

Draft Outline Document for the Ministerial Outcome Document of the 2021 UN Environment Assembly

Focus on the adopted theme "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable development Goals"

Vision: Urgent and transformative actions to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services are fundamental to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and rebuild a resilient and sustainable post-pandemic world.

Introduction: The science clearly identifies the urgent need for strengthened actions for nature to achieve sustainable development as called upon by the Rio+20 Outcome Document and Agenda 2030. COVID-19 has exposed how vulnerable our societies are and how connected we all are to each other and to nature. Healthy ecosystems are an important foundation to ensure healthy people, and loss of biodiversity undermines our individual and joint resilience. By protecting nature **and ensuring its sustainable use**, we protect ourselves. Fully implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, including eradicating poverty, is dependent on taking these challenges seriously. **As the pandemic severely aggravated social vulnerability within our countries, halting the loss of biodiversity and improving the conservation of ecosystems also remains deeply dependent on securing livelihoods and promoting the economic and social dimensions of sustainable development.** The UN Environmental Assembly is our platform for joint action and to respond to the urgency and scale of the challenge, moving beyond statements to gather forces around concrete actions.

We are experiencing an alarming loss of biodiversity and ecosystems on land, in freshwater and in the oceans. Land use change, over-exploitation, climate change, pollution and invasive species are all undermining our ability to ensure a safe and healthy life for our own and generations to come. The individual threats to nature are interconnected and exacerbate each other. These complex interlinkages, and the global scale of the challenges, require holistic and transformative approaches from the world, **with a special focus on modifying unsustainable consumption and production patterns, particularly in the most industrialized societies, as foreseen in SDG 12.** That requires efforts by governments, all relevant stakeholders, including the private sector and other economic actors all over the world.

Rebuilding a resilient and sustainable post-pandemic world also requires a strong multilateral system, international partnerships, and dedication to effective implementation of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals and other already agreed multilateral commitments including on means of implementation in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. **The effective implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the adequate provision of means of implementation, including transfer of technology, capacity building and financial support, take on an added significance in light of the economic consequences of the pandemic, especially in developing countries. Furthermore, the current scenario stresses the need for developed countries to fulfil their development assistance obligations, thus recognizing our common but differentiated responsibilities.** Together we can strengthen action to approach a positive scenario for our common home. **This requires putting people and nature at the heart of decision-making.** In line with the 1992 Rio Declaration, the holistic and transformative approaches needed to prevent the loss of biodiversity and ecosystems depend

on recognizing human beings as the centre of the concerns for sustainable environment, so as to better understand the drivers behind environmental degradation.

Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) issued a clear challenge in their 2019 Global Assessment Report¹ stating that "goals for conserving and sustainably using nature and achieving sustainability cannot be met by current trajectories, and goals for 2030 and beyond may only be achieved through transformative changes across economic, social, political and technological factors." We have through our broad consultations identified three transformative areas for joint and positive action by UNEA5.

~~Green recovery~~ Sustainable and resilient recovery

~~Now is the time to build back better.~~ We recognize that the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals provide a roadmap for building back better through an inclusive, sustainable and resilient recovery that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. We ~~recognize~~ also acknowledge the vulnerability of our society and our economy, especially in developing countries, and the urgency of efforts for a post COVID-19 recovery that puts society on track for the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals through strengthened action for nature. Leadership, science-based decision-making, involvement of stakeholders, and global cooperation will only be more important in the time to come. Ministers can promote regulations, incentives, financial instruments that respond to the COVID-19 situation while at the same time contributing to a low GHG emission economy based on sustainable production and consumption, ~~circular economy, and a pollution-free world with vital ecosystem services and biodiversity,~~ bioeconomy and reliable provision and valuing of ecosystem services. It will be to our benefit that we reduce our environmental footprint and ~~place people and nature at the heart of decision-making~~ build more resilient, sustainable and inclusive economies.

The measures we take should work with nature and not against it and ~~support nature-based solutions~~ support ecosystem-based approaches and bioeconomy. The UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration and the 2018-2030 strategic framework of the UNCCD are timely opportunities. Land degradation and loss of ecosystem services represent a 10% loss in global annual gross product and negatively impact on the well-being of at least 3.2 billion people². Ministers can draw attention to the benefits for biodiversity, climate change adaptation and mitigation, benefits for the economy, welfare and potential for jobs through ecosystem restoration. Ministers can consider ways for the public and private sector to take better account of biodiversity and ecosystem services and contribute to mainstreaming in decision-making processes across governments and economic sectors. Given the economic consequences of the pandemic for the poorest and the people living in vulnerable situations, Ministers may consider innovative financial schemes for payments for ecosystem services, in order to support local communities. Ministers may consider how the UN Environment

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Commented [H2]: The concept of nature-based solutions (NbS) lacks a multilaterally agreed definition, which ultimately may lead to ambiguity and undermine discussions on the actions needed to ensure healthy ecosystems. Prior to the uptake of such a concept, it is of utmost importance to assess its full implications in appropriate multilateral fora, so as to have a better understanding of the linkages between NbS and current approaches, such as Ecosystem-Based Approaches (EBA).

¹ IPBES (2019) Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services

² IPBES (2018) The assessment report on land degradation and restoration.

Programme and the UN system as a whole can best support strengthened efforts for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals across their work and to support countries in this effort.

Healthy ecosystems, healthy people - Holistic approaches to protect and restore nature and ecosystem services – ~~including nature-based solutions~~

Ministers may raise attention as to the importance of healthy ecosystems as a foundation to ensure healthy people, and that the considerable loss of biodiversity is undermining our joint resilience. It is the poorest among us who are most vulnerable. Zoonotic diseases like COVID-19 expose the close relationship between nature and people. We increase our vulnerability to such diseases through environmental degradation and the lack of adequate and effective mechanisms to address illegal wildlife trade, as well as other illicit predatory activities, such as the misappropriation of biological and genetic resources. This pandemic reveals the associated significant cost and the need for strengthened action to avoid future emergence of zoonotic diseases. Besides taking account account the effects of environmental degradation, Ministers may consider the linkages between the illegal trade and use of wildlife, the misappropriation of biological resources and the emergence of zoonotic diseases. Identifying the drivers behind wildlife consumption and the specific risks thereof will help us devise better biosafety measures that are essential to curb transmission events and reduce animal-to-human spillover of new viruses. Recognizing the rapid loss of nature, the piece by piece loss of natural habitat and the associated increasing risk for our societies and the risks of disease transmission prompted by illegal wildlife trade, ministers can commit to measures to strengthened cross-sectoral efforts to protect and ensure the sustainable use of biodiversity, reverse the degradation of ecosystems and enhance ecosystem resilience and regulate wildlife trade and consumption. ~~This also as important measures to urgently adapt and mitigate climate change~~ Fair and equitable benefit-sharing is an indispensable component of any attempts to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Ministers can promote involvement of a broad range of actors in the development and scaling up of effective actions, including indigenous peoples and local communities, local and sub-national authorities, women and youth groups. Building on this and given the developments around the order of environment-related international meetings in 2021, the ministers can commit to the development and effective implementation of an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework to be adopted at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, to be held in China, which reflects a proper balance between all three pillars of the CBD: conservation, sustainable use, and benefit-sharing. Without encroaching on the mandates and legal regimes of other multilateral environmental agreements and in a manner fully respectful of the independent nature of their respective Governing Bodies, Ministers can also emphasise the importance for enhancing synergies at all levels between the biodiversity related conventions and other multilateral environmental agreements in order to efficiently contribute to the implementation of the post 2020 global biodiversity framework and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Ministers should also consider ways to support the work of the UNFCCC and the Paris agreement, thus contributing to the 26th Conference of the Parties in 2021 and the negotiations of the beyond 2020 instrument for the sound management of chemicals and waste. Acknowledgement of such synergies, however, should in no way be interpreted as detracting from the established priorities of different multilateral environment agreements, including in the area of climate change, where the core goal remains the reduction of fossil fuel-related emissions.

Sustainable food systems – a part of the solution

Meeting the world's increasing demand for food while still reducing agriculture's environmental impacts is one of the defining challenges of our time, as stated in the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) 2019 Global Assessment Report. Addressing solutions to the food system is an important opportunity for ministers at the environment assembly, as well as for the private sector, farmers and other stakeholders. Among the findings of the IPBES report is that feeding humanity and enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of nature are complementary and closely interdependent goals. They can be advanced through sustainable agriculture, aquaculture and livestock systems, innovative agroforestry systems, such as integrated cropland-livestock-forestry projects, the safeguarding of native species, varieties, breeds and habitats, and ecological restoration. Ministers may also raise attention to the ways in which sustainable food systems can be promoted through benefit sharing mechanisms, in order to stimulate discussions on the need to improve those mechanisms within the International Treaty on Phytogenetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and advance the regulation of the Global Multilateral Benefit-Sharing Mechanism of the Nagoya Protocol. The ministerial declaration can contribute to the growing understanding and attention to the environmental dimension of sustainable food systems, including how improvements in the different parts of the food systems are important for both people's livelihood and health, the environment and the economy, and its significance to be able to provide a healthy and affordable diet to the global population in decades to come. This is critical to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Ministers can highlight important approaches and solutions that are available and contribute to further measures to strengthen action at the UN Food Summit in 2021.