

**NATIONAL STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES**  
**at the 1st Part of the 5th Session of the United Nations Assembly**  
**February 22, 2021 (Virtual UNEA 5.1)**

H.E. Mr. Sveinung Rotevatn, Environment Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good morning/afternoon/evening!

While COVID-19 may have overturned our lives and constrained our assembly into this virtual two-day meeting, the Philippines nevertheless looks forward to our discussions in this meeting and the continuation of our substantive discussions in February 2022, so we can take decisive and ambitious actions to accelerate environmental measures in support of SDG implementation.

The current global pandemic has threatened - and continues to put at risk - lives and livelihoods globally and has forced us to rethink our current strategies. It has exposed and exacerbated underlying and prevailing issues of inefficient social safety nets, rising inequalities, climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and has even limited and reversed development gains made in the past decade.

Despite all these challenges, the Philippines, as a megadiverse country, is mustering its limited resources to progress towards attaining the SDGs. In 2020, we crafted and implemented 38 policies to continue to protect and conserve our protected areas and critical habitats and our biodiversity. This includes strengthening capacities of our implementing regional and field offices, assessments of 1,199 caves and 89 wetlands and developing action plans for a fifth of these identified areas, fortifying the fight against illegal wildlife trade by cracking down on online traders.

The Philippines has successfully managed over 2.7 million hectares of coastal and marine ecosystems, protected areas and other priority coastal and marine conservation areas. We are also seeking to regulate unnecessary plastics and adopt an Extended Producer Responsibility system, while cities and municipalities carry on with implementing our 2001 comprehensive ecological solid waste management law. Currently, our country's recovery and response strategy is hinged on accelerating action to address the health, social, environmental and economic impacts of COVID-19, forging a trajectory towards building back better within the context of sustainable development.