

Contributions of Colombia to the draft outline of the Ministerial Declaration of the Document of the 2021 UNEA5
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.

Comment of Colombia 20200813

With regards to the vision, Colombia considers important to make reference to long lasting actions, and to mention climate change, considering that 2020 will be a key year to ensure robust commitments that will be critical to achieve the SDGs.

We suggest the following adjustments:

Urgent, transformative, **and long-lasting** actions to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services, **and to effectively address climate change**, 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, 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 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. 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. 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.

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This paragraph is crucial because recalls the direct drivers of biodiversity loss, nevertheless we consider important to include also the indirect drivers according to the IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, due to the underlying causes are causing and accelerating the biodiversity loss:

“(…) Land use change, over-exploitation, climate change, pollution and invasive species **and the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss**, are all undermining our ability to ensure a safe and healthy life for our own and generations to come.

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

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 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. It will be to our benefit that we reduce our environmental footprint and place people and nature at the heart of decision making.

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We consider important to mention some projects and activities that may contribute to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda 2030. For this reason we propose the following wording:

GHG emission economy based on **sustainable production and consumption, circular economy, and a pollution-free world with vital ecosystem services and biodiversity—and the bioeconomy, boosting initiatives and projects in areas such as sustainable infrastructure, sustainable cities, sustainable tourism, agroforestry and silvopastoral production, payments for environmental services and payment for results, prioritizing investments in health and education, in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda 2030-**. It will be to our benefit that we reduce our environmental footprint and place people and nature at the heart of decision making.

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

The measures we take should work with nature and not against it and support nature-based solutions. 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. 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 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. This pandemic reveals the associated significant cost and the need for strengthened action to avoid future emergence of zoonotic diseases. 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 biodiversity, reverse the degradation of ecosystems and enhance ecosystem resilience. This also as important measures to urgently adapt and mitigate climate change. 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. 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.

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In this segment for the first draft of delcaration Colombia highlights the following aspects:

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

- Although protection is named in the title, this section has a general focus on a restoration approach. A more balanced approach including preventing action and efforts to avoid destruction of nature -not only for biodiversity but also for ecosystem degradation in general- should be considered.
- Actions to prevent, reduce, and control pollution on land and marine ecosystems should be a part of the commitments of the ministers but also other stakeholders. Whereas there is political agreement on the need to act, there has been an insufficient political will to translate it into real action on the ground.
- Ministers should consider the reaffirmation of the commitments included in the Paris Agreement such as pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Having in mind the ambition of the declaration and the urgent call to action, and according to the Global Risks Report 2020 of the World Economic Forum, inaction against climate change and loss of biodiversity are among the top 10 risks with the greatest impact globally. It is key to mention the risk to give even more weight to the need to take urgent action for biodiversity. Therefore, we propose the following wording:

Holistic approaches to protect and restore nature and ecosystem services – including nature-based solutions are intrinsically invaluable and underpins human health, wellbeing and prosperity. Protecting and restoring biodiversity and well-functioning ecosystems are crucial to boost our resilience and help us prevent zoonotic diseases. We know that half of the world's GDP depends on nature, yet we are not valuing nature nor factoring its services into decision-making, even though the benefits of protecting, sustainably managing and restoring nature outweigh the costs ten-fold, while the costs of inaction on biodiversity loss are high. For this reason, we must reassess our relationship with nature by rethinking our consumption and production patterns, strengthening the sustainable use of resources, and prioritizing investments in the protection of nature to help boost global economies, prevent new pandemics and boost global sustainable development.

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, the safeguarding of native species, varieties, breeds and habitats, and ecological restoration. 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.

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Colombia considers that a fair transition towards more sustainable food systems should be promoted. In this regard, the cost of such a transition should not fall on small farmers or producers, who are often the weakest link in the production chain. On the contrary, financial incentives as well as technical assistance and technology transfer should be properly provided to support these transition actions.

It is crucial that governments with other stakeholders can build and improve sustainable production and consumption policies that contribute to change behaviour patterns as well as to reduce negative effects on environment.