

MARN-DM-29/2020

San Salvador, May 12th, 2020.

Reference: Ministerial Declaration for the Fifth
United Nations Environment Assembly.

His Excellency
Sveinung Rotevatn
Minister of Climate and Environment
Norway

Dear Mr. Rotevatn:

In response to your letter Ref. 19/1039, dated April 24th, 2020, where you invite countries to provide initial inputs in preparation of the ministerial declaration of the fifth United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5), under the theme “*Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*”; I hereby inform, based on the guiding questions provided, important and relevant elements that should be considered in this process.

1. Important elements and key messages that address the theme in an impactful manner

It is important to highlight the clear links between forests and natural ecosystem loss with the likelihood of new pandemics and the adverse effects of climate change, as well as the links between illegal biodiversity trade and the degradation and loss of ecosystems. Being aware of those interlinkages, with a high likelihood, or unavoidable risk, of new pandemics and its subsequent economic disruption; requires minimizing those risks and enhancing resilience to respond faster and better to future impacts. This demands a different course of action and changes in investment priorities, where environmental sustainability and resilience are at the core of rescuing, recovering and transforming economies, and therefore, updating economic growth measures and indicators.

Countries, particularly those developing and vulnerable to climate change, and financial systems, can't afford current losses at the scale experienced during these and unprecedented times. Transformational action and investment priorities are the basis for sustainability in the short, medium and long term; and in this scenario, natural ecosystems and nature-based solutions should be included, as they address and respond to such challenges.

UNEA should also encourage and urge countries to deeply mainstream biodiversity and ecosystem restoration as an essential element in their development and climate change adaptation planning, particularly by enhancing sustainable agricultural practices, and encouraging for a strong cultural action plan that aligns global food consumption habits to new and environmentally friendly food production practices.

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Reducing emissions and cleaning urban air by adopting zero carbon transportation systems will, as well, provide the highest contribution to human health and resilience to future impacts of climate change and pandemics.

2. How can UNEA contribute to *Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*” at a global scale and its relationship with other processes and meetings?

Compliance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as achieving an adequate economic and social reconstruction Post COVID-19, can only be attained if the challenges posed by the climate threat are adequately addressed and development is promoted in a transformative way and integrating the environmental dimension.

Within this framework, UNEA-5 must reiterate the importance of promoting the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and of promoting nature-based solutions, that allow the building of resilience to climate change and guarantees a permanent provision of key ecosystem services to sustain economic growth and human well-being, in terms of water provision, renewable energy, human health, agricultural production and food security.

Therefore, we consider it relevant that the declaration reiterates the need to promote ambitious actions to restore ecosystems and rehabilitate degraded lands, within the framework of the United Nations Decade for Ecosystem Restoration; as well as, that the Global Agenda for Biodiversity 2030 contemplates ambitious national goals that stop the rates of loss of biodiversity and address ecosystem threats, in particular pollution, promoting ambitious plans for sustainable production and consumption, and a transition to a low carbon economy.

Kind regards,

Fernando Andrés López Larreynaga
Minister

