

Initial draft, 8 October 2021

Ministerial declaration for the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

“Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”

Proposed preambular section

Proposed preambular paragraph 1: We, the ministers of environment of the world, gathered at the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, under the exceptional circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, to strengthen actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Proposed preambular paragraph 2: We recognize that a healthy nature is a prerequisite and a foundation for sustainable development in all its dimensions, and that we depend on nature, and on the solutions it provides, for our health, our well-being, our resilience, our economy, and ultimately our very existence.

Proposed preambular paragraph 3: We note with deep concern the loss, degradation, and fragmentation of ecosystems and biodiversity habitats, which affect life on land and life below water, due to multiple and interlinked threats such as the unsustainable management of nature and its resources, unsustainable consumption and production patterns, climate change, and pollution and litter in water, air, and soil.

We further note with grave concern that the 2020 goal on the sound management of chemicals and waste has not been achieved, in addition to the pollution goal, which continues to threaten nature and our health.

Proposed preambular paragraph 4: We are encouraged by the power of innovation, knowledge-building, and ongoing investment in green technologies, which indicate that solutions exist or can be reached.

Proposed preambular paragraph 5: We are deeply concerned about the devastating impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on human life and health, as well as on economies and societies, which threaten our ability to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, and we recognize that we face recurrent risks of future pandemics if current patterns of interaction with nature continue.

Proposed preambular paragraph 6: We acknowledge the need for transformative and systemic changes and the opportunities to achieve more through policies and investments that address many environmental challenges at once through comprehensive and innovative approaches that truly value nature.

Proposed preambular paragraph 7: As the United Nations Environment Programme marks its fiftieth anniversary with a special session of the Environment Assembly, we reaffirm UNEP's continuing significance as a champion of the global environment and reiterate our support to further strengthen UNEP.

Proposed operative section

Proposed operative paragraph 8: We commit to supporting a green and just recovery aimed at revitalizing our economies and livelihoods and contributing to the eradication of poverty by mainstreaming environmental concerns into all policies; by leveraging ecosystem-focused green-economy pathways and knowledge-based management; and by reducing greenhouse-gas emissions while adapting to climate change in line with the Paris Agreement.

Proposed operative paragraph 9: We commit to acting across sectors and levels of government to halt the loss, degradation, and fragmentation of ecosystems, focusing on areas of particular importance for biodiversity, through sustainable land use, effective management of protected areas, and protection of particularly fragile habitats, species, and ecosystems; and by addressing illegal deforestation, wildlife trafficking, mining, and other crimes that have severe environmental impacts.

We commit to seeking and joining unconventional cross-sector partnerships, and to working with youth, Indigenous Peoples, the private sector, and civil society as a whole, to advance actions that

enhance nature and reverse the long-term negative trend for the environment described in recent scientific reports issued by the United Nations Environment Programme, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Proposed operative paragraph 10: We commit to revisiting our approaches to the use and management of nature and its resources, and to advancing sustainable consumption and production patterns, including through resource efficiency and circular-economy policy approaches, and through integrating the sound valuation of nature and the assessment of nature-related risks in policymaking.

Proposed operative paragraph 11: We commit to encouraging and promoting nature-based solutions through the effective protection and sustainable restoration of degraded ecosystems that provide us with food, water, and energy; that are habitats for biodiversity; and that enable carbon storage and sequestration, climate-change adaptation, and disaster-risk reduction, such as natural forests, wetlands, and mangroves, thereby supporting our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Proposed operative paragraph 12: We commit to cross-sector and multi-level cooperation to transform our food systems, inspired by the vision of the United Nations Food Systems Summit, towards sustainable food systems that deliver enhanced food security and resilience while reducing emissions, biodiversity loss, and freshwater use. We underscore UNEP's role in the Summit's follow-up processes.

Proposed operative paragraph 13: We will promote comprehensive land-use planning supported by strong national enforcement as an invaluable tool for sustainable development, and we will help create an enabling business environment that stimulates investment in sustainable production and value chains.

Proposed operative paragraph 14: We commit to protecting life below water and to ensuring clean, healthy, and productive oceans capable of providing food, livelihoods, and carbon storage, by strengthening

efforts for the sustainable management of all our oceans, as well as the sustainable use and protection of oceans and seas and coastal ecosystems; and by working to prevent pollution, ocean warming, and ocean acidification, maintaining our efforts in line with the Paris Agreement.

Proposed operative paragraph 15: We continue our dedication to act in line with the “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet” Implementation Plan to protect nature and human health from the harmful effects of chemicals and waste and to support an ambitious post-2020 framework for the sound management of chemicals and waste.

Proposed operative paragraph 16: Text referring to recent developments and outcomes on marine litter.

Proposed operative paragraph 17: We reaffirm the ongoing need to strengthen actions for nature and our commitment to the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and we call for an ambitious and transformative post-2020 global biodiversity framework to be adopted at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, including a set of clear and strong goals and targets to address the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss, as a principal means to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Proposed operative paragraph 18: We call for appropriate and consistent implementation of the actions, commitments, and decisions adopted by the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, as well as the previous outcomes of the Assembly. We also recognize our role, as ministers of environment, in following up on these commitments within our governments, contributing to coordinated action across sectors and levels of government, and strengthening effective implementation.

Proposed operative paragraph 19: We recognize that effective implementation of these actions requires enabling and coherent policy frameworks at all levels, supported by effective means of implementation from all funding sources, including domestic and

international sources, the private sector, and innovative sources, consistent with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda; as well as continued capacity-building, environmentally sound technologies, dedicated development partnerships, and a renewed and strong commitment to multilateralism.