

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. 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, we protect ourselves. Fully implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, including eradicating poverty, is dependent on taking these challenges seriously. 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 and degradation of biodiversity and ecosystems on land, in freshwater and in the oceans. Land use change, natural resources over-exploitation, climate change, pollution, invasive species, extension of urban and rural areas, as well as uses and means of production that put pressure on natural resources, 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 urgent, holistic and transformative approaches from the world. That requires efforts by national and sub-national governments, all relevant stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and local communities, civil society, the private and financial sector and other economic actors all over the world.

Given the link between zoonotic disease and environmental degradation, rRebuilding a resilient and sustainable post-pandemic world also requires a strong multilateral system, international partnerships, inclusive participation of society for the conservation of biodiversity and maintenance of ecosystem goods and services with strong institutions to address major global challenges –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. Together we can strengthen action to approach a positive scenario for our common home and common future. This requires putting people and nature at the heart of decision-making.

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

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

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broad consultations identified three transformative areas for joint and positive action by UNEA5.

Green recovery

Now is the time to build back better. We recognize the vulnerability of our society and our economy and the urgency of efforts for a post COVID-19 recovery that puts society on track towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals through strengthened action to conserve, restore and sustainably use nature, and the services it provides. Leadership, science-based decision-making, involvement of all stakeholders, including the private sector, 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 consumption practices, such as agroecology and traditional practices, circular economy, and a pollution-free world with healthy biodiversity and vital ecosystem services and biodiversity. It will be to our benefit that we reduce our environmental footprint and place people and nature-relevant stakeholders at the heart of decision making.

Ministers can promote the mobilization of new and additional means of implementation from all sources to achieve the sustainable management of natural resources, particularly public resources. However, given the the budgetary reductions many countries currently face, there is a greater need for financing mechanisms that leverage resources from the private sector. Emphasis must be placed on innovative mechanisms such as the issuance of green, social and sustainable bonds, which promote results-based payments for projects with certified positive economic, social and environmental impacts.

Ministers can more actively support small and medium-sized businesses, including those led by women, and empower them as key actors in sustainable development for the creation of new green jobs and economic growth, especially in emerging economies.

The measures we take should work with nature and not against it and support nature-based solutions, including ecosystem-based approaches. 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 conservation and restoration.

Ministers can promote effective conservation schemes, such as Payment for Environmental Services (PES) programs, which allow for managing, protecting, conserving and improving

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

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Diverse agroecosystems deliver multiple contributions from nature to people, becoming more resilient to abrupt changes and less dependent on external inputs.

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Commented [EV4]: Should add green stimulus as a way to build resilience for a greener, healthier post-covid future, as well as structural changes to accelerate decarbonization.

ecosystems with an integrated land management approach, and promote productive environmentally friendly projects. These types of incentives-based policies help sustain the provision of ecosystems services such as clean air and water, biocultural diversity conservation, refuge for species, hydrological cycles regulation, healthy food and medicinal herbs, and green employment.

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. The participation of other-productive sectors, whose negative externalities impact ecosystems and therefore biodiversity, is important.

Ministers may consider how the UN Environment 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 human 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's and people's health. We increase our vulnerability to such diseases through environmental degradation. This pandemic reveals the associated significant cost and the need for strengthened action to avoid future emergence of zoonotic diseases.

Reinforcing the importance of maintaining a balance between nature and human activities and recognizing the rapid loss of nature, the piece by piece loss of natural habitat and the associated increasing risk for our societies, ministers can commit to measures to strengthened cross-sectoral efforts to protect and sustainably use biodiversity, reverse the degradation of ecosystems and enhance ecosystem resilience. This also as important measures to urgently adapt and mitigate climate change effects.

-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. They can also promote effective intersectoral coordination and collaboration mechanisms with different levels of government, to promote the articulation of public policies in the territory.

Ministers can promote Integrated Landscape Management, which provides countries with a tool for territorial planning and management, and for promoting sustainable production practices, through which disaster risk related to climate change is prevented in addition to receiving environmental services.

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, [taking into account lessons learned from the Aichi Goals](#).

Ministers can also emphasise the importance for enhancing synergies at all levels between the biodiversity related conventions and other multilateral environmental agreements, [such as the the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change \(UNFCCC\), and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification \(UNCCD\) to join efforts 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](#).

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 [all 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 [agroecology](#), sustainable [agriculture](#), [aquaculture](#), [agroforestry](#), [traditional management](#) and [agrosilvopastorallivestock](#) systems. [As well as the safeguarding of breeds, native and wild species, agrobiodiversity, varieties, breeds, natives and habitats, and ecological productive restoration](#).

[Ministers can promote the vision of sustainable practices in agriculture and livestock to reduce their expansion into forest areas and their associated impact on deforestation. They can also promote the functional restoration of landscapes through Integrated Land Management and Productive Restoration, ensuring forest restoration, improvement of soil and hydrological conditions, promotion of sustainable and traditional practices, and coordinated interventions in the territory](#)

The ministerial declaration can contribute to the growing understanding and attention to the environmental dimension of sustainable [and healthy](#) food systems, [with an efficient use of water in agriculture](#) as a condition for [food security](#), 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

Commented [EV5]: It might also be important to mention the Decade of Action to deliver SDGs by 2030, the United Nations Decade for the Restoration of Ecosystems and the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework.

that are available and contribute to further measures to strengthen action at the UN Food Summit in 2021.