ARGENTINA – INPUTS FOR UNEA V MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

I- What would you as, government/organization/stakeholder, welcome as the most important elements and/or key messages from the ministers in the declaration to address the theme in an impactful manner?

1. The COVID-19 pandemic presents us with the challenge of facing a shift in the paradigm the way societies relate to nature, which involves assuming that human beings are a driver for change with global impact. The current trajectory has proven to be unsustainable and the efforts made to date have been insufficient to stop the degradation of ecosystems, with the consequent loss of environmental services and functions. The last IPBES report indicates that incremental changes are not enough and that "transformative changes" must be carried out to conserve, restore and sustainably use environmental goods and services.

2. Concatenated changes at the local, sub-national, national and regional levels can lead to systemic transformations. Hence the importance of promoting the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the generation of added value in local communities. With respect to urban and peri-urban areas, the relevance of promoting a fair and inclusive agro ecological transition is highlighted, which should include the production and consumption of food from nearby geographical sources. It is considered important to advance in the development of nature-based solutions to address the post-pandemic situation.

3. The degradation, alteration and pollution of natural ecosystems are increasing in their variety, quantity and scope and have acquired a global scale. In this sense, a systemic transition is required to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems and associated goods and services, through appropriate policies and actions.

4. The current COVID-19 pandemic clearly shows the connection between human health and the environment. In order to avoid other major health crises in the future, an integrated approach is required with respect to the various environmental agendas, ecosystem conservation, human health, and plant and animal health.

5. Pollution decrease, verifiable at an atmospheric level and in both marine and inland waters, and the appearance of animals that were confined in habitats far from urban and semi-urban populations, present an opportunity to promote a change in the perception of consequences of our actions on our natural heritage.

6. The scale and complexity of the challenges to be addressed require the concerted effort of States and the articulation with the scientific-technological system, grassroots organizations, the private sector and civil society organizations.

7. There is a direct relationship between biodiversity, sustainable use and food security. Although the immediate priority is to prevent the spread of Covid-19, it is essential to address, in the long term, the loss of habitats and biodiversity. The loss of biodiversity triggers complex processes, such as the loss of pollinators that endangers food security, which only in recent years we are beginning to fully understand.

8. The five biggest threats to biodiversity are habitat degradation and loss, overexploitation of its resources, climate change, invasive species, and pollution. Keeping ecosystems healthy, functioning, providing their environmental goods and services is a fundamental part of the system that sustains life. Strong environmental policies are necessary to accompany a transition towards a new normality, which involves profound social changes. To achieve this, the role of environmental education is crucial.

II.- How can the environment assembly make a significant contribution to strengthening actions for nature to achieve the sustainable development goals at a global scale?. In doing so, you may take into account the preparation for the meeting, its conduct and follow-up, as well as its relationship to other meetings and processes.

1. Progress should be made towards translating commitments in concrete actions and goals with defined deadlines in the framework of the 2030 Agenda.

2. ANUMA V should urge developed countries to deepen and honor their commitments to developing countries in the provision of means of implementation (notoriously financing, technology transfer, technical assistance, and capacity building). This would allow reflecting the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, enshrined through various environmental agreements.

At the same time, this would represent an efficient channeling of resources, from a financial viewpoint, since some of the most promising ways to deal with multiple environmental problems are in developing countries, which must create their critical infrastructure networks, set up or complete the laying of national electrical systems, build terrestrial communication routes and establish the basic services (houses, sewers, drinking water, roads and routes, etc.) necessary to manage the rapid urbanization processes that have been going on for decades. Providing the necessary means of implementation, so that these processes of accelerated modernization in developing countries benefit from the accumulated and currently available collective experience in the area of environmental, social and productive efficiency, would represent a more effective use of available financial resources than its application to renovate the current infrastructure of some developed countries.

This would mean a clear expression of political will in the direction of effectively implementing international commitments and promises already made, but still pending of materialization. This includes the agreements emerged at Rio 1992, which gave rise to the agreements regarding climate change, biodiversity and the fight against desertification.

It is also crucial to mention the 2030 Agenda and specifically Sustainable Development Goal 17 (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development), which covers aspects such as the mobilization of financial resources; regional and international cooperation in science, technology and innovation; the development and transfer of environmentally sound technologies; capacity building; promoting international trade and especially exports; and help to achieve long-term sovereign debt sustainability; all the preceding points from an orientation that mainly benefits developing countries.

3. The science-policy interface is key in preventing, solving or mitigating problems of increasing complexity, such as the current pandemic and the broad spectrum of environmental agendas that are being addressed in parallel and at various levels.

4. Countries that conserve vast portions of natural ecosystems in a good state of conservation should be prioritized when carrying out programs, investments, and actions that contribute to the development, conservation, management, and sustainable use of such systems.

5. Investments should preferentially opt for those technologies that have the least impact on the environment and generate the greatest well-being for people and workers, always taking into account the articulation with the corresponding international negotiation areas according to each sector of the economy.

6. The support and technological assistance to the peoples that inhabit natural ecosystems and that, when using them in a sustainable way, contribute to their conservation, must be increased. Preserving cultural diversity will contribute to both its resilience and the conservation of biological and productive diversity.

7. UNEA must join efforts with FAO and other competent organizations to promote the incorporation of sustainability guidelines in the agriculture and livestock sectors (sustainable management of water; mitigation and adaptation to climate change; preservation of ecosystems and biodiversity; reduction in the most expeditious way possible in the use of agrochemicals).

These guidelines must be combined with:

a. Progress in the implementation of rigorous certification standards in the methods of production in terms of environmental footprint and carbon footprint;
b. The promotion of international food trade and the reduction of trade protectionism in this area.
c. Greater efficiency in the food logistics chain, from its production to its final consumption, in order to reduce the considerably high levels of food waste that are currently registered;

d. The promotion of various modalities of food production, favoring the spread of biotechnology, organic production (fully compatible with the other modalities), the coexistence of food-producing units of large, medium and small dimensions;
e. The promotion of scientific knowledge regarding agricultural production, which can benefit from the contributions of traditional knowledge regarding crops, water use and soil management (particularly those adapted to a specific ecosystem).

8. The post-pandemic economy should strive to avoid incurring in new environmental costs, so as not to repeat past mistakes. Development projects must be analyzed transversally, internalizing these costs in advance. This will allow a complete comparative analysis of the available options (combining the social, economic and environmental dimensions) and duly analyze the opportunity and convenience of their implementation.

9. In a different train of thoughts, we believe UNEA V should explore options to give continuity to its thematic approaches. A challenge for the next Assembly is to string together the theme chosen (*Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the sustainable development goals*) with the motto of UNEA III (*Towards a pollution free planet*) and the corresponding to UNEA IV (*Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production*). Argentina considers that it is necessary to present an overarching vision to overcome the image that every two years the Assembly addresses a new issue on the global environmental agenda unrelated to the previous ones, as if it were watertight compartments.