



Switzerland

Leadership Dialogues, 23 February 2021, UNEA5.1

Delivered by H.E. Ambassador Franz Perrez, Ambassador, Head of International Affairs Division, Federal Office for the Environment

Dear Madam Deputy Executive Director, Excellencies

Let me first thank UNEP for organizing UNEA 5.1 in such a good manner despite the challenges posed by COVID, allowing us to come together in these difficult circumstances, and give a clear and strong signal of our commitment towards the environment.

COVID is indeed posing new challenges of which we were not aware one year ago. Switzerland has taken ambitious measures to address COVID 19 pandemic in a holistic manner, including by adopting a comprehensive support package to maintain employment, safeguard wages, support the self-employed and prevent insolvencies. The Swiss government also agreed on a special support package to ensure the market of renewable energy would not weaken, and the Swiss Parliament has adopted at the heights of the pandemic an ambitious climate legislation. And at the international level, the Swiss government is supporting international efforts in developing countries, namely, efforts to make the vaccine accessible to all countries, especially also the poorest and most disadvantaged.

But let us be clear, dear colleagues: solving the COVID-crisis will not mean solving the environment and climate crisis. And these crises may threaten our wellbeing and prosperity even more fundamentally than the pandemic. While the vaccine may help us to overcome the challenges posed by COVID, we cannot overcome the environmental crisis by a vaccine. This needs more: this needs ambitious policy and action. And if we do not implement such policies and actions rapidly, we may have to take even more drastic measures later than what we are taking now to prevent the spread of COVID.

And let us also be clear: ambitious policy and action needs international cooperation and an enabling international framework. It needs a comprehensive, coherent, effective and efficient international environmental regime that protects the human health and the environment. International environmental governance is at the core to do more and better. Ambitious

international goals and agreements are essential to enable actions on a national level. And, UNEP is at the heart of a robust international policy framework.

The coming months provide us with the chance to achieve substantive progress. Key elements could be the decision to launch negotiations for a convention on plastics, to establish a science-policy body for chemicals and waste, or to develop guidelines to improve the sustainability of the mineral resource and infrastructure sector. We have two occasions, to achieve these steps. We have UNEA 5.2 and the special session, where we will meet again in Nairobi to celebrate the 50th birthday of UNEP and discuss relevant resolutions. And we will have Stockholm+50 which will recall the historical milestone of the 1972 environment conference. We are grateful for Sweden's initiative and look forward to taking decisive steps regarding sustainable consumption and production, which is a key element to transform our societies towards sustainability.

Let me conclude that COVID has shown that we can take drastic steps if needed to prevent catastrophes. Let us act early to protect our common environment and natural base for all prosperity and well-being so that we won't have to take even more drastic measures later.