

Draft Outline Document for the Ministerial Outcome Document of the 2021 UN Environment Assembly

Comments from the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)

General comments

- We suggest that the document reference G20 processes (e.g. relevant decisions on land degradation, ecosystems, coral reefs.) and others like the HLPF.
- The document does not yet contain a clear statement regarding the fact that we need to improve our performance toward achieving many of the key SDGs to be covered at UNEA, including SDG 12, 14, and 15.
- Considering its relevance, a greater and earlier emphasis was expected on the CBD and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.
- Integration between the CBD and other policy processes, most notably those of the UNFCCC, should be a point of emphasis.
- We suggest some concrete suggestions for policy changes. For example:
 - There could be an effort to expand the scope of green new deal and similarly themed programmes to cover biodiversity and nature conservation. This is particularly important because we are seeing that some countries are allocating very large amounts of economic stimulus money for unsustainable development.
 - There could be a suggestion that countries integrate biodiversity and natural resource management considerations into NDCs.
- Greater emphasis could be placed on having Ministries of Environment work more closely with other Ministries to achieve sustainability objectives.
- The discussion of the governance arrangements needed for governments, businesses, and other actors to work collectively on biodiversity were largely missing.
- The link to previous UNEA declarations and GEO-6 is limited, as is the link to social issues and just transition. The gender dimensions of these issues should feature somewhere in the document.
- There could be less discussion on the problem and more on solutions (see our examples under “Green recovery”).
- We suggest that the document acknowledge the need for more regulation, such as stronger pollution standards, stricter enforcement of pollution standards, expanding and strengthening

protected areas; and the need to curb fossil fuel exploration and production, for example by ending fossil fuel subsidies (which the G20 has already agreed to do).

Introduction

- We suggest replacing “We are experiencing an alarming loss of biodiversity and ecosystems…” with “We are experiencing an alarming loss of biodiversity and degradation of ecosystems…”
- An explanation of how water and air pollution affect, and are affected by, biodiversity would help to frame the argument in the introduction.

Green recovery

- The text should note that “green recovery” can be a major source of jobs and decent work, contributing to economic prosperity.
- Concepts such as sustainable production & consumption, sustainable transport, sustainable agriculture, and pollution reduction are also relevant here.
- Time horizons extending beyond mere “response and recovery”, could better highlight the transformations needed to achieve long term resilience.
- We suggest replacing “*Ministers can promote regulations, incentives, and financial instruments that respond to the COVID-19 situation while at the same time contributing to a low GHG emission economy based on sustainable production and consumption, circular economy, and a pollution-free world with vital ecosystem services and biodiversity*”, with “*By selecting appropriate regulations, incentives, and financial instruments to respond to COVID-19 Ministers can, at the same time, contribute to a low GHG emission economy based on sustainable production and consumption, circular economy, and a pollution-free world with vital ecosystem services and biodiversity.*”
- Regarding the passage: “It will be to our benefit that we reduce our environmental footprint and place people and nature at the heart of decision making. Economic recovery and protecting nature are not competing choices but with intelligent planning and implementation can lead to win-win outcomes”

→ Explicit reference could be made here to integrated approaches, tools and frameworks for supporting more effective policy and decision making (see examples from the transport, waste, and water sectors (among others) can be drawn from this publication:

https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.iges.or.jp/en/pub/governance-integrated-solutions-sustainable/en&sa=D&ust=1597297754774000&usg=AFQjCNHmqUtMxmyvX_K2C7vL4jxB5RZacw)

- Regarding the passage, “Land degradation and loss of ecosystem services represent a 10% loss in global annual gross product and negatively impact on the well-being of at least 3.2 billion people.”
 - Other distributional impacts arising from environmental degradation could be referenced here, including how poor and marginalized groups are more susceptible to future disasters and pandemics.
- Examples of circular economy in action in Japan include embracing the concept of local-level “[circulating and ecological sphere](#)” (CES) and [socio-ecological production landscapes & seascapes](#) (SEPLS). Both are considered as models for building more sustainably in the wake of COVID-19, and SEPLS are a means to preserve buffer zones between people and wildlife.

Healthy ecosystems, healthy people - Holistic approaches to protect and restore nature and ecosystem services – including nature-based solutions

- Regarding the passage, “Recognizing the rapid loss of nature, the piece by piece loss of natural habitats, and the associated increasing risk for our societies, ministers can commit to measures to strengthen cross-sectoral efforts to protect biodiversity, reverse the degradation of ecosystems and enhance ecosystem resilience, and urgently adapt to and mitigate climate change.”
 - It would be timely to consider adding content on banning trade in wild animals and plants (especially those threatened with extinction) or enforcing existing bans to clamp down on market for their consumption.
- The “Convention” is mentioned without introducing its full name, and at a late stage in the text.

Sustainable food systems – a part of the solution

- The section on food systems could be further articulated. For example, it could explicitly mention the importance of agroecology as well as other farmer-centered, participatory approaches; and could include the challenge of global food waste

