

## **Soroptimist International (SI Input to Ministerial Declaration- UNEA5**

### **Question #1:**

#### **What are the most important elements and/or key messages from the Ministers in the UNEA Ministerial Declaration to address the theme in an impactful manner ?**

How can we strengthen nature to achieve the sustainable develop goals? What should our key messaging be?

Unsustainable practices both at the ecosystem or biodiversity level, coupled with regulated animal-to-human interaction have impacted the world and resulted in diseases that already cause an estimated 700,000 deaths each year, and the probability of more disruptive and lethal pandemics than COVID-19 remain high. Covid-19 has hit our world like a giant tsunami, and has had catastrophic effects on both human life and global economies. To this extent States must urgently go back to the drawing board and evaluate human-animal interaction.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the need for transformative change to strengthen nature including fundamental, system-wide reorganization across technological, economic and social factors, including paradigms, goals and values, promoting social and environmental responsibilities across all sectors

Strengthening nature including by creating healthy ecosystems and a rich biodiversity is a prerequisite and foundation for economic prosperity, human health and well-being especially for women and girls and other impoverished and vulnerable groups.

In order to strengthen nature, we must quickly disrupt business as usual. Management of natural assets is key to strengthening nature and inclusive wealth provides the way forward. In order to treat our natural resources including our biodiversity and ecosystems as valuable assets, we must value, protect, conserve and properly assess the benefits of nature on a sub-national level in order to identify priority areas for investment.

Prior to UNEA 5, its participants must also facilitate the collection of disaggregated data on progress made in achieving gender equality in environmental policies and programmes as well as SDG 5, target 5.5 and 5.A and to report back to UNEA-5. It should also review whether or not Member have strengthened and implemented policies aimed at increasing the participation and leadership of women in environmental decision making and recognized their role as managers of natural resources and agents of change in safeguarding the environment States must safeguard the ecosystem that sustains billions of individuals across the globe through sound management of ecosystems and bio-diversity through holistic integrated management of land, water and living resources that places human needs at the centre. This calls for an ecosystem-based framework and tools that could be useful in the design, implementation and monitoring phases.

States must adopt a 'One Health' approach at all levels of decision-making – from the global to the most local – recognizing the complex interconnections among the health of people, animals, plants and our shared environment and ensure that better decisions are made that take into account long-term costs and consequences of development actions – for people and nature. To this extent we must put in place a structured, coherent and well-coordinated approach to handling nature-based solutions and employ good governance and management approaches. We must employ best practices to incentivize transition away from traditional approaches, and must develop and implement a global standard for nature-based solutions for quality and credibility

States need to strategically allocate limited resources to a set of actionable targets that will actually make a difference in the next decade. Transformative initiatives must include stopping and reversing the loss of biodiversity within the next decade i.e. by 2030 as well as setting aside at least 30 percent of the world's lands, freshwater systems and oceans as protected areas by 2030.

States must promote business investment in nature based solutions through transforming finance, and generating the shifts needed in both domestic and international governance and finance to value nature and realize the potential of nature-based solutions; strengthening economic incentives for investing in nature to increase attractiveness for investors to bring nature based solutions to the market; ensuring that financial mechanisms are supported with appropriate regulations that are enforced at the national and sub-national levels including promotion and adoption of green supply chains, green energy, water re-use, resource recovery, nature conservation etc.; moving away from funding for deforestation and other activities that harm ecosystems; increasing public and private funding for nature- based solutions investment; promoting green finance and innovative incentive measures to promote nature-based solutions.

There is an urgent need for States to significantly increase efforts to address the pervasive and extensive land degradation that affects all terrestrial and inland water ecosystems worldwide in order to restore the ecosystem. Degradation materially reduces the wellbeing of 3.2 billion people, and it is necessary to address this if we are to solve other problem. To this extent States must scale up nature-based solutions for mitigation, resilience and adaptation in key areas, ensuring people's livelihoods through the conservation and restoration of forest and other terrestrial ecosystems, conservation and restoration of freshwater resources as well as marine and ocean ecosystems, sustainable agriculture and food systems, and ensuring nature's systemic role in sustainable development in ways that end loss of biodiversity and optimize nature's contribution for resilient livelihoods, green infrastructure, sustainable settlements and just rural transitions.

In order to ensure that biodiversity and ecosystem considerations are prioritized and strengthened within the planning of all key sectors, States must ensure that adopt an inclusive approach and empower communities around the world to play a role in protecting the environment and its resources by harnessing the differentiated views, experiences and

knowledge of all people including women, indigenous peoples and other non-state actors. Women and girls, who constitute 50% of the world's population, have the voice and agency to be transformative at all levels of environmental management.

In order to strengthen nature, we must place the biodiversity and ecosystem crisis front and center with every national, regional and local authority, non-governmental organization, faith-based organization, coalition, business, scientist, Indigenous and local peoples and individual citizen as each person or entity has an important part to play in the transformative change we need to see for people and nature

States need to move beyond rhetoric by strengthening their enforcement of environmental regulations, implementation mechanisms, resource allocation, responsibilities and transparency in order to support each target. To this extent, States must enhance regional and international co-operation in ways that encourage ambition, transparency and environmental integrity and are supported by popular mobilization strategies, campaigns and initiatives that help deliver on the sustainable development goals.

Although UNEA resolutions are not legally binding, they represent the joint aspirations of the international community, frame consensus around actions to be taken, and help coordinate development aid and technical assistance. UNEA 5 participants must ensure that they comply with the UN Environment Assembly's mandate and capacity, as well as create a framework that is consistent as well as complementary with previous UNEA resolutions as well as SDG targets

All citizens of the world without exception, have a stake in the sustainability of the environment and its ecosystems and biodiversity, now and in the future. Citizens must therefore play their individual role in preserving and protecting the environment. States also must urgently step up and educate their citizens on nature based solutions so that everyone across the globe can contribute to the global effort to preserve and protect the environment, its ecosystems and biodiversity through concerted formal and informal learning, public awareness activities and campaigns.

## Answers to Question #2

How can the Environment Assembly Make A Significant Contribution to Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Goals on a Global Scale?

**Focus: SDG 14-How can the 2020 UN Ocean Conference declaration advance action on concrete, science-based and innovative solutions supporting the implementation of Goal 14?**

To begin with, an urgent, accelerated and effective implementation on a local, national, regional, global and- where appropriate -a transboundary scale is necessary in view of the fact that four targets of SDG 14 mature in 2020

And, again, challenges to the implementation of science-based or innovative actions to address the continued deterioration of the oceans, seas or marine environment and its resources due to unsustainable anthropogenic activities, are mostly linked to scarce intersectoral and interdisciplinary ocean, sea or marine resource data and information, inadequate data sharing and insufficient capacity to assess and address ocean issues in an integrated and holistic manner . If data can be collected based on the approved methodology for indicator 14.c.1, it will provide, for the first time, a baseline of the current state of implementation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and its implementing agreements with respect to the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources.

Other challenges in implementation include the need for both universal participation and full and effective implementation of the international legal framework for the oceans such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Paris Agreement and other relevant instruments on the part of each state which is a member of the U.N.

In addition, if not addressed, scientific, technical, financial, institutional and legal capacity constraints, in particular for developing countries, will continue to preclude significant progress in the implementation of international law as reflected in the Convention. For example, Inadequate governance and science-policy dialogue hamper many countries from participating in ocean science or benefitting from existing knowledge. For biodiversity conservation, the need for multi-level governance policies beyond conservation measures to achieve target 14.a has been noted, as well as the need for the co-production of knowledge.

Other challenges include the need for sustainable funding; ocean science expenditure is highly variable worldwide, and government funding is modest overall, though investment is increasing. It is also necessary to translate the increase in scientific knowledge into effective development opportunities, especially for small island developing States (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs); to overcome capacity limitations and find new ways of garnering investment.

In addition, once again, basic and applied research should be linked in order to deliver impact in terms of science-based or innovative actions which improve the state of the marine environment and ocean economy. Acceleration in science and technology also provide a challenge and an opportunity for the coherent implementation of UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and its provisions on marine scientific research and the transfer of Marine Technology (TMT).

There also remains a need to accelerate the pace of the World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations on fisheries subsidies that contribute to: illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) ; overcapacity and overfishing; cross-cutting issues which include special and differential treatment, disputes, remedies for non- compliance, and transparency and notifications. Increasing participation in relevant instruments, addressing challenges of implementation, including resource and capacity constraints, strengthening intersectoral cooperation, coordination and information sharing at all levels and the timely development of

new instruments to address emerging challenges will also be key elements in accelerating implementation of this target.

Efforts to increase implementation by strengthening the international legal framework through the elaboration of new instruments could also include, in particular, the Intergovernmental Conference convened by the General Assembly to elaborate the text of an international legally binding instrument under the Convention on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction. The International Seabed Authority is also developing exploitation regulations, which if implemented will provide a framework for regulating and managing exploration and exploitation of mineral resources in the Area in a sustainable manner.