Statement of Prof. Mark Sutton to CPR-159 on behalf of the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (NERC-CEH)

Thank you Chair. On behalf of the GEF/UNEP project Towards the establishment of an International Nitrogen Management System (INMS), we very much welcome the initiative of the Executive Director, Ms Inger Anderson to invite Member States to nominate chairs to the Nitrogen Working Group. It is also excellent to see several countries offering nominations, and we thank Sri Lanka, India, Romania, Rwanda and Egypt for their initiative.

I wish only to draw one further matter to the attention of Your Excellency's. In the presentation from UNEP delivered by Ms Tessa Goverse about UNEP follow-up to the two UNEA resolutions on Sustainable Nitrogen Management (4/14, 5/2), she noted that an ambition to halve nitrogen waste would save approximately $100 billion USD annually, to be updated. The need to update reflects the current global energy crisis, which is massively increasing fertilizer prices. Currently, in many parts of the world, fertilizer prices paid by farmers are now triple the cost prior to 2020. Broadly speaking, this means that halving nitrogen waste globally – reducing emissions from all sources and forms of nitrogen – would now save around $300 billion USD annually.

To take the example from my own country, the United Kingdom: at £2400 GBP per tonne of nitrogen fertilizer, and wasting around 1520 thousand tonnes of nitrogen resource annually from the agri-food system alone, this means a waste of around £3.6 billion GBP annually. This can be compared with the total value of Government agricultural support to farmers in the UK, which is about £3 billion GBP annually. Nitrogen waste from the agri-food system is thus similar or larger than the entire cost of the agricultural support package. The scale of these numbers demonstrates the urgent need to accelerate actions for sustainable nitrogen management, which can strengthen our economy and environment at the same time.

On behalf of the global scientific community across the INMS project, we look forward to working further with Your Excellency's and Member States on this critical challenge.

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