

**Statement by Elizabeth Maruma Mrema**  
**Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity**  
**on the occasion of**  
**International Mountain Day 2022**  
**11 December 2022**  
*#MountainsMatter*

Mountains offer some of the most unique and inspiring landscapes on Earth.

Occupying around 27 per cent of the Earth's land surface, mountains contain half of the world's biodiversity hotspots.

Yet, despite their strong and majestic appearance, mountains are particularly fragile.

They experience disproportionate climate warming and they are slow to recover from increasing human pressure which increases the risk of disasters, water shortages, loss of biodiversity, and outmigration.

This year we celebrate International Mountain Day under the theme “**Women move mountains**”. It puts the spotlight on one of the most vulnerable communities – women and girls.

Mountains are a harsh environment to live in, particularly for women. Its difficult terrain, harsh climate, and often remote education and health centres put women and girls of the mountains at a disadvantage. Mountains are also particularly prone to outmigration of young men leaving women behind to take care of the households. More than 50% of women carry out agricultural activities such as animal husbandry.

Mountains have been net exporters of resources to the plains – water, mineral, timber, medicinal plants, and much more. Women in the mountains are engaged in many traditional activities that depend on natural resources, including the array of non-timber products, medicinal plants, dairy products and many others, giving them a substantial role in the management of natural resources and biodiversity.

Mountains are not only biodiversity-rich, but they also possess tremendous cultural diversity and rich traditions of living in harmony with nature. Indigenous peoples and local communities are often the stewards of mountain ecosystems and their knowledge, traditions and cultural practices are vital to maintain the biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services in these regions.

As we look forward to the adoption of an ambitious and inclusive post-2020 global biodiversity framework, we look to the strong actionable target calling for the integration of women and girls in decision-making processes related to biodiversity. In addition to the framework, Parties are also considering the adoption of a draft post-2020 gender plan of action, currently under negotiation.

On 11 December 2022, I encourage you to show your support for mountains, their biodiversity and the women and girls of mountains, by sharing your stories and tag *#MountainsMatter* on any media platform you may use. After all, it is true – women move mountains!