

CHINA IS READY TO HOST COP15

Using science, politics and diplomacy
to support global biodiversity



When the Fifteenth Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity begins on 11 October 2021, each participating government will have spent years preparing for the negotiations. None more so than COP15's host country.

China, as the incoming president of COP15, is responsible for hosting the conference, as well as for promoting the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), an important milestone toward the 2050 vision of Living in harmony with nature.

Behind every great COP is a strong negotiating team. Established in 2019, China's COP15 Executive Committee Office Negotiation Team is led by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment and includes members from the Ministry's Foreign Environmental Cooperation Center (or FECO) and the Chinese Academy of Environmental Sciences (CRAES) and the Nanjing Institute of Environmental Sciences (NIES).

International expectations are high for COP15 to play a key role in reversing the decline in biodiversity. Previous

COPs have made important progress, but COP15 is expected to be a watershed meeting that produces a landmark document — much as COP21 on climate change resulted in the 2015 Paris Agreement.

China's negotiating team comprises the nation's best and brightest minds and draws from diverse disciplines: it has a breadth and depth that makes the group well qualified to challenge, question and review the science that drives negotiations.

The team's primary tasks are forging consensus and deliberations through formal negotiations and informal consultations in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as other parties and stakeholders. Through this process, the negotiation team will support common concepts of biodiversity; strengthen bilateral and multilateral exchanges that will lead to action; and lend weight to the scientific base of the Post-2020 GBF and other expected COP outcomes.

Conservation of global biodiversity requires widespread understanding

of key concepts. Building the capacity and opportunity for national leaders to discuss biodiversity, and China's endeavours as the host country, is important to this. In September 2020, President Xi Jinping at the United Nations Biodiversity Summit invited governments of the world to "gather in Kunming, the spring city".

Such high-profile events are underpinned by activities such as the release, in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, of China's position paper, Building a Community of Life on Earth: China in Action, and organizing significant meetings such as the 17-country ministerial-level online roundtable and the global biodiversity conservation dialogue on CCTV-13.

China's negotiating team has played an active and constructive role in pre-COP gatherings such as the second meeting of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework Open-ended Working Group (WG2020-2), the twenty-fourth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SBSTTA-24), the third

meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI-3), and the United Nations Biodiversity Summit. These meetings discussed global biodiversity goals, policy formulation and conservation practices, and cooperation.

Also important are the bilateral and multilateral exchanges and meetings organized by the negotiating team, where representatives work through contentious topics of the framework to facilitate consensus. Substantial progress is being made on key issues such as funding mechanisms, biosecurity, ecosystem restoration, digital sequence information, and marine and coastal biodiversity, the negotiating team reports.

As COP15 draws closer, the team reflects on the importance of their mission. The future of global biodiversity depends on it. ■



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