

Inputs for ministerial declaration for UNEA 7

Ministry of Environment, The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

1. Transboundary air pollution

Strengthening regional cooperation on preventing and controlling the transboundary effect of air pollutants across tropical and subtropical Asian regions.

Monitoring and evaluation of the long-range transport of air pollutants is important because it is evident that, in certain incidences, a significant portion of air pollution is not local but transboundary, traveling from a neighboring city, state, or even country. The main sources of pollution include crop residue burning, inefficient fertilizer use, industries, power plants, vehicle emissions and household cooking—some of which are unique to the region.

A sustainable integrated approach for addressing transboundary air pollution issues at the regional level in tropical and sub-tropical Asian regions is a timely and important matter to address this issue effectively and efficiently. Especially, northern to the southern tropical belt countries experience significant changes in seasonal climate patterns including wind patterns. Furthermore, it is noted that the air pollution and recent climate change feedback loops and amplification mechanisms exacerbate air pollution impacts on human health and ecosystems. Therefore, accurate air quality assessment and monitoring are required with close interaction between the science and policy interface, along with a sustainable financing mechanism.

Coordinated and collaborative efforts of air quality management across borders, and among multiple agencies and jurisdictions are essential, that can yield better and faster results at lower financial costs. Therefore, it is important to revitalize the mechanism with broader geographic regions with the scope of a long-term sustainable financing mechanism.

Requests the Executive Director to support appropriate measures emphasized transboundary approaches, broader technical cooperation, advanced knowledge sharing, and building capacity for the use of harmonized technologies and methodologies for air better quality management in the region.

2. Biodiversity Conservation

As Terrestrial and aquatic habitats are affected by Invasive Alien Species (IAS) Fauna and Flora, sustainable mechanism, tool for IAS management is needed. Habitat degradation, habitat loss and habitat fragmentation are affect Biodiversity and ecosystem restoration is needed to minimize human wildlife conflict.

The Bio-piracy and Genetic Modified Organisms (GMO) are effect on Biodiversity and it Should be addressed.

Reverse Coastal ecosystem degradation by reducing coastal pollution including plastic waste through introduction of innovative solutions and schemes like EPR and PES and Transfer coastal ecosystem conservation benefits to local guardians in a tangible way through innovative financial instruments like Carbon\Biodiversity Credits, Promote Ecosystem based solutions like building artificial coral reefs, mangrove regeneration as a means of disaster risk mitigation and Reduce coastal resources dependence through innovative and financially sound livelihood options for local coastal communities are also identified as important measures.

3. Environment Pollution Control

It is important to address Transboundary Marine Plastic Pollution by specially Strengthening Regional Collaboration for Plastic Waste Management, Enhancing the Global Plastic Treaty to Include Marine Plastic Leakage Measures. And also Advocate for mandatory Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) obligations on multinational companies exporting plastic-packaged goods to developing nations and Global Ban on harmful Single use Plastics should be addressed.

Controlling Heavy metal pollution- inland and marine also vital specially Strengthening Global and Regional Governance on Chemicals & Heavy Metals , enforcing Global Ban on Export of Hazardous Waste to Developing Nations. The Capacity Building for Safe Chemical and Waste Management should be addressed and disposal facilities is to be strengthened.

Addressing the issues of Food waste through Establishing a Global Framework for Food Waste Reduction, Implementing Circular Economy Models for Food Waste and concerning Post-Harvest Food Loss in Developing Nations would be critically important. Advocate for the acceleration of circular economy practices to reduce waste and promote resources efficiency is also emphasized.

4. Natural Resources Management

Effective and sustainable management of environment for resilient adaptation on the utilization of natural resources are critical. The need of remediations for increased issues of Groundwater Resources utilization which is mainly attributed due to climatic change and other manmade influential factors. The adaptation of Integrated Water Resources Management Strategy within the water sector, Metering of Groundwater abstractions through smart water meter systems, Adaptation of new technologies such as real-time monitoring at higher resolution with capacity for big data analysis and Developing of a Groundwater policy and subsequent setting of regulatory guideline for sustainable management of Groundwater Resources are important. Declaration of highly sensitive groundwater zones of the country for conservation and protection through appropriate management is essential.

Inefficient irrigation systems and deforestation further exacerbate the problem by reducing soil moisture retention and increasing erosion. Climate change-induced droughts worsen water scarcity, threatening agriculture, biodiversity, and rural livelihoods. Sustainable water management practices, such as rainwater harvesting, efficient irrigation, and reforestation, are crucial to mitigating these environmental challenges. Achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) through a variety of initiatives aimed at sustainable land management and environmental conservation need to be emphasized. Traditional water management system plays a crucial role in preventing land degradation, particularly in Asian countries, where small tank cascade systems (STCS) have been used for centuries to manage water, soil, and ecosystems sustainably.

Investing in Sustainable Consumption and Production is also important in Natural Resources governance and sustainable forest management is vital to achieve net zero goals.

5. Addressing the Climate Change Impact

Adaptation and resilience building is critical important for vulnerable countries due to the impacts of climate change. Accordingly, developing and implementing national adaptation plans are vital. Investing in climate resilient infrastructure such as water management, flood defenses and supporting community-based adaptation initiatives and improving early warning systems for extreme weather events are necessary. Acknowledge and address the irreversible losses and damages due to climate change impacts which go beyond the adaptation limits. Establish funding mechanisms and support systems in coping with loss and damages, including climate induced displacement and economic losses.

Increasing grant-based finance, particularly most vulnerable countries like Sri Lanka. Improving access to climate finance and promoting innovative financing mechanisms such as blended finance, carbon markets and advocate and provide financial incentives and support for the development and adoption of green technologies in key sectors. Harnessing the power of climate data and digital technologies is essential for Sri Lanka to understand climate change impacts, adapt to its effects, build resilience, and pursue sustainable development. Addressing the challenges and building the necessary capacities will be crucial for realizing the full potential of these technologies and ensuring a climate-resilient future.