

**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, well-being, resilience, economy and ultimately our existence.

PP2-bis We recognize that countries are at different starting points in addressing major environmental issues. We also recognize that developing countries need predictable and sufficient financial and technical support to undertake a smart transition to environmentally friendly production and consumption patterns.

PP2-ter We recognize that a comprehensive action to face major environmental issues requires consensual and concerted action, taking into account the principles of equity, and the common but differentiated responsibilities and the countries’ respective capacities.

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

PP3-bis We recognize that desertification/land degradation and drought undermine health, development and prosperity in all regions and acknowledging that dryland ecosystems are areas of special focus.

PP3-ter We are deeply concerned that the impacts of desertification/land degradation and drought are felt most keenly by vulnerable people.

PP3-quarter We recognize that achieving land degradation neutrality has the potential to act as an accelerator for achieving a number of the Sustainable Development Goals; we further recognize that practices which conserve and restore land and soil affected by desertification/land degradation, drought and floods, contribute towards achieving land degradation neutrality and can also have long-term multiple benefits for the health, well-being and socioeconomic development of the entire society, especially for the livelihoods of the rural poor.

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 COP26 Glasgow] Suggestion of language on the COP-26 outcomes:

We note with appreciation the outcome of the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Glasgow, from October 31st to November 12th, 2021, which reflects a delicate balance between positions, interests and concerns of all Parties to the Paris Agreement, as well as of several relevant stakeholders.

PP4 We are encouraged by the strength of innovation, knowledge building, and investing 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.

PP5-bis We note with grave concern the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, that has considerably altered the developing countries' capacities to address challenges imposed by major environmental issues, such as, inter alia, biodiversity degradation, climate change, desertification and land degradation, as well as pollution.

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.

PP6-bis We also recognize that the participation of developing countries in the global effort to tackle major environmental issues implies the provision of adequate, sufficient and predictable means of implementation by developed countries, in accordance with the frameworks and instruments in force, in line with the 2030 agenda.

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 recovery, with the goal of revitalizing our economies and livelihoods, contributing to just and equitable transition to environmentally friendly production and consumption patterns, poverty eradication, by mainstreaming environmental concerns into all policies and to also promoting economic recovery; making use of green economy pathways that emphasize ecosystem and knowledge-based management, and by reducing greenhouse gas emissions while adapting and combating climate change, and by adapting to the adverse effects of 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 ecosystems, and addressing illegal deforestation and wildlife trade, mining, and other crimes that have serious impacts on the environment.

OP9-bis We commit to fully implementing the decisions adopted by the 26th United Nations Conference on Climate Change (Glasgow, United Kingdom, 31 October-12 November 2021), by giving adequate attention and granting a balanced treatment of all aspects relating to climate action, including the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions, adaptation to the adverse impacts of climate change, loss and damage, climate finance, technology transfer and development, capacity building, as well as transparency of action and support.

OP9-ter We commit to undertake necessary actions and measures to combat desertification and land degradation, drawing on the practices and experiences of countries facing these challenges.

NEW We commit to pursue and join relevant 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, inter alia, 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 sufficient and nutritious 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 our food systems, inspired by the UN Food Systems Summit vision of sustainable food systems that deliver enhanced food security and resilience while combating climate change, reducing emissions, biodiversity loss, desertification and land degradation, as well as and freshwater use, water scarcity, as an essential solution to accelerate actions to attend all the Sustainable Development Goals, and we underline the natural role leadership of UNEP in the Summit follow-up processes.

OP12-bis We commit to making efforts for the protection and the preservation of natural habitats and ecosystems against all forms of threat, by undertaking adaptation measures to the negative impacts of climate change in accordance with Article 7 of the Paris Agreement, and by focusing on areas recognized as "hot spots".

OP13 We commit to provide adequate, sufficient and predictable financial and technical support to developing countries, especially those that are extremely vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, biodiversity loss, desertification, as well as to the negative impacts of all forms of land, sea or air pollution.

OP13 We will promote comprehensive land use planning backed up by robust national enforcement as an invaluable important 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 underwater, and a clean, healthy, and productive ocean capable of providing food, livelihoods, and storing carbon, through strengthening efforts to sustainably manage all our oceans, as well as by sustainably using and protecting 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 United Nations Convention Framework on Climate Change and its 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.

OP15-bis We commit to building a balanced international cooperation framework, which encompasses coordinated interventions to address the negative impacts of plastic waste.

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 15th 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 related 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 with in 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 are renewed and strong commitment to multilateralism.