

Excellency,

On behalf of the Republic of Uzbekistan, we are pleased to submit our initial input for the zero draft of the UNEA-7 Ministerial Declaration, aligning with the theme “*Advancing Sustainable Solutions for a Resilient Planet.*”

Our input is the following:

Commit to combating nature crime by eliminating the illegal and unsustainable use and trade of wildlife and biodiversity, while promoting and supporting the legal, sustainable, and safe use and trade of these resources to strengthen local livelihoods and national economies.

The Republic of Uzbekistan is confronting complex environmental challenges, including the long-lasting consequences of the Aral Sea disaster, increasing desertification, water scarcity, and the loss of native biodiversity. These issues are compounded by the impacts of climate change and unsustainable resource use, putting ecosystems and rural livelihoods at further risk.

In recognition of the urgent need to address these challenges, the President of Uzbekistan has declared **2025 as the Year of Environmental Protection and Green Economy**, reinforcing the country’s firm commitment to sustainable development and ecological stewardship. Earlier this year, Uzbekistan also hosted the **Samarkand Climate Forum** in April, bringing together international partners and experts to strengthen regional and global cooperation on climate action.

As a reflection of Uzbekistan’s commitment to environmental stewardship and biodiversity conservation, we are honored to host the **20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES CoP20)** in 2025. This historic event—the first CITES CoP ever held in Central Asia—highlights Uzbekistan’s active leadership in combatting illegal wildlife trade and promoting the legal, regulated, and sustainable use of biodiversity.

In this context, Uzbekistan wishes to emphasize the following priorities:

1. **Strengthening Wildlife Protection and Combating Nature Crime** – Enhancing enforcement, capacity-building, and international cooperation to fight illegal wildlife trade, with strong alignment to the principles and objectives of CITES.
2. **Ecological Restoration of the Aral Sea Region** – Advancing large-scale afforestation and ecosystem recovery efforts in the dried seabed of the Aral Sea through national and international cooperation.
3. **Combatting Land Degradation and Desertification** – Scaling up sustainable land management and climate adaptation measures to reverse desertification and support livelihoods in vulnerable areas.
4. **Sustainable Water Management** – Promoting efficient, equitable, and cooperative use of transboundary water resources, particularly in the Syr Darya and Amu Darya basins.
5. **Mainstreaming Green Development** – Advancing Uzbekistan’s Strategy for Transition to a Green Economy, and integrating sustainability across agriculture, energy, and infrastructure development.

We propose that the UNEA-7 Ministerial Declaration recognize the critical role of multilateral environmental agreements, including CITES, in tackling biodiversity loss and nature crime, and highlight the importance of strengthening global cooperation to support sustainable and legal biodiversity use.

Uzbekistan remains strongly committed to the objectives of UNEA-7 and looks forward to contributing actively to the development of a bold and inclusive Ministerial Declaration.