



World Federation of Engineering Organizations
Fédération Mondiale des Organisations d'Ingénieurs

12 May 2020

H.E. Mr. Sveinung Rotevatn
President of the UN Environment Assembly
and Minister of Environment and Climate of Norway.

Dear Mr. Sveinung Rotevatn,

Writing on behalf of the World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO), I wish to contribute our initial ideas and inputs to specified questions on the ministerial declaration of the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly.

We consider the two questions:

- 1. 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?*
- 2. 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.*

Emerging evidence of the broader impact of the COVID-19 crisis on our quest to achieve the SDGs is troubling. UNESCO estimates that some 1.25 billion students are affected, posing a serious challenge to the attainment of SDGs Goal 4 (Quality Education). We are seeing wide-scale job losses, with those in informal employment suffering most from lack of social protection. Unfortunately, these are just the tip of the iceberg.

Our suggested input and guidelines from the engineering profession:

- 1- Attach the same level of importance and urgency to the fight against poverty, hunger, and climate change and focus on people particularly, women, youth, low-wage workers, small and medium enterprises, the informal sector and vulnerable groups already at risk.
- 2- Investing in Engineers and Scientists brings independent countries. We need to continue promoting sustainable investment by requesting mandatory disclosures, minimum standards for investment products and incentives.
- 3- Suspending debt payments and reassess debt sustainability beyond the crisis at the regional level by establishing a regional response fund or exploring the possibility of multi-country social bonds in financing the SDGs post-pandemic in sanitation and renewable energy.
- 4- Promoting sustainable investment in education and “green” jobs at the local circuit with a public and private investment in sustainable development such as building resilient infrastructure; strengthening social protection systems; additional investment in crisis prevention, risk reduction and planning; and eliminating trade barriers and restrictions that affect supply chains.
- 5- Collecting and analysing disaggregated data so that decision-makers at all levels can take proactive measures to prioritize and target mitigation and response measures to those most affected and those at heightened risk of infection and mortality. Reinforcing and expanding social protection systems to

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include the informal sector, including micro entrepreneurs and self-employed people, especially the most precarious in domestic, care and services work, including sex workers, to ensure that all people have access to a universal basic income, paid leave, food, and caregiving services. Specific actions to fulfil the right to information, including by ensuring that information about the pandemic is available in different languages and formats accessible to people with disabilities, illiterate, and those lacking access to digital spaces while ensuring the broadest possible access to the internet.

- 6- Collecting and analysing disaggregated data so that decision-makers at all levels can take proactive measures to prioritize and target mitigation and response measures to those most affected and those at heightened risk of infection and mortality.
- 7- Eliminate user fees and increase immediate investments in public health systems to provide comprehensive and quality services that are available, acceptable and accessible, especially to communities most at risk from the pandemic, and help to facilitate long-term improvements in health infrastructure, and the quality and accessibility of care. Ensure access to the highest attainable standard of both physical and mental health, including providing access to highly isolated populations to engage in and practice self-care.
- 8- Safeguard democratic elections, alongside public health, by adapting and reforming election law and voting procedures to allow 100% voting by mail, while ensuring transparent elections free from corruption and coercion. Engage communities, especially those most affected, social movements, non-governmental organizations, local government and academics to develop immediate responses and document lessons learned from taking an intersectional approach to apply to future crises and emergencies.

We also request that the engineering profession and the contribution of engineers be acknowledged within the ministerial declaration. Indeed, the implementation of solutions to achieve the UN SDGs requires to a very significant extent the contributions of engineers and engineering.

In March 2018 the WFEO signed the Paris Declaration with UNESCO clearly demonstrating the commitment of 30million engineers worldwide to Sustainable Development. Furthermore, following its 2019 General Assembly in Melbourne, and in the frame of the COP25 in Madrid, WFEO has summarised its position and commitment to act quickly through a Declaration on Climate Emergency. This declaration evidences our active commitment in the fight against climate change.

As a final point, we would like to highlight our wish to strengthen the future relationship between UNEP and WFEO through active engagement with the WFEO Committee of Engineering and the Environment.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to contribute to the UNEA-5 ministerial declaration.

Yours Sincerely,

Davide Stronati

Chair of the Committee on Engineering and Environment,

on behalf of the World Federation of Engineering Organizations

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