Introduction by Ms. Janice L. Bailey**

*Scientific Director of the Fonds de recherche du Québec en nature et technologies (FRQNT)*

Prior to joining the FRQNT, Ms. Bailey was a professor for 25 years. She had the opportunity to work on the impacts of contaminants on polar bear reproduction. Her research has focused on males to demonstrate the subtle effects of contaminants in polar bear sperm on offspring and future generations, research that raises awareness of the lesser known impacts of contaminants on Arctic biodiversity.

Ms. Bailey informed us that FRQNT is working on a new strategic plan which now explicitly includes biodiversity. The goal is to ensure that funded research also addresses the maintenance of biodiversity. FRQNT is also playing an important role in the establishment of new international programs that value cooperation with indigenous peoples, particularly to mitigate the effects of climate change on the Arctic.

## **Presentation by Mr. David Ainsworth**

*Information Officer in the CBD/United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Secretariat*

Mr. Ainsworth has been Information Officer at the CBD/UNEP Secretariat since 2003. He outlined the history of the CBD, which opened for signature on June 5, 1992. During the first 10 years of the Convention, each country tended to work in silos, without following an established strategy at the global level. This situation changed when the first global strategic plan 2002-2010 of the Convention was adopted in The Hague in 2002. However, this strategic plan was not a success, in particular because it was too short in time, did not address the causes of the problems and lacked funding. The 2010s saw the adoption of another strategic



plan in Nagoya, targeting the period 2010-2020. The inclusion of civil society is improving, but the CBD report published in 2019 is rather pessimistic: biodiversity loss is increasing. In 2020, the Biodiversity Global Outlook 5 was published by the CBD and shows that there has been some progress, such as an increase in the proportion of the world's land and ocean designated as protected areas.

Tinged with diplomacy and mixed optimism, Mr. Ainsworth's speech outlined the progress, but also the work and risks ahead. He pointed out the risk of losing millions of species in the coming decades. He ended his speech by highlighting the change in attitude towards biodiversity in certain sectors such as finance, and the growing mobilisation of civil society and governments. He concluded that the future is unknown, but that there is hope.

### **Presentation of Ms. Sabaa Khan**

*Executive Director, Quebec and Atlantic Canada at the David Suzuki Foundation*

Ms. Khan presented the international law aspects of the CBD. She particularly highlighted the challenges of fragmentation of international environmental law and the need to adopt a holistic approach to the subject. She thus placed the struggle for biodiversity conservation in a context of legal and societal fragmentation.

The CBD was drafted as a binding legal instrument, but it functions as a soft law, Ms. Khan noted. The targets decided at the Conference of the Parties are non-binding, which limits the impacts of its decisions. However, the CBD contributes to a holistic approach to environmental governance governed by the integrity and connectivity of the living world. There is also an

emerging “Earth jurisprudence” that questions whether nature should meet human needs.

She concluded by reminding us that the fragmentation of international environmental law remains one of the greatest challenges for the preservation of our ecosystems.

### **Presentation by Ms. Lucie Robidoux**

*Head of the Ecosystems Unit at the Commission for Environmental Cooperation*

Ms. Robidoux has been in her position since 1994. Her presentation was an opportunity to speak about biodiversity from a different perspective than the other panelists. She focused her presentation specifically on animal biodiversity.

Ms. Robidoux reminded us that Montreal was the first monarch butterfly-friendly city in Canada. The city is working closely with the United States and Mexico to preserve the species' habitat. She also discussed other conservation challenges, including migratory birds. In the last 50 years, a loss of 3 billion birds have been recorded in the United States and Canada alone.

Ms. Robidoux also forged links between these animals and humans. While some migratory birds depend on local communities for their survival, local communities also benefit from the birds, especially in terms of tourism. Communities depend on biodiversity while at the same time being its custodians.

Ms. Robidoux's presentation was particularly compelling because it put a face on the animals impacted by biodiversity loss while showing the mutual dependence of communities and animals on each other.

**Presentation by Mr. Jean Lemire**

*Envoy for Climate Change, Northern and Arctic Affairs,  
Government of Quebec*

Mr. Lemire spoke frankly about the failure of various past biodiversity initiatives and had a very mixed view of the progress that has been made so far. According to him, compromise is one of the reasons for these failures. Mr. Lemire illustrated this with the example of a vintage wine to which water is constantly being added, with the end result being a diluted product. The first stage is that of the scientists who make their recommendations, for example, to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (the vintage wine). In the next stage, politicians get involved and add a first layer of compromise that weakens the commitments. Finally, the economy takes part in the negotiations and a new compromise is built (the diluted wine), further attenuating the recommended changes.

Involving stakeholders in the field would be a preferred solution. According to Mr. Lemire, if we listened more to the stakeholders in the field, the decisions and actions taken might be better. As an example, he noted that areas managed by Indigenous communities have a much higher rate of success in preserving biodiversity.

Mr. Lemire concluded by inviting us to adopt a global vision and to change our way of communicating about the issue by using vocabulary that affects everyone. For example, instead of talking about “biodiversity,” a term that few people understand, we should talk about “nature.” Mr. Lemire said that when it comes to biodiversity, we are more concerned with failure currently, but that we have no right to fail.

## Question and Answer Period

*Question 1: In the past, was there a place for Indigenous peoples at the table?*

- Mr. Ainsworth: The CBD gives explicit recognition to Indigenous peoples and gives them a seat at the table. Also, the best protected areas are managed by Indigenous communities.
- Ms. Khan: There is still progress to be made, but the CBD offers a more important place to Indigenous communities than other international treaties.
- Mr. Lemire: Indigenous peoples have a privileged status in the Arctic Council, but there needs to be more room for the local level in the CBD as well.
- Ms. Robidoux: In the field, work is done with local and Indigenous communities. More and more, we are giving a direct voice to Indigenous peoples in projects.

*Question 2: How do we resolve the tensions that arise from “competing priorities,” operating in silos and diluting science with politics? How do we really put the scientific facts forward? Where did we go wrong?*

- Dr. Lemire: There has been little progress in communicating science in recent years. Science is facing great challenges in a context of extreme international polarization. Everything should always be about science. But money is going to be the key. As soon as economics is brought into the debate, people become more resistant to change and the facts are interpreted and communicated differently.
- Mr. Ainsworth: Our economy spends billions on activities that destroy our planet. We must work together on science, finance and communication.
- Ms Khan: There is a tendency to put a lot of hope in international law, but international law is a compromise between a multitude of

actors. It is in risk management that science can really have an impact.

- Ms. Bailey: It is also important to bring multinational companies to the table to avoid increasing polarization, because they have a lot of power.

*Question 3: How do we deal with the fact that nature belongs to private individuals? How do we manage the protection of biodiversity in the face of private property?*

- Mr. Ainsworth: Governments have long encouraged the private sector to take biodiversity into account, but it is difficult. Today, governments are in dialogue with the private sector on the basis of costs and prices, investments, and risk of biodiversity loss.
- Mr. Lemire: There is a need for education at all levels of governance and no one should be excluded from discussions. A cost-benefit index is now being put on nature, but there are possible abuses and a mistrust of the idea of putting a price on everything. There is also a risk of greenwashing.

*Question 4: How do we deal with the fact that states reserve the right to wage war? Should the protection of biodiversity include a self-destructing species? Should a right to environmental protection be included in the Geneva Convention?*

- Mr. Ainsworth: All resources should be used to protect nature, not to wage war. However, it is difficult, if not impossible, to wage an ecologically responsible war.
- Mr. Lemire: When there are conflicts, there is less money to protect the environment or for science.

## **Lunch Break**

The lunch break was an opportunity to welcome Mr. Benoit Charette, Minister of the Environment and the Fight against

Climate Change of the Government of Quebec, and the youth of the College of Future Generations.

### **Presentation by Mr. Komlan Sedzro**

*Dean of ESG UQAM*

At the end of the first panel of the day, Mr. Sedzro introduced Minister Charrette. He also took the opportunity to thank the organizers of the event and to remind everyone that ESG UQAM is currently the only business school in Montreal to have a Corporate Social Responsibility department.

### **Speech by the Honourable Benoit Charette**

*Minister of the Environment and the Fight against Climate Change, Government of Quebec*

Mr. Charette began his remarks by thanking the organizers of the event and noting that the event was a great opportunity to mark the 30th anniversary of the CBD.

He emphasized the extent to which Quebec is blessed with biodiversity and freshwater. The latter represents 22% of the province's territory and 3% of the planet's fresh water. Moreover, the territory is home to 40,000 species of plants and wild animals.

Mr. Charette said that protecting this rich biodiversity is a priority for the Quebec government. In December 2020, the provincial government committed to protecting 17% of its land and freshwater territory. He also recalled the beauty of Quebec's territory, including Anticosti Island, for which the Government of Quebec has initiated the process to have it recognized as a natural heritage site by UNESCO.

The minister said he is proud of the protected areas in Quebec. A new Natural Heritage Conservation Act was recently passed that will support the achievement of the 2030 targets. This legislation

includes new categories of protected areas, such as sustainable use and aboriginal initiative protected areas. According to Mr. Charrette, the latter category demonstrates the government's commitment to working with local partners, including Indigenous communities and conservation organizations. New protected areas are also regularly announced with the objective of protecting Quebec's natural heritage. The government plans to continue in this direction in the various regions of the province's vast territory over the next few years.

Minister Charrette concluded his speech by mentioning the fundamental nature of the CBD, particularly in the fight against climate change. He congratulated the assembled participants for their interest in these environmental issues.

### **Word from the College of Future Generations**

After Mr. Charrette's speech, two CEGEP students spoke about future generations in the presence of the minister. They began by asking us what could we expect from their speech. They mentioned the Anthropocene era, the role of humans in the onset of the sixth mass extinction and the consequences of these threats to human life and biodiversity. They then surprised us. The students tell us that this kind of pessimistic discourse has had little impact on policy. Thus, why not make people dream rather than be alarmed? They thus offered a positive discourse of a possible future around the refrain "I have a dream."

"I have a dream... in which humans and nature are united, people share their knowledge, communities help each other, the economy is used for the good of all. I dream of a better world." The two students invite the audience to close their eyes and to imagine and dream of the future world in which they wish to live. The students then invite the audience to visualize this dreamed world together, a world in which children play in green alleys, citizens

debate in assemblies, and pure air permeates Quebec's Boreal forest.

Finally, they conclude that utopia lies with those who think we can go on without changing things. They remind us that our world is worth it. They invite us to dare to dream, but also to dare to act and embody the changes we wish to see.

This speech, filled with hope from the hearts of two students representing the future generation, captivated the audience. It offered a breath of realistic optimism in the face of the challenges that lie ahead.

## **Panel 2: The Future of the Convention on Biological Diversity - What Objectives for 2050?**

### **Introduction by Ms. Corinne Gendron**

To open the afternoon conference, Ms. Gendron introduced the moderator of the second panel, Mr. Jérôme Dupras, a recognized specialist in the socio-economic valuation of biodiversity. He completed postdoctoral studies in biology, and is also a founding member of the band Les Cowboys Fringants. The objective of the panel was to reflect on the achievements of the CBD, next steps to be taken, and what its objectives should be for 2050.

### **Introduction by Mr. Jérôme Dupras**

*Professor, Department of Natural Sciences, Université du Québec en Outaouais*

Mr. Dupras' presentation began with the first photo taken of Earth, to illustrate that conservation and protection of biodiversity are global issues. Taken about 50 years ago, it also represents the beginning of the ecological movement. He then made several



diagnoses concerning the planet's current biodiversity. First, he reminded us that not only are a million species currently in danger of extinction, but also that in the next decade, the deterioration of natural inhabitants is estimated to occur 10,000 times faster than historical rates. This is due, among other things, to the multiplication of invasive species and the ecological consequences of climate change. On this subject, Mr. Dupras reminded us that nine of the 15 tipping points of the climate system are in the process of being crossed and will lead to abrupt and irreversible changes. For example, the thawing of permafrost, the death of coral belts, and the melting of the ice cap. In his studies, he was interested in the transformations of ecosystems as a result of climate change. Through his studies, he has observed an alteration in the pattern of native biodiversity in Quebec. While there is no decline in biodiversity in terms of quantity, there is a regression of native species in favour of a migration of non-native species to the northern biomes. Thus, within the next 10 years, Mr. Dupras said we can expect that 80% of the species encountered in Quebec will be foreign to the original ecosystem. How can we prevent such a transformation of ecosystems? First of all, Mr. Dupras believes that it would be necessary to protect more than 17% of the ecosystems while better distributing the protected areas between the south and the north in order to preserve a greater diversity. He also argued that it is possible to adopt sustainable forestry practices. The solutions are known, but what is needed now is cooperation and co-construction of agendas to implement them in different countries. Although biodiversity is silent, mobile and invisible, it must be protected. Mr Dupras noted that currently, it is the First Nations that protect nearly 80% of biodiversity, so it is essential to include them in the discussions and next actions to be taken.

### **Presentation by Ms. Jihyun Lee**

*Director, Science, Society and Sustainable Futures Division, UNEP/SCBD*

Ms. Lee began her presentation by highlighting key observations by the latest global assessment of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) – biodiversity is deteriorating worldwide, and this decline is projected to continue or worsen under the business-as-usual scenarios. She then explained that policy options are available to the global community that could halt and ultimately reverse biodiversity loss, putting nature on a path to recovery towards the 2050 vision of living in harmony with nature, as agreed by 196 countries in 2010. In this regard, the CBD Parties and stakeholders are in the process of developing the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. The post-2020 global biodiversity framework will be complementary to, and supportive of, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At the same time, progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals will help to create the conditions necessary to implement the global biodiversity framework. The draft framework will be considered by the Conference of Parties to CBD at its 15<sup>th</sup> meeting, later this year. She concluded that to bend the curve of biodiversity loss by 2030, we need to fundamentally reform our relationship with nature, and we need all hands-on deck, across all levels of government and across society.

### **Presentation by Ms. Dalal Hanna**

*Postdoctoral Researcher, Department of Biology, Carleton University*

Ms. Hanna's presentation addressed ecosystem services and their sometimes-overlooked benefits to human functioning and

well-being. According to her, we need nature to live and a healthy ecosystem provides many services to humanity. It provides water and food, which are essential to life, but it also plays a protective role. Ms. Hanna, for example, pointed out that certain ecosystem processes reduce the risk of flooding, sequester carbon and ultimately regulate the climate. In addition to these services, Ms. Hanna said we must not forget that ecosystems support many recreational activities and contribute to the well-being and quality of life of populations. Recognizing the full range of ecosystem services should encourage more holistic decision making. In this regard, Ms. Hanna identified four good practices for diligently taking ecosystem services into account in policy-making. First, the types of services must be properly evaluated and the tangible (e.g., food) and intangible (e.g., cultural) services produced by the ecosystem must be identified. Indicators must be developed to ensure quality, relevant and standardized measurement. Finally, it is important to consider the interaction between the different services provided by different ecosystems and their consequences on different spatial and temporal scales.

**Presentation by Mr. Florian Roule**

*Senior Director, Strategy and Partnerships, Finance Montreal*

Mr. Roule explained how the financial sector is essential to solving the biodiversity issue. Moreover, the sector is in the process of seizing this issue and increasingly sees the Earth as it is, i.e., as a finite world.

In his view, biodiversity must be taken into account by the financial community in order to bring public and private financial flows in the right direction and to align the different interests. For example, the cost of negative externalities should be increased. In green finance practices, the goal is to mobilize funds towards nature-based solutions. All of this will still take some dialogue, Mr. Roule

noted, and will require the development of new instruments and more blended financing. Finance has an interesting skill, that of maximizing under constraint. This could provide solutions for supporting countries in developing national strategies. It is also important to ask for disclosure, as accountability is key to moving financing towards a greener trajectory.

Mr. Roulle said finance is increasingly interested in biodiversity because it is a high and systemic risk and because companies depend on these ecosystem services. Thus, he said we need to move towards more redistribution of financial assets and a willingness to see the positive effects of this funding.

### **Presentation by Mr. Maxim Larrivé**

*Director, Insectarium, Space for Life*

Mr. Larrivé is interested in entomological biodiversity and participatory science, which ranges from contribution to engagement. Insects provide important ecosystem services (e.g. pollination and decomposition of organic matter). Although less noticeable, the collapse of entomological biodiversity has accelerated since 1990. The changes observed in a few decades are comparable to biomass losses that used to be recorded over a century. This extinction is a global and multifactorial phenomenon whose impacts are devastating, as insects are the larder of biodiversity.

Mr. Larrivé said biodiversity loss is a difficult issue to address because it knows no boundaries. The protection of species, especially migratory species, requires close collaboration between different levels of stakeholders at the local, national and international levels. For example, Mr. Larrivé noted that in the West Island of Montreal, there have been no bumblebees since 2000. Bumblebees play an important role in pollination, and there

are many reasons for their decline, such as the use of pesticides, meteorological factors related to climate change, or the spread of pathogens. In order to combat this decline, Mr. Larrivée said it is essential to adopt projects and an approach aligned with Montreal's priorities, but also to accelerate the ecological transition, strengthen solidarity and stimulate innovation.

Mr. Larrivée noted that we have also witnessed the emergence of participatory science: people can now actively participate in data collection, for example through the monarch butterfly blitz, where thousands of people list the monarchs they have seen on their daily walk, or the Nunavik Sentinels, a training program that both documents the entomological biodiversity of Nunavik and helps young Inuit. The data collected will be used to evaluate the speed of climate change, in order to better predict the impacts of these changes on the territory. In addition to increasing entomological knowledge about Canada's North, this program promotes the empowerment of Aboriginal communities and knowledge sharing.

Participatory science provides more than just data, according to Mr. Larrivée; it increases time spent in nature, which increases health and well-being, and allows for the development of direct contact with living things and open innovation. It also increases people's engagement with the environment and biodiversity.

Mr. Larrivée concluded his presentation by explaining the metamorphosis of the Insectarium, who's new paradigm is meant to change the perception of humans towards insects. According to him, the keys to success for the protection of biodiversity are the paradigm shifts in education, participatory science and interdisciplinarity, as well as innovation (e.g., artificial intelligence), while expanding opportunities.

## **Presentation by Ms. Francine Pauvif**

*Founder, Canadian Youth Biodiversity Network*

Ms. Pauvif explained the importance of including and listening to youth in biodiversity issues. The Canadian Youth Biodiversity Network acts as an international coordination platform for youth in the CBD. It plays a policy and advocacy role by organizing intergenerational consultations and providing spaces for dialogue. It also plays a role in empowerment and capacity building by helping to understand our role, taking ownership of the biodiversity issue and building confidence and capacity to empower ourselves. The Network also offers capacity building workshops. Ms. Pauvif said this is a global movement with real impact on the ground. Since their launch in 2019, the Network has 100 members and over 1000 social media followers. This allows them to gather the views of youth across Canada and bring it to the attention of decision makers. Getting involved allows for capacity building, participating in consultations, taking part in advocacy and taking action. Ms. Pauvif said that the vision of the Network is comprehensive. On the one hand, it promotes education on environmental issues among youth. On the other hand, it advocates for preserving ecosystem integrity, supporting sustainable development, increasing intergenerational equity and climate justice.

Ms. Pauvif remarked that the biodiversity crisis does not get the same amount of attention as climate change. For example, with the Paris Agreement, it is climate change that has gained the most visibility. There is a common language to build, because biodiversity cannot be addressed by only one actor. Although we are experiencing climate change more concretely, there is still work to be done in educating people about the issues affecting biodiversity. Finally, Ms. Pauvif noted that we must not forget that

insects do not need us, but we need them. We should thus not hesitate to go outside and get in touch with nature and biodiversity.

### **Question and Answer Period**

*Opening question by Mr. Dupras: For the past 20 years, media coverage of the biodiversity crisis has not been given the same prominence as that of the climate crisis. How can we ensure that this biodiversity crisis is understood by a range of audiences, particularly those with whom you work?*

- Mr. Roulle: With regard to climate change, the IPCC and the Paris Agreement have shed a very strong light on the climate emergency. The biodiversity crisis is, in my opinion, very complex and particularly fragmented and therefore more difficult to define. Biodiversity, unless you are an expert, is less visible and based on very local considerations. We need to establish a common language so that financiers and scientists understand each other.
- Mr. Larrivière: Climate change is experienced more concretely by people, but lately the collapse of insect biodiversity is also reaching a wider audience.
- Ms. Pauvif: We really need to focus on education, as people do not hear enough about biodiversity. Climate change has been the focus of discussions for more than 10 years, but the collapse of biodiversity much less so. Education needs to be refocused on basic concepts and outreach.
- Ms. Lee: Increasing public awareness on the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss is critical to addressing planetary crisis. For this reason, we need to make concrete efforts for engaging diverse civil society groups, including youth group who are actively joining today's event. The strong voices by youth group on the urgent needs for transformative changes have been well appreciated by the public, national governments and UN Bodies and processes.

*Question 2: Do you see the right of nature in the text to be adopted in 2025 by the Convention as a good omen?*

- Mr. Larrivée: When we come into contact with living things in an ecosystem, we become aware of the existence of a much larger whole. This concept must be instilled in young people as early as possible so that it becomes a priority.
- Ms. Lee: The right-based approaches, in particular human right-based approach, for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are actively being addressed by various Parties and observers in the development of the post 2020 global biodiversity framework. The notion of right of nature is being introduced in the form of biodiversity awareness building events.

## **Closing Cocktail**

### **Presentation by Ms. Marie Christine Bellemare**

*President of the Association des biologistes du Québec.*

Ms. Bellemare greeted the biologists in the room and said that she was honoured to be here. She traced the evolution of the biology profession and the impact that the arrival of the CBD had on the profession. A former student at UQAM, she said that the Convention has had little impact on the daily lives of biologists, since only a minority work with this tool. However, it has had an impact on a more macro level. She noted that in the 1970s, most of the work by biologists in Quebec was done by the Ministry of Recreation, Hunting, and Fisheries, where their work was limited to managing permits. Today, however, it is much more than that. Ms. Bellemare said the expertise of biologists is now recognized in the evaluation and analysis of various projects. It was not until the 1990s that biology was understood in its complexity and completeness, and that it had an impact on regulations and legislation. The profession of biology as understood today has existed for about 20 years. Biologists can now have practices that



are very committed and grounded in ecosystem restoration. Most impact studies are now chaired by biologists. Ms. Bellemare noted that there is even an elected official who is a biologist. All this to say that it is high time to stop pitting the economy against biology, according to Ms. Bellemare, and to stop having to choose between caribou and forestry. She added that we are living in an era of commodification of nature through which we are trying to justify its preservation, but that we must instead rethink our management models and find ways to convince decision makers to act on biodiversity issues.

### **Closing Remarks by Ms. Corinne Gendron**

Ms. Gendron ended the day with some personal points, while inviting everyone to continue their reflections on the subjects discussed earlier, in order to fuel their future actions. Her first reflection was related to the CBD, which had raised a lot of hope, but unfortunately, in the light of its most recent report, did not lead to the desired results. Ms. Gendron said we need to think about what needs to be done in the face of this relative failure of the ambitions we had for the Convention. She then asked the question: “While remaining democratic, how can we ensure that political consensus does not prevent us from making firm commitments on biodiversity? Obviously, we know that the exploitation of natural resources is a major issue, but behind this overexploitation, there is also a lot of waste.” She reminded the audience that despite the efforts made, pollution remains a serious issue.

Ms. Gendron concluded that “soft” law may no longer be sufficient; we need to move to legal regimes that are commensurate with the challenges and threats we face. She noted that the CBD is a “new era” convention, as it is more global and all-encompassing in scope, unlike previous conventions that were more limited and

narrow in focus. When it comes to the environment, we must think globally. Ms. Gendron said that we must address not only the fragmentation of international environmental law, but also the division between environmental protection policies and economic rules.

Finally, Ms. Gendron mentioned that we must stop thinking of environmental protection in a fragmented way. Human environments should be seen as part of a connected natural environment. The paradigm shift referred to throughout the day is very relevant. All populations and social actors must be involved in this change in order to restore natural spaces. Decision makers must call on young people and local communities more, and citizen science is becoming an imperative for transmitting knowledge through action. Ms. Gendron reminded participants that social justice must be taken into account and that, in terms of biodiversity protection, the wealthy and privileged are not doing their part, and that they will not be the ones to suffer the main consequences of biodiversity loss.

## Appendix

### **The College of Future Generations: Between Bitterness and Hope**

On June 15 and 16, the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Montreal and the SCBD celebrated the 30th anniversary of the CBD. During these two days of celebrations, various participants gathered to talk about the achievements of this convention and to debate the future of biodiversity.

For the occasion, a College of Future Generations was formed. Composed of three students from Collège de Maisonneuve and three students from UQAM's Institute of Environmental Sciences (ISE), this particular college was a showcase for the work and other academic commitments to biological diversity of younger generations. With talk of a sixth mass extinction on the rise, we saw an opportunity to ask them about their vision for the future of life preservation.

For Sara Maourouri, a graduate in rural engineering from Algeria and a Master's student in Environment at ISE UQAM, the future of biological diversity looks difficult. This future is all the more difficult given the current state of the world. In view of her work on water pollution and the degradation of coral reefs in Australia, she believes that it will be difficult to change direction and move towards the restoration of degraded ecological environments and better protection of the environment. According to Sara Jacques, a graduate of Collège de Maisonneuve and future history student at UQAM, the future looks bleak for biological diversity because she believes that the elites of our modern societies do not take the future into account enough. This vision is also shared by Sara Roux, a Master's student at ISE UQAM. For her, however, the source of the problem goes beyond the sphere of the elites. To her, faced with various contemporary problems (war, famine,

mass migration, etc.), the vast majority of the world's population hardly prioritizes issues related to biological diversity. The root of the problem is to be found in the selfish nature of humans who only think of themselves.

For Rémy Billette, a student in environment and global issues at Collège de Maisonneuve, the collapse that some people are predicting will not happen tomorrow. However, although he is not defeatist, he believes that we will have to wait until we are faced with disaster before a real change of course can be observed.

For Lilly De Cotret, also a student in environment and global issues at Collège de Maisonneuve, facing the challenges posed by the safeguarding and protection of biological diversity will not be possible without the openness and inclusion of society as a whole. According to her, people do not understand international conventions that are divorced from their reality.

Overall, the College of Future Generations remains hopeful that it is not too late to protect biodiversity, although the road ahead is long and winding. Ms. Maourouri says she is hopeful because she does not want to be depressed or engage in negative rhetoric. She hopes her work will help resolve this crisis. Ms. Jacques, on the other hand, advocates a radical change in the current economic system, better justice and greater equity. She remains hopeful, because she believes that we have the means to change things. For Mr. Billette, in the face of the petty games and power stakes of states, change must come from the people and not from the elites. For Zeynep Torun, a Master's student at ESG UQAM and holder of a first Master's degree in Economic and Social Sciences, the CBD is a good start, but we must work twice as hard to avoid missing the finish line. She preaches in particular for an overhaul of agriculture and hopes that it will not be too late.