

Zero draft, 8 October 2021

Ministerial declaration for the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

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

Proposed preambular section

PP1 We, the world’s Ministers for the Environment, have gathered at the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, under exceptional circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, to strengthen actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

PP2 We recognize that a healthy nature is prerequisite and foundation for sustainable development in all its dimensions, and that we depend on nature, and the solutions it provides, for our health, wellbeing, resilience, economy and ultimately our existence.

PP3 We note with profound concern the loss, degradation and fragmentation of ecosystems and habitats for biodiversity, affecting both life on land and life under water, due to multiple and interlinked threats such as unsustainable management of nature and its resources, unsustainable consumption and production patterns, climate change, and pollution and littering of water, air, and soil.

NEW We note with further grave concern that the 2020 goal for the sound management of chemicals and waste has not been achieved, thus remaining a threat to nature and our health with environmental pollution.

NEW [Placeholder for reference to outcomes from COP 26 Glasgow]

PP4 We are encouraged by the strength of innovation, knowledge building, and investment in green technologies currently taking place which indicate that solutions exist or can be found.

PP5 We are deeply concerned about the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on human lives and health, as well as on economies and societies, further threatening our ability to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals and are aware that we face recurring risks of future pandemics if we maintain the current patterns of interaction with nature.

PP6 We recognize the need for transformative and systemic changes and could have the opportunity to achieve more by policies and investments that address several environmental challenges simultaneously through innovative holistic approaches that truly value nature.

PP7 We reaffirm, as UNEP celebrates through a Special Session of UNEA 50 years since its establishment, its continued great importance as advocate for the global environment and express our support for further strengthening of UNEP.

Proposed operative section

OP8 We commit to supporting a green and just recovery, with the goal of revitalizing our economies and livelihoods, contribute to poverty eradication, by mainstreaming environmental concerns into all policies and tools promoting economic recovery; making use of green economy pathways that emphasize ecosystem and knowledge-based management, and by reducing greenhouse gas emissions while adapting to climate change in line with the Paris Agreement.

OP9 We commit to working across sectors and levels of government to halt the loss, degradation, and fragmentation of ecosystems, focusing on areas of particular importance for biodiversity, through sustainable land use, effectively managing protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs), safeguarding especially vulnerable habitats, types of nature and eco-systems, and

Commented [A1]: “Achieved” is the word used in the Global Chemical Outlook II rather than “met”. We also deleted “with pollution” here because, the Global Chemical Outlook II lists “Growing production and consumption of chemicals” and “Chemical-intensive industry” before “Release of hazardous chemicals and pollutants”, which indicates that pollution is not necessarily the sole or main reason for the goals not being met. Singling it out gives a false impression on this point. We added “with environmental pollution” at the end rather, as a bridge to the reference to a pollution-free planet in OP15.

addressing illegal deforestation and wildlife trade, mining, and other crimes that have serious impacts on the environment.

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NEW We commit to pursue and join untraditional partnerships across sectors, and work with youth, indigenous peoples, private sector and all of civil society, to develop actions that strengthen nature and turn around the persistently negative long term trend for the environment described by recent scientific reports from United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

OP10 We commit to rethinking our approach to the use and management of nature and its resources, to advance sustainable consumption and production patterns, including through resource efficiency and circular economy policy approaches, and by integrating the proper valuation of nature and the assessment of nature-related risks in policymaking.

OP11 We commit to promote and strengthen nature-based solutions by actively protecting, sustainably managing, and restoring degraded ecosystems that provide us with food, water, and energy, are habitats for biodiversity and provide carbon storage and sequestration, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, for example forests, wetlands, and mangroves, thus underpinning our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

OP12 We commit to cooperate across sectors and levels of government to transform our food systems, building upon the discussions of the UN Food Systems Summit, including the Secretary-General's Chair Summary and Statement of Action, that accelerate actions of various stakeholders for sustainable food systems on all the Sustainable Development Goals, and we underline the natural role of UNEP in the Summit follow-up processes.

OP13 We will promote comprehensive land use planning backed up by robust national enforcement as an invaluable tool for sustainable development and help create a conducive business environment that stimulates investments in sustainable production and value chains.

OP14 We commit to safeguarding life under water, and a clean, healthy, and productive ocean capable of providing food, livelihoods, and storing carbon, through strengthening efforts to sustainably manage all our oceans, as well as by sustainably using and protecting oceans, seas and coastal ecosystems, while acting to prevent pollution, and prevent marine temperature rise and [further] ocean acidification, by keeping our efforts in line with the Paris agreement.

OP15 We maintain our dedication to act in line with the implementation plan towards a pollution-free planet to protect nature and human health from adverse impacts from chemicals and waste and support an ambitious framework for the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.

OP16 [Placeholder for text with reference to recent developments and outcomes on Marine Litter]

OP17 We reaffirm the continued need to strengthen actions for nature and our commitment towards the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and call for an ambitious, transformational and realistic/practical/achievable post-2020 global biodiversity framework for adoption at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity that inter alia includes a set of clear and robust goals and targets to address the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss, as a key instrument to reach the Sustainable Development Goals.

OP18 We call for the adequate and coherent implementation of the actions, commitments and resolutions adopted by the fifth United Nations Environment Assembly as well as previous UNEA outcomes, and further recognize our role, as Ministers of the Environment, in following up on these

Commented [A2]: We have deleted "natural" because the benefits of providing carbon storage and sequestration, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction is not limited to natural forests but can also be derived from all forest in general (afforestation, for example), and if forests were to be listed alongside wetlands and mangroves, it should not be limited to natural forests.

Commented [A3]: We deleted the original wordings because, for example, reducing freshwater use has not been recognized as being a vision of the Food Systems Summit, nor are we aware that any such commonly agreed document identifying elements of a "visions of the FSS" has ever been published. We replaced the original wording with reference to the discussions at FSS and the actual outcome document instead of trying to re-write them here.

Commented [A4]: We do not understand what this "natural role" of the UNEP is. Please clarify.

Commented [A5]: The Paris Agreement goals have not been able to stop this and is actually occurring. Preventing "further" acidification appears to reflect reality better.

Commented [A6]: We need to recognize that the Aichi targets have not been met, and the new framework needs to be grounded in reality in order to not repeat that experience. We have provided several alternatives herein.

commitments within our own governments, contributing to coordinated action across sectors and levels of government and promoting effective implementation.

OP19 We recognize that the effective implementation of these actions requires enabling and coherent policy frameworks at all levels, good governance and law enforcement at all levels, to be supported by effective means of implementation from all sources of finance, including domestic, international, private sector and innovative sources in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, as well as further capacity-building, environmentally sound technologies, dedicated development partnerships, and a renewed and strong commitment to multilateralism.