

## **Australia's submission on the Zero Draft Ministerial Declaration of the Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5)**

Australia thanks the President of UNEA-5 and the members of the Bureau for sharing the Zero Draft of the Ministerial Declaration and the opportunity to provide comments on this document. We would also like to express our appreciation for the highly consultative manner in which the Presidency have prepared the Declaration, particularly given the substantial logistical challenges to negotiating multilateral documents due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Australia supports the concise nature of the current draft. We believe that a Ministerial Declaration which is succinct and focusses on key areas of action in which UNEA can make its greatest value add to environmental multilateralism will maximise political commitment and public engagement with the Assembly.

We welcome the inclusion of language on the sustainable use and management of the ocean and commitment to multi-stakeholder partnerships, including with Indigenous Peoples, for actions to strengthen nature. As the world's highest level decision-making body on the environment, UNEA will give a valuable profile to these policy goals and approaches.

With regards to the current operative paragraph 8, we suggest use of the terms 'sustainable, inclusive and resilient' recovery in reference to the goal of revitalising our economies and livelihoods following the COVID-19 pandemic. In the context of multilateral documents such as the UNEA Ministerial Declaration, these terms provide important clarity on policy approaches that Member States will take to advance the environmental dimension of sustainable development while recovering from the pandemic.

With regards to the current operative paragraph 12 on the UN Food Systems Summit, we suggest that "continue to strengthen" offers greater clarity and recognises that our food systems must continue to adapt and do better, but in a way that builds on the strengths of current food systems and progress made to date. It is important to recognise that the changes needed will differ from country to country; that is, not all food systems face the same challenges or require the same level of "transformative" change.

With regards to the same paragraph 12, it is important to recognise the three dimensions of sustainability (economic, social and environmental) in reference to the UN Food Systems Summit vision by including reference to the need for food systems to deliver food security and nutrition, decent work and employment while enhancing environmental outcomes (as suggested in track changes). Additionally, we welcome the continued strong engagement of UNEP in Summit follow-up processes, but suggest that the term "natural role" may confuse the leadership of the Rome-based agencies in taking Food Systems Summit outcomes forward (as suggested in track changes).

In the current operative paragraph 14 on a clean, healthy, and productive ocean, we have suggested changes to fully align its language with Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Life Below Water).

Australia would welcome further opportunities to provide written inputs to subsequent drafts of the Declaration. This will also allow Member States from our geographical region, who may otherwise struggle to provide views in real-time consultations due to the logistical elements of virtual meetings, to participate meaningfully in the drafting process.

Australia offers our full support to the Presidency and Bureau in the development of the UNEA-5 Ministerial Declaration, and we look forward to further engagement in the ongoing negotiation of this vital document.

## Ministerial declaration for the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

### “Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”

#### Proposed preambular section

PP1 We, the world’s Ministers for the Environment, have gathered at the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, under exceptional circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic to strengthen actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

PP2 We recognize that a healthy nature is prerequisite and foundation for sustainable development in all its dimensions, and that we depend on nature, and the solutions it provides, for our health, wellbeing, resilience, economy and ultimately our existence.

PP3 We note with profound concern the loss, degradation and fragmentation of ecosystems and habitats for biodiversity, affecting both life on land and life under water, due to multiple and interlinked threats such as unsustainable management of nature and its resources, unsustainable consumption and production patterns, climate change, and pollution and littering of water, air, and soil.

NEW We note with further grave concern that the 2020 goal for the sound management of chemicals and waste has not been met with pollution thus remaining a threat to nature and our health.

NEW [Placeholder for reference to outcomes from COP 26 Glasgow]

PP4 We are encouraged by the strength of innovation, knowledge building, and investment in green technologies currently taking place which indicate that solutions exist or can be found.

PP5 We are deeply concerned about the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on human lives and health, as well as on economies and societies, further threatening our ability to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals and are aware that we face recurring risks of future pandemics if we maintain the current patterns of interaction with nature.

PP6 We recognize the need for transformative and systemic changes and could have the opportunity to achieve more by policies and investments that address several environmental challenges simultaneously through innovative holistic approaches that truly value nature.

PP7 We reaffirm, as UNEP celebrates through a Special Session of UNEA 50 years since its establishment, its continued great importance as advocate for the global environment and express our support for further strengthening of UNEP.

#### Proposed operative section

OP8 We commit to supporting a ~~green and just~~ **green and just sustainable, inclusive and resilient** recovery, with the goal of revitalizing our economies and livelihoods, contribute to poverty eradication, by mainstreaming environmental concerns into all policies and tools promoting economic recovery; making use of ~~green economy sustainable economic~~ **green economy sustainable economic** pathways that emphasize ecosystem and knowledge-based management, and by reducing greenhouse gas emissions while adapting to climate change in line with the Paris Agreement.

OP9 We commit to working across sectors and levels of government to halt the loss, degradation, and fragmentation of ecosystems, focusing on areas of particular importance for biodiversity, through sustainable land use, effectively managing protected areas, safeguarding especially vulnerable

habitats, types of nature and eco-systems, and addressing illegal deforestation and wildlife trade, mining, and other crimes that have serious impacts on the environment.

NEW We commit to pursue and join untraditional partnerships across sectors, and work with youth, indigenous peoples, private sector and all of civil society, to develop actions that strengthen nature and turn around the persistently negative long term trend for the environment described by recent scientific reports from United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

OP10 We commit to rethinking our approach to the use and management of nature and its resources, to advance sustainable consumption and production patterns, including through resource efficiency and circular economy policy approaches, and by integrating the proper valuation of nature and the assessment of nature-related risks in policymaking.

OP11 We commit to promote and strengthen nature-based solutions by actively protecting, sustainably managing, and restoring degraded ecosystems that provide us with food, water, and energy, are habitats for biodiversity and provide carbon storage and sequestration, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, for example natural forests, wetlands, and mangroves, thus underpinning our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

OP12 We commit to cooperate across sectors and levels of government to ~~transform-continue to~~ strengthen our food systems, inspired by the UN Food Systems Summit vision of sustainable and resilient food systems that deliver enhanced food security\_ and ~~resilience nutrition, provide decent work and employment opportunities and livelihoods~~ -while reducing emissions, biodiversity loss and freshwater use, as an essential solution to accelerate actions on all the Sustainable Development Goals, and we ~~underline the natural role~~ welcome the strong engagement -of UNEP in the Summit follow-up processes.

OP13 We will promote comprehensive land use planning backed up by robust national enforcement as an invaluable tool for sustainable development and help create a conducive business environment that stimulates investments in sustainable production and value chains.

OP14 We commit to safeguarding life ~~under below-~~ water, and a clean, healthy, and productive ocean capable of providing food, livelihoods, and storing carbon, ~~through by~~ -strengthening efforts to sustainably manage ~~all our oceans, as well as by sustainably using~~ and ~~protecting our~~ oceans, seas and coastal ecosystems, while acting to prevent pollution, and prevent marine temperature rise and ocean acidification, by keeping our efforts in line with the Paris agreement.

OP15 We maintain our dedication to act in line with the implementation plan towards a pollution-free planet to protect nature and human health from adverse impacts from chemicals and waste and support an ambitious framework for the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.

OP16 [Placeholder for text with reference to recent developments and outcomes on Marine Litter]

OP17 We reaffirm the continued need to strengthen actions for nature and our commitment towards the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and call for an ambitious and transformational post-2020 global biodiversity framework for adoption at the 15<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity that inter alia includes a set of clear and robust goals and targets to address the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss, as a key instrument to reach the Sustainable Development Goals.

OP18 We call for the adequate and coherent implementation of the actions, commitments and resolutions adopted by the fifth United Nations Environment Assembly as well as previous UNEA outcomes, and further recognize our role, as Ministers of the Environment, in following up on these

commitments within our own governments, contributing to coordinated action across sectors and levels of government and promoting effective implementation.

OP19 We recognize that the effective implementation of these actions requires enabling and coherent policy frameworks at all levels, good governance and law enforcement at all levels, to be supported by effective means of implementation from all sources of finance, including domestic, international, private sector and innovative sources in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, as well as further capacity-building, environmentally sound technologies, dedicated development partnerships, and a renewed and strong commitment to multilateralism.