



**Response to UNEA Bureau President Siim Kiisler's Request for Comments on the
Zero Draft of a Ministerial Declaration**

The National Council for Science and the Environment
November 2018

The National Council for Science and the Environment (NCSE) is a not-for-profit organization that works to improve the scientific basis of environmental policy and decision-making. NCSE appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Zero Draft of the UNEA-4 Ministerial Declaration.

NCSE welcomes the Ministerial Declaration's Main Priority 1: *Ensure the access and use of global environmental data and develop innovative digital solutions*. It also agrees with the Ministerial Declaration that the availability of transparent, reliable, comparable and accessible environmental data is vital for decision-making. However, making this data useful and available is an ambitious endeavour that requires highly trained professional resources. Therefore, NCSE emphasizes the role of the science community in collecting and interpreting global environmental data and in ensuring the scientific rigor of that process. The science community should be given sufficient means for this work and adequate mechanisms should be created for bringing the resulting knowledge to policymakers. Further, governments should be committed to using that knowledge as a basis for their decision-making and to ensure that the processes of consulting academic experts are transparent, open and inclusive, offering opportunities to researchers from different disciplines and institutions at all stages of their careers.

All this is in line with Main Priority 3: *Support robust engagement of civil society, citizens, private sector and academia in promoting innovative approaches for meeting global environmental challenges and sustainable production and consumption*. NCSE wholeheartedly agrees that representatives of academia and other citizens have a vital role in identifying and advocating sustainable solutions to global environmental challenges. In addition, ensuring citizens an access to environmental education and integrating responsible consumption and production policies into curricula are essential for achieving a sustainable change. To this end, educational institutions at all levels should be provided the necessary resources for offering the relevant training.

NCSE also supports Main Priority 2: *Foster sustainable and efficient resource management to decarbonize, detoxify, decouple and enhance ecosystem resilience*. NCSE, however, notes that this segment of the Ministerial Declaration, while identifying critical global environmental problems, could be more forthcoming and specific of how to implement the recommendations for societal change. Furthermore, NCSE advocates an approach that is sensitive to the circumstances in the least developed countries. The Ministerial Declaration contains references to technology which is not available to many countries and recycling and sustainable practices that may not be applicable for much of the global south.