

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

I thank all of you for the constructive engagements and insights that have laid solid foundations for a meaningful and impactful International Meeting of Stockholm +50, in June. I extend my sincere appreciation to the co-chairs for guiding the process and discussions in each of the sessions on the Leadership Dialogues.

As co-hosts, the governments of Kenya and Sweden deserve much credit for the success of this preparatory event. I express my sincere gratitude for their hard work in setting the stage for what follows.

Excellencies,

We owe much to the Stockholm Conference of 1972.

The conference catalyzed a new era of multilateral environmental cooperation and treaty-making. Without it, UNEP would not exist, and many global environmental treaties would be unwritten.

The Stockholm Declaration established international political goals and legal principles that have underpinned environmental discourse and law-making for the last fifty years.

By stressing that environmental issues are inherently political and not just scientific and technical, the Stockholm Conference demonstrated how global cooperation could take place, even amid Cold War tensions.

We have learned much about our world because of the Stockholm Conference.

Throughout the world, people and policymakers developed a new understanding of environmental issues, leading to the birth of environmental diplomacy and environmental laws.

The conference contributed to the democratization of environmental debate and policy-making by opening the door to non-governmental organizations that previously did not have access to in the UN system.

Excellencies,

Stockholm+50 offers us another opportunity to leave a legacy for the next fifty years.

The conference, under the theme of ‘a healthy planet for the prosperity of all - our responsibility, our opportunity’ presents us a critical opportunity to strengthen environmental multilateralism and build towards a sustainable and inclusive future — a vision that is shared in the UN Secretary-General’s report on ‘Our Common Agenda’.

And I am heartened by the overwhelming consensus from today’s meeting on the need for urgent action on behalf of our planet. Your messages here have been heard loud and clear and resonate deeply with all of us who are passionate about climate action.

These include:

- First, the call for meaningful engagement with youth, young men and women, the generation that will inherit this earth. I cannot agree more! Young people need to be meaningfully engaged.
  
- Second, the need understand development issues through a holistic approach, one which gives equal bearing to human and environmental well-being.
  
- Third, the concerted call to act now, including the need to implement existing commitments, as agreed in multilateral contexts, including on sustainable development and climate finance.

Stockholm+50 will offer opportunities to build lasting coalitions for the environment, and will foster strong partnerships, for and with future generations. We need to listen to the voices of the future generations.

Excellencies,

As it is, we are hurtling towards the edge of the cliff if we continue with business as usual.

We were not prepared for the COVID-19 crisis, and we are even less prepared for the looming consequences of on-going and worsening challenges of climate change.

However, I have not given up hope. As I have reiterated throughout my Presidency, we need hope more than ever, to remind us that practical and realistic steps to protect our planet are within reach. And the needed political will to take those steps is emerging, albeit much too slowly.

The crisis has shown that we can be more frugal in our consumption patterns, to be better aligned with environmental goals.

We must also ensure the post-COVID recovery integrates inclusiveness with climate and biodiversity concerns.

This means systematically integrating environmental and equity considerations into the economic recovery and stimulus process.

Excellencies,

In my lifetime I have seen progress. The urgency of the 1.5-degree target used to be voiced by only Small Island Developing States.

But now the whole world is coming together around this goal. To realize it, we must turn commitment into action and decarbonize every aspect of our lives.

I welcome the contribution of this meeting on the contents of the Leadership Dialogues that will guide discussions at the International Meeting for urgent action at the national, regional and global level.

And I am confident that the outcome of today's preparatory meeting has laid the groundwork for a very successful Stockholm +50, that will inspire bold ambitions and powerful concerted action on behalf of our planet.

I thank you.