

Australia's submission to inform the Zero Draft Ministerial Declaration of the Seventh Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7)

Australia thanks the President of UNEA-7 for the opportunity to input into the development of the Zero Draft of the UNEA-7 Ministerial Declaration and for sharing the roadmap for consultations. We wish to express our appreciation for the consultative approach being taken by Presidency in the preparation of the Ministerial Declaration for UNEA-7.

Australia supports the President's proposal for a concise, forward looking, ambitious and action-oriented Ministerial Declaration that is closely aligned with the UNEA-7 theme, *Advancing sustainable solutions for a resilient planet*.

Thank you for the provision of guiding questions to direct our inputs. We are pleased to share Australia's responses to each of these questions for your consideration.

1. What are the most important elements and or key messages for advancing the UNEA theme in the most impactful manner?

Integrated policy responses to address the triple planetary crisis

Biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution are inseparable and interdependent challenges of unprecedented severity that must be addressed urgently and holistically.

- Integrated policy responses are crucial for advancing sustainable solutions for a resilient planet.
- In line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, any sustainable solution needs to recognise the interlinked nature of all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and be viewed holistically across sectors. For example, identifying and implementing actions that address biodiversity loss and climate change (mitigation and adaptation) together, and balancing the need for food security with any environmental protection measures.

Following the *Joint Statement of the Presidents of the three Rio Conventions in 2023*, which called for integrated approaches to address the interlinked challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation, several decisions building on the statement were agreed in 2024¹.

- The Ministerial Declaration should help maintain momentum on leveraging synergies across multilateral environmental fora and advocate for integrated policy responses.

Equality and inclusion

Australia welcomes UNEP's work on equality and inclusion. We would like to see the Ministerial Declaration highlight the need for environmental policies to be responsive to, and inclusive of, gender, disability and diverse knowledge systems, particularly Indigenous and Local Knowledge.

Small island developing states

Australia recognises that some countries, particularly small island developing states (SIDS) face a greater share of the risks and impacts of environmental degradation, pollution, biodiversity loss and climate

¹ This includes: **The CBD COP16 draft decision:** *Cooperation with other conventions and international organizations*; **The UNCCD COP16 decision:** *Promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies*; **The UNEA-6 resolution:** *Promoting synergies, cooperation or collaboration for national implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and other relevant environmental instruments*.

change. We would welcome alignment of the Ministerial Declaration with the recently agreed Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States outcome – “The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) – a Renewed Declaration for Resilient Prosperity”.

The ocean

Noting SDG14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development) is one of the five SDGs under review at the 2025 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, and that the United Nations Ocean Conference will take place in June 2025, Australia would welcome a focus on the ocean in the Ministerial Declaration. This should reflect that SDG14 is currently the most underfunded of all the SDGs.

2. *What key messages or conclusions from recent scientific reports are recommended for consideration?*

Australia encourages the consideration of the key messages and conclusions from the following recent scientific reports:

- [IPBES assessments](#) including the latest to be approved at the IPBES-11 Plenary:
 - Nexus Assessment: [Summary for Policymakers - Additional information](#)
 - Transformative Change Assessment: [Summary for Policymakers - Additional information](#)
- [IPCC Assessments](#) including the latest [AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023](#)
- [UNCCD Science-Policy Interface \(SPI\)](#) including the latest reports:
 - [The global threat of drying lands: Regional and global aridity trends and future projections | UNCCD](#)
 - [Sustainable land use systems – the path forward to collectively achieve Land Degradation Neutrality | UNCCD](#)
 - [Harmony in action for land restoration: Linking social protection, financial inclusion and disaster risk finance | UNCCD](#)
- [High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy](#) Blue Papers on:
 - [The Ocean as a Solution to Climate Change: Updated Opportunities for Action](#)
 - [Co-producing Sustainable Ocean Plans with Indigenous and traditional knowledge holders](#)

Furthermore, we recommend the consideration of the key findings from the [2022 OECD Global Plastic Outlook](#) including the continued increase in plastic waste, leakage and plastic pollution.

3. *What proposed collective actions and policy solutions should be adopted to advance the UNEA theme and promote effective and inclusive environmental governance?*

We would like to see the Ministerial Declaration welcome the adoption of the **Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement** (BBNJ Agreement) and recognise the important role that the Agreement will play in achieving the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework 30x30 targets and sustainable use of the ocean.

Collective action by States to sign and ratify the BBNJ Agreement will help ensure its early entry into force.

A call for commitment to a 100% sustainable ocean management from all coastal and ocean states under national jurisdiction by 2030 and recognition of the critical role of the ocean in addressing the planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. 100% Sustainable Ocean Management is critical for: health and resilience; climate change mitigation; food security; economic growth; marine protection; and inclusivity and equity.

Our collective actions and commitments are essential to ensure the long-term health and resilience of the ocean, combat climate change, support global food security, promote economic growth, and foster inclusivity and equity in ocean governance.

Australia would also like to underscore the important role of:

- Scaling up of **Nature-based Solutions**, including for climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Implementing of **Nature Positive** policies and financial mechanisms.
- The finalisation, submission and implementation of **National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans** (NBSAPs) as agreed under the KMGBF.
- The timely signature and ratification of the **international plastic pollution instrument** once negotiations conclude.
- Building strong, inclusive **partnerships** at all levels, including between civil society organisations, Indigenous Peoples' organisations, the private sector, and governments, which can encourage greater coordination of efforts and resources.
- **Investments** focused on collecting quality, accessible, timely, reliable, and disaggregated data to measure progress on achieving environmental goals and targets (including the SDGs), helping to ensure and that no one is left behind.

4. Any other messages that the Minister for the Environment wishes to be considered or included in the ministerial declaration?

As always, Australia welcomes further opportunities to provide written input to subsequent drafts of the Declaration.

- We welcome the broad, transparent, and inclusive approach being taken to consultations on the Ministerial Declaration and look forward to that continuing, including during the negotiation process at UNEA-7.
- To maximise and support engagement of as many countries as possible, we request there is a virtual option to attend meetings wherever possible.
- Australia would support having consultations on the draft Ministerial Declaration at regional ministerial meetings. The outcomes of these could then inform the informal consultations convened by the Presidency of UNEA.

Australia offers our full support to the Presidency and Bureau in the development of the UNEA-7 Ministerial Declaration. We look forward to engaging further in the ongoing negotiation of this vital document.