

Excellency, Colleagues,

I am pleased to report that the Steering Committee of the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management (GPNM) has today asked me remind you of the Launch of UN Global Campaign on Sustainable Nitrogen Management, “Nitrogen for Life”, held in Colombo, Sri Lanka under the lead of H.E. Maithripala Sirisena, President of Sri Lanka, with UNEP represented by Deputy Executive Director Joyce Msuya. On behalf of the GPNM, we strongly encourage you to recognize this key achievement, which will accelerate implementation of the UNEA-4 Resolution on Sustainable Nitrogen Management (UNEP/EA.4/Res.14).

The main outcome was the Colombo Declaration on Sustainable Nitrogen Management. Its importance has been affirmed by the incoming President of Sri Lanka, H.E. Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who has personally shared the declaration with UN Secretary General António Guterres (see attached pdf). The Declaration was also welcomed in the press announcement of the Secretary General’s office on UN Day (24 October 2019), and has since been followed up by engagement of the Secretary General’s Office with the UN Environment Programme.

We here respond to your two specific questions with suggestions for the Ministerial Declaration to UNEA-5.

Question 1: What are the key messages from the ministers to address the theme of actions for nature to achieve the SDGs?

We recommend that the ministers welcome the key message of the Colombo Declaration that: *“Nitrogen is not just a another problem, but rather it must be part of the solution for many of our environmental challenges. The Colombo Declaration points toward the need for coordination between multiple ministries and stakeholders in environment, agriculture, health, education and science using a ‘whole of society’ approach.”* The systemic nature of the global nitrogen challenge means that addressing nitrogen will be an essential requirement to meet multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Question 2: How can UNEA-5 make a significant contribution to Strengthening action for the nature for the SDGs, taking account of preparation and relationship to other processes?

We propose that the Colombo Declaration should be welcomed as a landmark advance in making progress for nature to achieve the SDGs. Specifically we suggest that the ministers *“welcome the aim expressed by member states adopting the Colombo Declaration to develop national roadmaps with an ambition to halve nitrogen waste by 2030”*.

On behalf of the GPNM, we would add that a stronger emphasis on improved nitrogen and nutrient management must be part of the ‘Build Back Better’ challenge after COVID-19. According to space availability, elements of the following should be included: *“The Colombo Declaration ambition to halve nitrogen waste represents a global opportunity to save US\$100 billion per year as part of developing the circular nitrogen economy, with major benefits to*

reduce water pollution, air pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss and stratospheric ozone depletion, as well as for food, health and livelihoods. Action to accelerate economic recovery after COVID-19 and meet the Sustainable Development Goals, will require sustainable nitrogen management as one of the cornerstones.”

Further documentation on the Colombo Declaration can be found at:

<https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/sustainable-nitrogen-management> , including access to the summary report “Nitrogen: Grasping the Challenge” which highlights how action on nitrogen is essential to meet most of the SDGs.

While I provide these comments as Vice-chair of GPNM, I also write as the accredited representative to UNEP of the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, on behalf of the International Nitrogen Management System (INMS), which is a joint activity between UNEP, GEF, CEH and the International Nitrogen Initiative (INI).

Yours sincerely

Prof. M. A. Sutton

Vice-Chair of the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management (GPNM)

Director, International Nitrogen Management System (INMS)

Director, UKRI GCRF South Asian Nitrogen Hub

Co-chair, UNECE Task Force on Reactive Nitrogen (TFRN)