

INPUT ON THE DRAFT OUTLINE DOCUMENT FOR THE MINISTERIAL OUTCOME DOCUMENT OF THE 2021 UN ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY

H.E. Sveinung Rotevatn

Minister

Royal Norwegian Ministry of the Climate and Environment

Facilitator – Draft Ministerial Declaration for the fifth UN Environment Assembly

Subject: INPUT ON THE DRAFT OUTLINE DOCUMENT FOR THE MINISTERIAL OUTCOME DOCUMENT OF THE 2021 UN ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY (UNEA5)

Theme: “Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”

Dear Excellency,

Congratulations Your Excellency for a well-rounded, succinct draft outline document of the ministerial declaration for UNEA5.

The first paragraph in the introduction represents the heart and center of the ministerial declaration. The phrase, “*Health ecosystems are an important foundation to ensure healthy people,*”; “*By protecting nature, we protect ourselves*” very clearly pointed this out. Planetary health is the foundation of all life on Earth, not just humans. This is the vision of the draft declaration and must encompass protection, conservation and sustainable use, and restoration of the planetary ecosystems and functions to ensure that life on Earth will continue to thrive now and in the future. The declaration must uphold inter-generational justice, and must reiterate to every planetary citizen our responsibility in protecting the legacy of life and well-being which we are borrowing from future generations.

The ministerial declaration must uphold the *right to safe, clean and sustainable environment*. Recalling the following resolutions: The Right of a healthy and sustainable environment (A/73/188); Good practices on the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable development (A/HRC/43/53); Safe Climate (A/74/161); Clean air (A/HRC/40/55); Children’s rights and the environment (A/HRC/37/58); and biodiversity (2018), and Paris Agreement (UNFCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1).

The ministerial declaration must forge a path using *bottom-up and horizontal* approach in its implementation using science-based and capacity building to empower those who must implement initiatives of the declaration. It must build on experiences and

challenges on the ground to continue improving nature's protection and conservation and will continue to bridge gaps in policies and strategies. The declaration must urge all national and sub-national governments, including all stakeholders to take the leadership in the implementation.

Governments must seize this moment, to make this ministerial declaration a visionary *call to action* to prepare our children and youth for the task of protecting the planetary future. Our youth must be scientifically trained and be helped build capacity to increase love and respect, through knowledge as next caretakers of the planet. We must instill in our young people the love of nature. What one's love, one protects.

Women, youth and indigenous people must be positioned front and center in the 2021 UNEA5 ministerial declaration. As governments deliver the Sustainable Development Goals in accord with UNEP/UNEA goals, women, youth and indigenous people must be trained to be leaders in its implementation.

Just Green Recovery and Transformation

In rethinking global recovery in the post COVID-19 pandemic we cannot apply the same rationale and use similar systems that have created the inequalities, vulnerabilities and disasters exacerbated by this pandemic. We must shift to a path toward a holistic approach: *healthy planet, healthy people* thinking. In this regard, we must prioritize the implementation of the nature and environmental SDGs 13, 14, 15, as well as SDG 12 which will result in co-benefiting other SDGs. These require commitment by member states and other stakeholders in terms of budget priorities that take into consideration, for example, implementation of nature-based solutions. These solutions must be community-based and large-scale, with binding legal frameworks and monitoring mechanisms. Just transition must be observed and protect the dignity of work in a total green recovery and transformation.

Healthy ecosystems, healthy people - Holistic approaches to protect and restore natures and ecosystems services –including nature-based solutions

Holistic approach to healthy ecosystems, healthy people require understanding how human and natural systems interact and are interconnected. Existing environmental problems must be addressed at the source, for example, plastic pollution in land and water bodies. Ocean pollution originates from land therefore initiatives to stop plastic must start at its source. Coordinated efforts and collaboration across all levels, actors and policy makers are essentials in achieving this goal. Expanding natural protected areas especially in areas of biological corridors, requires both a national short-term and

long-term plan. Ensure to involve communities who have been living in the areas for generations. Local communities must be participants in the discussion and decision making regarding use and plan of their lands and territories. Original peoples must be considered as frontline protectors, especially the indigenous communities and use their traditional knowledge which have protected these habitats for thousands of years. Payment for Environmental Services (PES) have been effective in Costa Rica, as an approach to forest restoration and conservation, while ensuring the landowners and farmers receive remunerations for protecting their forests.

Sustainable food systems

COVID19 recovery must aim in strengthening food security of nations. With several hundred millions unemployed and families experiencing hunger because of exacerbated poverty, the link to food security and poverty must be addressed.

Small-holder farmers and rural agricultural workers, majority are women, feed 70% of the world population according to the Food and Agriculture Organization. In many developing nations, women feed their immediate household and community, hence, playing an important role in ending hunger. Agricultural workers, especially women access to land and water sources for irrigation must be given priority in national and subnational recovery budgets. Agricultural cooperatives must be established to help smallholder farmers to have strong fiscal leverage and creation of local markets for their products. In the Philippines, the Department of Education in collaboration with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources had launched school vegetable gardening to help students and their families. Building capacity for youth to understand the importance of food production and agriculture must be part of every educational curriculum. Youth must be helped to build knowledge and resilience to food security.

The right to a safe, clean, healthy environment

To be clear, all States have obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, including States that have not yet recognized the right to a healthy and sustainable environment (A/HRC/43/53). This is a planetary citizen obligation.

Thank you, Your Excellency, for this opportunity to contribute.

Submitted by:

Marvie L. Misolas, MM NGO Representative

Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic, Inc. (UNEA accredited NGO)

