



Online session of the 5th United Nations Environment Assembly

22-23 February 2021

Statements during the Wrap-up plenary on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

- President Rotevatn, Madame Executive Director, Ladies and Gentlemen,
- It is my privilege to speak on behalf of the European Union and its 27 Member States. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

Message from the on-line UNEA-5

- The EU and its Member States would like to express once again their deepest appreciation to your Presidency, and to you personally, for your tireless efforts to mobilize the full membership to adopt this message. Your search for consensus around an ambitious message from this online session of the UN Environment Assembly must be praised. The circumstances were not easy indeed and this amplifies the merit of your efforts.
- We also thank the Committee of Permanent Representatives and its Chair, who prepared this session of UNEA and especially the important and novel Medium Term Strategy that will guide the work of UNEP for the next four years, in a way that takes into account the global environmental crisis, and

with a focus on the importance of the driving forces behind it and therefore the need to implement sustainable consumption and production practices.

- We cannot be complacent, however. Climate change is relentless. Biodiversity is being lost as we speak, maybe forever. Our rivers and air are polluted, our soil degraded.
- Our 2030 Agenda ambitions are very high, yet we only have a few years left to meet our targets. For many of them, we are either late or we are on the wrong track. We need to catch-up. We have no time to waste. No time to be timid. Now it is the time to be audacious and ambitious. As the Secretary General said on Thursday at the launch of the Synthesis Report “Making Peace with Nature”, 2021 may be a decisive year for action, if we are to succeed in changing the trajectory towards planetary deterioration of no return.
- It is with this sense of urgency that the EU and its Member States would have appreciated an even higher level of ambition expressed in this message. Yet, we appreciate and support it. But we can do better, much better!
- Over the next two years, we will have many opportunities to do better, and do more, and I sincerely hope we will. On all the pressing challenges, from climate to biodiversity; from land to food systems; from chemicals and waste to plastic pollution, to the solutions in shifts in our productions and consumption patterns, including through resource-efficiency and the promotion of the circular economy.
- We are showing the way with our European Green Deal. Words are not enough! We take action and move forward. Our Global Alliance on Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency launched yesterday is a promising track of global collective engagement. We hope to see its membership grow rapidly. And where there is political will, action will follow.

- Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, the second and in-person session of UNEA5 is around the corner. Twelve months to go. We have a collective responsibility to come forward with an ambitious programme to address the challenges we are facing. Decisions cannot be deferred any longer. We are already late. Let's do it.

Commemoration of the creation of the UNEP by the UN Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm from 5 to 16 June 1972” – (UNEP@50)

- The EU and its Member States would like to express their full support to the UN Environment Programme and its highest governing body, the UN Environment Assembly, meeting here today in this virtual session, as well as our firm commitment to a strong multilateral system that works for the benefit of all.
- Today, with the planetary crisis deepening as we speak, UNEP and UNEA's work is indeed more relevant, but also more urgent, than ever!
- The UN Environment Programme is turning 50 next year. This is indeed a very important anniversary, which deserves to be celebrated by the global community. We are fully behind the host country, Kenya, and honoured to contribute to this well-deserved tribute. We stand ready to help making these celebrations an opportunity for collective engagement.
- We very much welcome the Assembly's decision to hold the UNEP@50 celebrations in Nairobi in March 2022 in conjunction with the resumed session of UNEA-5. We are convinced that the format agreed, a Special Session, will ensure an impactful commemoration with broad as well as high-level participation.

- The EU and its Member States see UNEP@50 as a way of raising awareness of the added value of UNEP and its fundamental role for driving the international environmental agenda and environmental and sustainability governance, and recognise its role and support to the work undertaken so far under UNGA Resolution 73/333 on international environmental governance and international environmental law. As we will finalize this process at the resumed session of UNEA-5, the EU and its MS reiterate that the UNEP@50 commemorations that will be held in March 2022, constitute an excellent opportunity to adopt the final outcome of this process in the form of a high-level political declaration. That said, we are of course mindful of the role of the Presidency and the Bureau of the Sixth session of UNEA and do not wish to prejudge its guidance on the matter.
- The EU and its Member States would also like to reaffirm their full support to the offer made by Sweden to host Stockholm+50, a UN high-level meeting, in June 2022, fifty years after the Stockholm conference of 1972, and the related work taken forward in New York, concerning the adoption of an enabling resolution. We see these two events, UNEP@50 and Stockholm+50, as distinctly different, but interrelated, complementary and mutually reinforcing.
- Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, the EU and its Member States are fully committed to these important milestones in the history of global environmental governance, and we count on the active engagement of all member states and the global community as whole to make the celebrations truly resounding successes.

Thank you.