



**ROYAL NORWEGIAN MINISTRY OF
CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT**

The Minister

United Nations Environment Programme
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Your ref

Our ref

Date

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Letter to members of the United Nations Environment Assembly

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to start by extending my warmest regards to all of you during these particularly difficult times. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has affected us all, and it is becoming clear that the impacts will be with us for some time to come. It is the very ethos of the United Nations that we are stronger together in such times of crisis. We must all take collective responsibility and do our part to protect the vulnerable and those on the frontline in our fight to limit the spread, and minimize the hardships endured by all as much as possible.

As we adjust to the evolving situation, our understanding of the broader consequences of both the pandemic, and the measures that we put in place to contain it, will grow. At the same time our efforts to address climate change and loss of biodiversity, to combat pollution, and sustainably manage chemicals and waste, must continue.

It is in this context that I wish to share with you my intention to start the process for the preparation of the ministerial declaration for the fifth United Nations Assembly, the theme of which is "*Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*".

At our UNEA Bureau Meeting, 1 April 2020, members of the bureau provided guidance on how to maximize the synergies between the relevant meetings and milestones planned in 2020 and UNEA-5, taking into account the evolving situation. Bureau Members emphasized the importance of a strong narrative of green recovery, positioning UNEA in the current political context, and of the links between biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution in the ministerial declaration.

Despite of the uncertainties for the year to come I am determined to lead an inclusive process where all member States have the opportunity to be heard and provide their views on the scope and actions/commitments for an ambitious declaration from all Environment Ministers.

On my part, I believe that our ministerial declaration should address the critical and transformative changes that will need to take place to stop the loss of and protect biodiversity and ecosystem services. This is fundamental for us to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and sustainably rebuild a resilient post-pandemic world. There are many good measures being implemented across the globe to stop the loss of nature, but the losses nevertheless continue at an alarming rate.

To start our dialogue, I wish to invite you to provide initial inputs and ideas. To structure these, I invite you to consider the following questions:

-What would you, as government/organization/stakeholder, welcome as the most important elements and/or key messages from the ministers in the declaration to address the theme in an impactful manner?

- How can the Environment Assembly make a significant contribution to *Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals* at a global scale? In doing so, you may take into account the preparation for the meeting, its conduct and follow-up, as well as its relationship to other meetings and processes.

I would kindly request for your written input by 12. May 2020 through the UN Environment Programme Secretariat (unep-sgb@un.org) and to the Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment (postmottak@kld.dep.no). The input received will inform a first outline to be shared ahead of the joint meeting of the bureau for the Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives scheduled to take place 9-10 June, 2020. All member states and stakeholders will be given the opportunity to provide their views to the first outline, which in turn will inform a more advanced draft to be circulated.

I look forward to your contributions to the important work ahead and wish to reassure you of my willingness to regularly update you about further dates and milestones given the current uncertainty.

Before closing I wish to use this opportunity to briefly outline some implications of the pandemic for our work going forward.

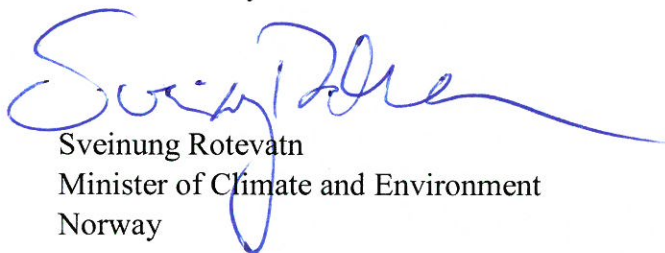
For many of us, an immediate consequence of the current situation has been the shift from physical to online meetings. Furthermore, as you are aware, many meetings scheduled for the rest of this year have already been postponed. I was looking forward to welcoming the bureau of both the Environment Assembly and the Committee for Permanent Representatives to Oslo

in June, as well as major groups and stakeholders for consultations, including the Science Policy Business Forum. Given the current situation, we are working on holding these important meetings virtually. Further information will be shared within the next few weeks.

The Executive Director of UNEP and I have not as yet considered any implications in respect of the fifth UN Environment Assembly scheduled to take place in February 2021. If and when there are further developments in this respect, Member States, all relevant partners, major groups and stakeholders will be appropriately informed, as per the Rules of Procedure.

I would encourage us all to continue our work to prepare for a bold and ambitious Assembly. Even in a period of economic and social uncertainty, we cannot lose sight of the environmental imperatives we must address in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Yours sincerely



Sveinung Rotevatn
Minister of Climate and Environment
Norway

Ministers Responsible for the Environment
Members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives
Major Groups and Stakeholders representatives accredited to UNEP