

The UK would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide initial ideas and inputs in relation to the ministerial declaration of the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5). The Environmental Assembly is of course a critical event and its results and outcomes are made even more crucial given the need for global society to begin to emerge from the current Covid-19 pandemic. The Assembly represents an opportunity to achieve this, alongside vital ambitions for the environment, and ultimately build back better. Please see our comments and ideas below.

UK views on key elements/messages within the declaration

Post Covid-19, green recovery

- Once the world begins to move to recover from the Covid-19 crisis, there will be a critical opportunity to shape our economy and society in ways that are green, just and resilient. Putting nature at the heart of our decision making rather than as an afterthought is critical.
- COVID-19 is clearly the most urgent threat facing our society today, but climate change and biodiversity loss are among the biggest threats to humanity in the longer term – and their impacts are already with us.
- As the UN Secretary General has said, as recently as 20 April 2020 “The impact of the coronavirus is both immediate and dreadful. But, there is another deep emergency — the planet’s unfolding environmental crisis. Biodiversity is in steep decline. Climate disruption is approaching a point of no return.
- We need to develop a compelling vision and a strong commitment to turn that rhetoric into action, that puts the environment at the heart of a sustainable recovery, with economic, environmental and societal objectives being integrated.
- This vision, which should be expressed within the declaration, needs to:
 - recognise the urgency of driving environmental recovery;
 - recognise and build on the links between a healthy environment and healthy population;
 - be based around clear principles and be underpinned by concrete steps for delivery.

Linked action on climate change and biodiversity loss

- Climate change and biodiversity loss will not obey country boundaries – we must all work together to achieve action to address climate change and biodiversity loss. The protection, restoration and enhancement of biodiversity on land and at sea, and climate change adaptation and mitigation, are intrinsically linked and should be addressed together.
- COP26 and CBD COP15 provide critical opportunities to take effective action on climate change and biodiversity loss and deliver a step change on both of these global crises. It is essential that together, we find new ways to ensure the effective implementation of both conventions.
- RAMSAR COP presents another critical opportunity to achieve action on both climate change and biodiversity loss.
- It is essential the ministerial declaration highlights this.

Action not rhetoric

- The commitments within the ministerial statement should be about action, not committing to recognising there is an issue.
- We need to move from rhetoric to action and the statement should highlight this.

UK views on how UNEA can make a significant contribution to 'strengthening actions for nature to achieve the SDGs' at a global scale?

Profile and global visibility

- UNEA should be used as a platform to pull together differing global views on a green recovery post-Covid and project a coherent vision across the world in order to generate consensus and momentum.
- It is therefore key that UNEA communicates a clear and compelling narrative.

Ensuring momentum to drive environmental recovery during 2021

- Given the potential for lost opportunities for progress globally on environmental recovery during 2020 as a result of the postponement of key events, it is critical UNEA-5 galvanises action throughout 2021 and beyond.
- It is essential that there is a clear plan for a legacy of UNEA and that this works to enable continued momentum and progress.

UNEA as a convener and catalyser

- UNEA has the profile and convening power to pull together global leaders to create action and accord, following on from likely calls and declarations at this September's UN General Assembly and the associated nature Summit. It also has the ability to create a global narrative which transcends from the leadership/policy level to create will and action at a community and individual level.
- UNEA should work to ensure its messages are communicated to all audiences.