

RE: Japan's response to the letter to members of the United Nation Environment Assembly

- What would you, as government/organization/stakeholder, welcome as the most important elements and/key messages from the ministers in the declaration to address the theme in an impactful manner?

Japan considers the following elements would address the theme “*Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*” in an impactful manner.

1. Biodiversity as a hot “nature” topic

<Biodiversity>

The year 2021 will be the year when the UNEA-5 to be held and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework is also expected to be adopted. While we will not prejudge the outcome of the CBD COP15, we consider the following elements would be important actions for conservation of nature:

- **Promoting landscape approaches adopted by the Satoyama Initiative**
- **Promoting Ecosystem-based Approaches to Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction**
- **Consideration for biodiversity in economic activities, including promotion of legal and sustainable supply chains that take into account of biodiversity conservation, and ensuring transparency and good governance practices**
- **Promotion of global efforts against unintentional introduction of invasive alien species through logistics activities**
- **Reconsideration of the best way to live in harmony with nature including reestablishment of coexistence of people and wildlife**

The first four elements have already been submitted to the CBD Secretariat from Japan as important areas to consider for conserving nature. The last element relates to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, as many emerging infectious diseases are believed to be transmitted from wildlife. We would like the President/Secretariat to note that we should pursue proper management of wildlife based on scientific knowledge and evaluation of risks and benefits arising from our coexistence with wildlife, without precluding the use of wildlife in a sustainable manner.

2. Threats to nature

While the theme is “*Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*,” elements affecting the state of nature are wide-ranging.

<Climate Change>

Climate change is a growing threat to natural ecosystems, raising the need to accelerate our efforts to mitigate its impact. **Energy Conservation**, introduction of **Renewable Energy**, **CCUS** (Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage) and **development of other CO2 reduction technologies** should be promoted under the concept of “a virtuous cycle of environment and growth.” The efforts of non-state actors, such as **Zero-carbon Cities**, should also be promoted in the context of localizing SDGs.

Furthermore, we must adapt to the impacts of climate change, such as natural disasters. **Ensuring climate resilience is integral to achieving sustainable development, and in particular, synergies among climate-change countermeasures, disaster prevention, and SDGs are necessary to deal with the meteorological disaster risks that are already present.**

<Resource Efficiency>

Extraction of natural resources and inappropriate treatment of wastes are, in some cases, causing nature destruction. **Resource Efficiency**, **Circular Economy**, and **3Rs** (Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle) approach should be promoted.

<Marine Plastic Litter>

Marine plastic litter is an emerging threat to marine ecosystems. **We note with concern that the high and rapidly increasing levels of marine litter, including plastic litter and microplastics, represent a serious environmental problem on a global scale. Aiming to reduce additional pollution by marine plastic litter to zero by 2050 and toward achieving Target 14.1 of Sustainable Development Goals, we must take swift actions to establish an international process to collect and share scientific knowledge and best practices, and promote comprehensive life-cycle approach.**

Reducing additional pollution by marine plastic litter to zero by 2050, through a comprehensive life-cycle approach that includes reducing the discharge of mismanaged plastic litter by improved waste management and innovative solutions, was called upon in the Osaka Blue Ocean Vision. To this end, we propose to embed in the declaration of the UNEA-5, a call for all countries in the world to unite in embracing the goal to bring additional pollution by marine plastic litter to zero by 2050 - this can be turned into a commitment which is specific, measurable, actionable, realistic and time-bound and at the same time transformative. This vision is already shared and indigenized by more than 80 countries, regions, and regional organizations around the world. We think that the UNEA-5 will provide the necessary additional momentum to introduce this vision to a wider audience and transform it into a collective movement of global coverage to combat marine plastic litter.

<Chemicals>

Chemical pollution is one of major threats to sound ecosystems and human life. **Adequate life cycle management of chemicals** is imperative, while the global efforts are expected to be guided by the **Post-SAICM**.

<Water and Air>

Pollution of water and air is also counted as a threat to nature. Following elements should be considered in the occasion of UNEA-5.

- **Strengthening international environmental cooperation for water and air environment conservation (including strengthening cooperation at the regional level).**
- **Virtuous cycle between environment and economy by multi-stakeholder participation, and environmentally sustainable and diverse transportation systems.**

3. Environmental aspects in the recovery from COVID-19

As mentioned above in the Biodiversity part, we should deal with nature and other environmental issues (e.g., energy saving) in the context of “with/after COVID-19.” The followings are the possible aspects we should table during UNEA-5.

- In order to realize the above elements, one of the common pathways is **behavioral change** based on the sound understanding of nature. This is especially relevant in the context of the recovery from COVID-19 crisis.
- **Digitization of environmental administration and prompt international sharing of data and knowledge** is also a lesson learned from the response to COVID-19.

- How can the Environment Assembly make a significant contribution to *Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals* at a global scale? In doing so, you may take into account the preparations for the meeting, its conduct and follow-up, as well as its relationship to other meetings and processes.

- With regards to measures against invasive alien species, international cooperation and/or consideration of all relevant sectors such as related countries and private businesses is essential, and we would like UNEA to reach out to the relevant international framework (IPPC and OIE).
- In order to reduce the negative impacts of economic/social activities on nature and biodiversity, consideration should be made in the entire value chain across the borders. We expect UNEA to visualize and integrate the activities of business sector, and share the information globally.
- The issue of nature and biodiversity is closely related to climate change and resource circulation.

For the business sector, it is desirable that these issues are to be dealt as an integrated issue rather than separate issues. We expect UNEA to lead the formulation of a framework for the business sector to discuss climate change, resource circulation and biodiversity in an integrated manner.

- In order for the economy and society to be sustainable, the nature should be maintained in a good condition, and conservation of nature including biodiversity underpins the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. Advancing the above-mentioned activities would contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- We expect UNEA to lead the international collaboration in formulating the self-reliant and decentralized society, which potentially gives less impact to the environment and is resilient to emerging infectious diseases.
- In order to reduce the environmental impact of holding international conferences we expect UNEA to take a lead in holding online-based conferences and limiting the physical participants at the venue as long as it is feasible.