



**ROYAL NORWEGIAN MINISTRY OF
CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT**

The Minister

Your ref

Our ref

Date

19/1039-

19 March 2021

Excellencies, colleagues and friends,

We held our first ever online meeting of the United Nations Environment Assembly, 22-23 February 2021. I am sure that you will all agree with me that it was a resounding success.

Together, we endorsed a joint message¹; we approved a new medium-term strategy and programme of work and budget for the UN Environment Programme; we agreed on modalities for a resumed session of UNEA-5 in 2022; and we decided to organize a special session on the commemoration of the 50 year anniversary of the creation of UNEP. The online meeting also included a very well-attended leadership dialogue on the contribution of the environmental dimension of sustainable development to building a resilient and inclusive post-pandemic world. In total, over 110 ministers or deputy ministers from 151 Member States and 2 Observer States participated in the online UNEA-5, as well as more than 70 intergovernmental organizations and about 130 non-governmental organizations. The online format allowed for many thousands of interested citizens to follow the meeting and watch the videos, with between 5 000-8 000 individual views recorded for the plenaries and leadership dialogues.

This is an impressive outcome, given the circumstances. It clearly demonstrates that Member States and stakeholders share a common sense of urgency to make further progress towards achieving the UN 2030 Agenda on sustainable development. This despite the challenges we face related to the pandemic – determined that action on addressing global environmental challenges cannot be postponed.

¹ [Looking ahead to the resumed UN Environment Assembly in 2022 – Message from online UNEA-5, Nairobi 22 – 23 February 2021](#)

For my part, I wish to acknowledge and thank all Member State delegations and stakeholders, as well as the UNEP secretariat, for contributing to this successful outcome, as a major collective achievement.

The online UNEA-5 is an excellent springboard for the resumed Assembly in 2022. It is also a promising starting point for an impactful celebration of UNEP@50, which I believe will be a milestone for the global environmental community.

We all also learnt much from the Online UNEA-5. Participants spanned the globe, despite time-zone challenges. The digital format allowed for delegations that may not otherwise have participated to do so, and it provided a platform for a large number of Ministers to make their voices heard and share their experiences. We also heard from many experts and representatives from civil society, academia and business. There were, however, also hard lessons regarding how to address some of the limitations of multilateral engagement, in particular to secure simultaneous interpretation for online meetings. Using the full potential of online meetings requires that all delegations from Member States are able to engage on an equitable basis. This is a vital principle for our engagement within the United Nations. I remain optimistic that we can meet in person at our resumed session and UNEP@50, while also retaining the positive aspects of online meetings, such as improved accessibility and a smaller environmental footprint.

Finally, I am grateful to the Executive Director Inger Andersen and her staff, as well as to other United Nations support staff, which made the online UNEA, as well as the Major Groups and Stakeholder Forum; Science Policy Business Forum; and the Youth Environment Assembly; all possible. Engaged and committed member states, partners from civil society, the business community, academia and youth representatives all played their part in making online UNEA-5 a success. Together we can contribute to work towards sustainable development and a healthy environment for all.

I hope to see you in Nairobi at UNEA-5 part 2 in early 2022.

Yours sincerely



Sveinung Rotevatn