

STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY, PROFESSOR FEKADU BEYENE ALEKA, COMMISSIONER OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMISSION OF THE FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA FOR THE FIFTH SESSION UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY, LEADERSHIP DIALOGUE-23 FEBRUARY 2021

H.E. Mr. Sveinung Rotevatn, President of UNEA 5 and Minister of Climate and Environment of Norway:

Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme:

Ms. Joyce Msuya, Deputy Executive Director of UNEP

Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the people and the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, I would like to thank the President of UNEA 5, and the Secretariat for successfully organizing this first edition of UNEA 5, despite the daunting challenges posed by the covid-19 pandemic.

Ethiopia is currently struggling to cope up with devastating impacts of the covid-19 pandemic. Although the impacts of COVID-19 are being felt in every sector and corner, my country has made all efforts to change the challenge into an opportunity to build capacity and capability in the health sector and also embarked on making environmental issues a top priority, as the cost of delayed response to prevailing environmental crises is expensive and irreversible. As part of this endeavor, Ethiopia has finalized updating its Nationally Determined Contribution, and also pursuing the endeavor of preparing the 2050 Long-Term Low Carbon Development Strategy.

Moreover, we have embarked on implementing various environmental flagship initiatives in a COVID response way. The Green Legacy Initiative is worth mentioning in this regard. Designed with the overarching goal to pursue sustainable development by reducing poverty, conserving biodiversity, and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, the initiative has a target of planting 20 billion tree seedlings by 2022. Of which, more than 9 billion seedlings were planted in the last two years.

Currently, preparation is undergoing to expand the initiative into the neighboring countries with a target to support planting around 1 billion tree seedlings in those countries.

The initiative is also expected to improve the lives of important infrastructures such as irrigation schemes and hydro-electric power dams.

Ecellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

While fighting the pandemic, Ethiopia has also launched its Ten Years Development Plan (2021-2030), which was built on its Home-Grown Economic Reform Agenda and Climate Resilient Green Economy Strategy. Climate-Smart Agriculture, Manufacturing, Tourism, and Mining are among the key priority areas envisioned to follow the green recovery path.

The Unity park, Sheger Riverside, and Entoto park projects launched in and around Addis Ababa amid the pandemic also symbolize concrete actions on the green recovery. The new national initiatives such as the Gorgora, Wenchi, and Koyscha parks projects to be launched soon also represent Ethiopia's pathway towards green recovery, as they lay down a basic foundation for eco-tourism development.

The Green Legacy Initiative and these eco-tourism projects are not only in line with the UN's call for the decade of action but also uphold the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

As I conclude, I would like to reiterate the unwavering commitment of my government to the implementation of all SDGs, and call upon the UNEP, the UN, and the global community to stand in solidarity with Ethiopia in all our endeavors of building a green and resilient economy.

I thank you!