

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 met with pollution thus remaining a threat to nature and our health.

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, while recognizing the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on developing countries in this regard, and are aware that we face recurring risks of future pandemics if we maintain the current patterns of interaction with nature.

Commented [H2G1]: This paragraph needs to reflect the outcomes of Glasgow in a balanced manner, and should express support to Egypt’s hosting of the upcoming climate COP 27 in Sharm el-Sheikh.

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.

PP7bis We recall and reaffirm the basic principles governing development and the environment, including the principle of “Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)” and equity.

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 and building resilience in line with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and 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, water use, effectively managing protected areas, safeguarding especially vulnerable habitats, types of nature and eco-systems, and addressing illegal deforestation and wildlife trade, mining, and other crimes that have serious impacts on the environment. 2

NEW We commit to stngthen 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).

Commented [H2G3]: In addition, this para needs to be split. One para on working with science, be it IPCC or IPBES, and the other which should come at the end addressing interactions with youth, indigenous peoples and the private sector. They are different in nature, process, and potential outcomes and recommendations.

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 nature and the assessment of nature-related risks in policymaking.

OP11 We commit to promote and strengthen ecosystem-based approaches 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 natural 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, inspired by the UN Food Systems Summit vision of sustainable food systems that deliver enhanced food security while reducing emissions, and enhancing resilience – in particular in developing countries – and reducing biodiversity loss and freshwater use, as an essential solution to accelerate actions 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 ocean acidification, by keeping our efforts in line with the Paris agreement and adopting “Source to Sea” approaches and interlinkages.

OP14bis We commit to safeguarding all water bodies, including lakes and rivers, to address water pollution in inland, coastal and marine ecosystems and improve water quality by, inter alia, increasing efforts in pollution prevention at all levels, including increased transboundary cooperation, integrated water resources management, sustainable use of water, water governance, improved water quality data collection and

Commented [H2G5]: Pending the discussions on the nature-based solutions draft proposed by the EU, and the adoption of a possible definition, it would be best to retain the intergovernmentally agreed term “ecosystems based approaches” for now.

improved data sharing in order to ensure a sustainable supply of water for life, agriculture, food production and other ecosystem services and benefits, and we further note that the midterm review of the water goal under the agenda 2030 in 2023 would be an important milestone in this regard.

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 and transformational post-2020 global biodiversity framework for adoption at the 15th Conference of Parties of 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, and we further note the importance of enhancing coherence between the different environmental agreements and take note of Egypt's initiative on the margins of CBD COP14 in this regard.

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 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, including good governance and law enforcement, and enhanced international cooperation to support developing countries through the provision of sufficient, ambitious and 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 and commitments made under the various Multilateral Environmental Agreements, as well as further capacity-building, transfer of environmentally sound

technologies, dedicated development partnerships, and a renewed and strong commitment to multilateralism and of not backtracking on previous commitments made on the provision of means of implementation.