



ROYAL NORWEGIAN MINISTRY OF  
CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT

*The Minister*

Your ref

Our ref

Date

19/1039-

4 November 2019

## **Letter from the President to Member States and Stakeholders on the Theme for UNEA-5**

Dear colleagues,

I have the pleasure to share with you a note that outlines important elements regarding the selection of a theme for the fifth Session of the UN Environment Assembly in 2021 (UNEA-5). The note brings us one step closer to finding a theme that has the broadest possible support by the end of this year.

In my initial "thought starter" on the selection of a theme, which was circulated in July, I outlined three possible thematic areas as a basis for further consultations. I am very pleased to see that the "thought starter" has stimulated very useful discussions by the Committee of Permanent Representatives in Nairobi, as well as inspired ideas from many other stakeholders.

I want to thank you all for the high level of engagement in the discussions on theme for UNEA-5. I particularly appreciate the support and contributions from my colleagues in the Bureau, the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and the members the Committee of Permanent Representatives, to ensure an open, inclusive and transparent dialogue around the final choice of the theme. All relevant information as well as written inputs from member States and stakeholders are available on the following page: <https://bit.ly/32MU7vo>.

The attached note summarises the overarching guidance received so far, and seeks to narrow down the focus of the possible theme. It also includes some examples of specific

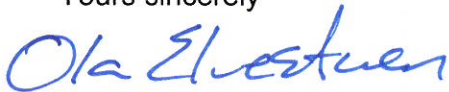
questions and issues that could be encompassed by the overarching theme. My hope is that these will in turn stimulate interesting initiatives and discussions at UNEA-5.

I am very pleased that there is such a strong interest in identifying solutions with their basis in the nature around us. I believe this will allow UNEA-5 to play a key role within the larger process of international efforts to implement the environmental dimension of the UN 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals. Achieving sustainable development is dependent on both sufficient and balanced progress socially, economically and environmentally.

I therefore invite the Committee of Permanent Representatives and interested stakeholders to continue their consultations on the basis of this document. Written inputs and comments from delegations who are not able to participate in meetings in Nairobi are invaluable and will be published on the website and taken into account. The same is true for inputs from the major groups and all relevant stakeholders, including fellow UN and multilateral organizations.

I look forward to your further guidance and advice.

Yours sincerely



Ola Elvestuen

## Consensual elements for the theme for the fifth Session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA)

24 October 2019

1. This proposal is based on discussions on the theme held in various forums and groupings, including during the [UN Environment Assembly Bureau held on 1st October](#), the [CPR sub-committee meeting held on 12 September](#), 2019, and consultations with regional and political groups in the margins of the Annual Sub-Committee held from 8-10 October, as well as taking into account written inputs from member States and Stakeholders, which are available on a dedicated [website](#). The discussions were guided by a letter from the President of the UN Environment Assembly and a "[thought-starter](#)" entitled "Finding the right theme for the 2021 UN Environment Assembly".

2. In the course of these consultations, the President of the Assembly with the support of the Chair of the CPR noted three common messages which have been considered in developing the consensual elements in this note. The main common messages are:

a) **The majority of Member States expressed support for a theme that is related to nature-based solutions in the context of sustainable development.** Such support builds on the tentative thematic area 1 set out in the "[thought starter](#)". There is also interest among stakeholders for such a theme. In addition, many have expressed interest in a holistic approach, which would also allow for inclusion of elements from the other tentative thematic areas outlined in the thought-starter (namely "Blue Planet: Transformative actions to protect our freshwater and oceans" and "Addressing the water–energy–food interlinkages for sustainability").

b) **The overarching principles and criteria in the thought-starter have been endorsed and expanded upon.** These include action- and solution-oriented outcomes; broad and inclusive consultations; building on the outcomes of previous assemblies; a strong scientific grounding; and easily communicable and compelling. Member states have also been clear that the theme should contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly the eradication of poverty and the promotion of sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

c) **The UN Environment Assembly should connect and consolidate environmental actions within the context of sustainable development and give significant impetus to more effective implementation.** The approach should aim to mobilize, motivate and energize member States and stakeholders into sharing and implementing successful approaches and solutions, while avoiding duplication and overlaps with the mandates of other fora.

3. **In summary, the feedback from the consultations and inputs signal a strong preference from Member States for a theme that upholds the vital role of Nature and the solutions Nature provide for our ability to reach the Sustainable Development Goals in its three complementary dimensions** (social, economic and environmental).

4. From a communications perspective, selecting a theme that connects People with Nature has the potential to invite all stakeholders to think about how we are part of nature and how intimately we depend on it. Connecting People with Nature, could challenge millions of individuals to understand, experience and cherish this vital relationship. There is also a significant potential for the UN Environment Assembly and

the Environment ministers to demonstrate to other sectors in their government and society the multitude of ways that a healthy environment underpins a thriving economy and society, and how actions to keep or enhance them are important part of the solutions to the challenges of their portfolios.

5. In this regard, the fifth UN Environment Assembly will provide, under such theme, a platform to capture the potential of innovative solutions and actions that all segments of society can take. In addition, this theme will allow to bring together contributions from different fora, in particular from relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

#### **Possible sub-themes that could be formulated with a strong implementation focus under this theme**

6. In order to enhance ownership of the overarching theme and help identify potential sub-themes on which the fifth UN Environment Assembly can promote action, the consultations generated several relevant suggestions and ideas, as listed below. In this regard, Member States could consider them as inspiration for a limited number of concise and operative resolutions with a strong implementation approach, submitted in line with applicable Rules of Procedure and Assembly decisions.

7. Bearing in mind that several issues will be followed up at the next Environment Assembly regardless of the chosen theme, due to mandates from previous Assemblies, the President of the Assembly proposes that member States consider action in some of the following areas:

- a) Enhancing ecosystem services for inter alia sustainable food, water and energy systems;
- b) Improving the state of our ocean and freshwater environments, and promoting sustainable management of ocean resources, in support of economic and social development;
- c) Promoting pathways to prevent land degradation and desertification, and achieve sustainable land use;
- d) Taking action to detoxify land, ocean and freshwater, to allow ecosystems to perform its services to humanity;
- e) Safeguarding the multi-benefits of marine and aquatic vegetation, such as mangrove, wetland, peat, seagrass and kelp ecosystems;
- f) Considering further measures for the sustainable management, use and conservation of natural resources;
- g) Identifying innovative solutions and actions that have multiple environment benefits and so are cost-effective;

#### **Next steps**

8. The President in consultation with the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives proposes the following next steps:

- a) Final consultations will be held at the meeting of the sub-committee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives on 31 October and in the context of regional meetings taking place during October/November.
- b) Written inputs from delegations without representation in Nairobi as well as from stakeholders will also be important to ensure broad ownership of the theme.
- c) The final decision will be made, in accordance with [decision 2 of the 4<sup>th</sup> session of the Assembly](#), by the Bureau of the UN Environment Assembly at the joint bureaux meeting to be held on 3 December 2019.