

Ministry of Environment proposals for the preparation of the ministerial declaration for the fifth UN Assembly (UNEA-5) on “strengthening actions for nature to achieve the sustainable development goals”

Main Proposal: Building on the Egyptian Initiative:

“Our solutions are in nature”.

- Acknowledgment that Nature has provided us numerous gifts such as air, water, food, medicines, minerals, plants, and animals. Existence on Earth would not be possible without any of these. “Our solutions are in nature” as long as Nature is kept healthy. The post 2020 global biodiversity framework will present an ambitious strategy that will contribute to the achievement of the vision 2050 on biodiversity: living in harmony with nature, the SDGs, and support the Rio Conventions as well as other biodiversity-related conventions.
- Note that loss of biological diversity is one of the drivers for zoonotic diseases. This is a phenomenon on the rise, as the world continues to see unprecedented destruction of natural habitats by human activity threatening economic development, animal and human well-being. These include Ebola, bird flu, Rift Valley fever, West Nile virus and Zika virus and of course the novel coronavirus.
- The coronavirus outbreak highlights the need for a deeper understanding of the link between threats to biodiversity including, climate change and the emergence of infectious diseases.
- It is important to address the multiple and often interacting threats to ecosystems and wildlife to prevent zoonosis from emerging, including habitat loss and fragmentation, illegal trade in wildlife, pollution, invasive species and, increasingly, climate change. Mother nature is the responsibility of everyone.

“Nature based solutions and Ecosystem based adaptation”

Addressing climate change and biodiversity loss and ecosystems degradation are among the most urgent challenges of the 21st Century and have to be addressed jointly if we are to avoid catastrophic destruction, and also if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement. A coherent approach would ensure that climate change impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems are reduced, and that biodiversity and ecosystems can continue to contribute to climate adaptation and mitigation and to the restoration of degraded lands, and that is through:

- Prioritizing nature-based solutions that can provide multiple cascading benefits including ecosystem restoration, climate change mitigation/adaptation within the

scope of nationally determined contributions, and generally increasing synergies between the implementation of relevant national strategies and action plans;

- Increase investment and incentives to enable and promote implementation of and research on nature-based solutions; and
- Provide tools for decision-makers and experts in policy, practice and civil society to incorporate nature-based solutions /ecosystem-based approaches in priority sectors according to national priorities (e.g. energy and mining, infrastructure, industry, agriculture, forest management, water, urban planning, fisheries).

Additional proposal: Response to questions mentioned in the letter from Royal Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment:

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

We would welcome the following elements in the declaration;

1. Note the importance of reducing pressure on ecosystems and giving them sufficient time to allow for self-restoration.
2. Enhance ecosystem based adaptation and encourage nature based solutions for both mitigation and adaptation to climate change.
3. Encourage research and innovation in the fields of pollution control, water treatment and solid waste management to reduce pollution sources affecting ecosystems and increasing their fragility.
4. Recall the Rio principles, including equity, common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities and the right of developing countries to achieve sustainable development and eradicate poverty.
5. Note the urgent need to tackle immediate, short and medium term adaptation challenges facing developing countries, and highlight the importance of supporting adaptation efforts by providing the adequate means of implementation needed to complement national actions aimed at containing the adverse impacts of climate change.
6. Highlight that there are different initiatives aimed at tackling climate change, and stress with concern that such initiatives should respect the principles and provisions of the UNFCCC and that measures taken to combat climate change, including unilateral ones, should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade.
7. Strengthen cooperation between countries to provide technologies, mechanisms, technical support, and capacity building programs for developing countries to provide alternatives for unsustainable production and consumption patterns focusing on the agriculture, industry, energy, housing and tourism sectors.
8. Link between pre-university education and vocational education curricula and systems to preserve nature, environmental investment opportunities and rational use of natural resources.
9. Sustainable use of ecological resources (including biodiversity, land, climate, and seas) is important, however they are being exhausted and overused, and the effect is felt past national borders. There is thus an urgent need to encourage collaboration

between parties to manage and monitor how natural resources are extracted from global commons.

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.

We suggest the following;

1. Invite focal points of the three Rio conventions to participate in the meeting to guarantee that the outcomes of the meeting are aligned and do not contradict with the decisions and agreements taken under these conventions.
2. Establish a process of fundraising to meet the developing countries needs to implement concrete actions in the field of nature conservation and nature-based solutions.
3. Follow up on the implementation of the actions emerging from this meeting and encourage the showcasing of its achievements/outcomes in subsequent meetings.