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**United Nations
Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment
Programme**

**United Nations Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment Programme
Fifth session**

Nairobi (hybrid), 22–26 February 2021
and 28 February–2 March 2022*

**Draft ministerial declaration of the United Nations
Environment Assembly at its fifth session**

**Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development
Goals**

1. We, the world's ministers for the environment, have gathered in Nairobi, Kenya, together with representatives of international organizations, major groups and other stakeholders at the resumed fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, under exceptional circumstances created by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, with the urgent aim of strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.
2. We reaffirm all the principles set out in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and our commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, with the United Nations Environment Assembly contributing to the effective implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development in an integrated manner.
3. We are ready to do our utmost to end plastic pollution worldwide, and we welcome the decision by the Environment Assembly to establish an intergovernmental negotiating committee towards an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution.
4. We are deeply concerned about the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on human lives and health, economies and societies, which further threaten our ability to achieve sustainable development, and we are aware that we face heightened risks of future pandemics and other health threats if we maintain the current patterns of interaction with nature and do not take a One Health approach, and other relevant holistic approaches, in moving forward.
5. We recognize that a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is important for the enjoyment of human rights and for sustainable development in all its dimensions, and that the well-being of humanity depends on nature and hence on our ability to sustainably use, restore and protect the ecosystem services that it provides for poverty eradication, resilience, our health, our economies and ultimately our existence.

* In accordance with the decisions taken by the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its meeting held on 8 October 2020 and by the bureaux of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives at their joint meeting held on 1 December 2020, the fifth session of the Environment Assembly was adjourned on 23 February 2021 and is expected to resume as an in-person meeting in February 2022.

6. We note with profound concern the findings of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services that nature is facing severe pressure from human activities, and we stress the urgent need to halt the global decline of biodiversity and the fragmentation of habitats, which are unprecedented in human history, their main indirect and direct drivers being changes in land and sea use, direct exploitation of organisms, unsustainable consumption and production patterns, climate change, invasive alien species and pollution of ocean and fresh water, air and soil.

7. We are deeply concerned about the impact of land degradation, desertification and droughts, especially in the most vulnerable countries, and recognize that practices that restore land and soil and aim to achieve land degradation neutrality have the potential to bring about positive socioeconomic change, protect ecosystems, facilitate climate adaptation and act as an accelerator for achieving several Sustainable Development Goals; and we acknowledge the work done by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in this regard and look forward to the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, to be held in Abidjan in May 2022.

8. We also note with grave concern that the 2020 goal on sound management of chemicals, agreed under the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, has not been achieved. The unsound management of chemicals and waste remains a threat to the environment and our health and is further aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic through widespread use of single-use plastics and disinfectant chemicals, as well as economic challenges.

9. We recognize the need for transformative and systemic changes and for policies that address several environmental, economic and social challenges simultaneously, rechanneling financial flows to serve the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals through innovative, holistic approaches that truly value nature.

10. We will build on the strength of innovation, science and knowledge, capacity-building, and investment in green and sustainable technologies, which show that solutions exist or can be developed to benefit all countries, and reaffirm the importance of dedicated North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation for development partnerships and our strong commitment to multilateralism and international solidarity.

11. We welcome the outcomes of the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, including the adoption of the Glasgow Climate Pact, which emphasized the urgent need for parties to increase their efforts to collectively reduce emissions through accelerated action and implementation of domestic mitigation measures and the critical role of protecting, conserving and restoring nature and ecosystems in delivering benefits for climate adaptation and mitigation while ensuring social and environmental safeguards. The Glasgow Climate Pact urged developed-country parties to provide enhanced support, including through financial resources, technology transfer and capacity-building, to assist developing-country parties with respect to both mitigation and adaptation in continuation of their existing obligations under the Convention and the Paris Agreement, and encouraged other parties to provide or continue to provide such support voluntarily. The Pact also recognized the importance of the adequacy and predictability of adaptation finance, including the value of the Adaptation Fund in delivering dedicated support for adaptation. We are committed to a successful twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Egypt that further enhances global action to tackle climate change.

12. We welcome the holding of the first part of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, in Kunming, China, in 2021, under the theme proposed by the host, "Ecological civilization: building a shared future for all life on earth". We call for an ambitious and transformational post-2020 global biodiversity framework for adoption at the second part of the fifteenth Conference of the Parties that, among other things, includes a set of clear and robust goals and targets that are supported by increased finance and strengthened reporting and review mechanisms as a key instrument for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2050 vision of the Convention on Biological Diversity of living in harmony with nature.

13. We welcome and express our support for the upcoming special session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, to be held in Nairobi on 3 and 4 March 2022 under the theme "Strengthening the United Nations Environment Programme for the implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, as a historic opportunity to reflect on the past, present and future contribution of the United Nations Environment Programme as the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental

dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system, and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.

14. We commit ourselves to promoting an inclusive and sustainable recovery, a green and just transition, with the goal of revitalizing our economies and livelihoods and ending poverty, by mainstreaming biodiversity, climate change and pollution concerns into all policies and tools; by making use of green economy pathways that emphasize ecosystem and knowledge-based management; by using gender-sensitive approaches and addressing inequalities; and by reducing carbon and non-carbon greenhouse gas emissions while adapting to climate change and its impact in line with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement.

15. We reaffirm our commitment to the United Nations Decade of Ecosystem Restoration and undertake to work across sectors and levels of government, and among governments, to halt the loss, degradation and fragmentation of ecosystems, focusing on areas of particular importance for biodiversity; sustainable land, sea and water use; effectively managing and actively designating protected areas and parks; safeguarding especially vulnerable habitats, types of nature and ecosystems; promoting ecological connectivity; and addressing deforestation, illegal timber trade and wildlife trafficking, environmentally harmful and illegal mining, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and crimes, conflicts, and other unsustainable activities that have a serious impact on the environment.

16. We commit ourselves to promoting the conservation and sustainable use and management of natural resources and to advancing sustainable consumption and production patterns, including through resource efficiency and circular economy policy approaches, and by applying appropriate methods of valuation of nature and assessment of nature-related risks in policymaking.

17. We will promote and strengthen ecosystem-based approaches and nature-based solutions, including by reducing deforestation and forest degradation and by protecting, conserving, sustainably managing and restoring degraded land, soil and ecosystems that provide us with food, water and energy, are habitats for biodiversity, and provide carbon storage and sequestration, thus yielding multiple benefits across the economic, social and environmental domains and underpinning our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

18. We recognize the importance of the best available science for effective action and policymaking on climate change, biodiversity and pollution, and we stress the urgency of enhancing ambition and action in relation to mitigation, adaptation and finance in this critical decade.

19. We will promote comprehensive land and water use planning with robust national enforcement as an important tool for sustainable development and will encourage international cooperation to help create a conducive business environment that stimulates investment in sustainable production and value chains.

20. We commit ourselves to safeguarding life under water and restoring a clean, healthy, resilient and productive ocean capable of providing food, sustainable livelihoods, and storing carbon, and we will do so by strengthening efforts to protect, conserve and sustainably manage our oceans, seas, lakes, rivers and coastal ecosystems while acting to prevent pollution, including eutrophication and plastic pollution, and to prevent sea level rise, ocean warming and acidification by keeping our efforts in line with the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We look forward to the organization of the second United Nations Ocean Conference in Lisbon in 2022 and the United Nations Water Conference in New York in 2023.

21. We will continue our dedicated efforts to act 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 at the fifth meeting of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, recognizing pollution as one of the major drivers of climate change and biodiversity loss which in turn requires us to prevent pollution that toxifies land, air, ocean and fresh water.

22. We commit ourselves to pursuing and joining new and innovative partnerships across sectors, and to engaging all relevant stakeholders, working with youth, women, indigenous peoples and local communities and with the business, finance, education and science sectors to develop actions for nature and reverse the persistently negative long-term trend for the environment. We therefore welcome the inaugural Youth Environment Assembly held in Nairobi in February 2022.

23. We welcome and rely on the knowledge gained from the recent scientific assessments from the Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the International Resource Panel and the United Nations Environment Programme, and we encourage enhanced collaboration among scientific panels. We further recognize the contribution of indigenous peoples' expertise and knowledge.
24. We undertake to cooperate across sectors and levels of government, in partnership with other governments and local actors and the private sector, to transition to sustainable food systems in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, and inspired by the outcomes of the United Nations Food Systems Summit held in New York in 2021, with a view to delivering enhanced food security and resilience and fostering innovation while reducing emissions, biodiversity loss and freshwater use.
25. We welcome the extension by the General Assembly of the mandate of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (One Planet Network) to 2030.
26. We call for the decisive, adequate and coherent implementation of the actions and commitments contained in resolutions adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fifth session, as well as in the outcome documents of previous sessions of the Environment Assembly, addressing the triple crises for our common environment – climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. We recognize our role, as ministers for 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.
27. We recognize that the effective implementation of these actions requires enabling and coherent legal and policy frameworks at all levels, good governance and enforcement of legislation. We reaffirm our strong political commitment to addressing the challenge of financing and acknowledge the need for effective and rapidly mobilized means of implementation from all sources of finance, including the domestic, international and private sectors as well as innovative sources, in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, as well as from relevant multilateral environmental agreements.
28. In closing, we welcome and express our support for the upcoming international meeting “Stockholm+50: a healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity”, to be held in Stockholm on 2 and 3 June 2022 to further accelerate the transformation to a sustainable future, and we request the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, in her capacity as Secretary-General of the Stockholm+50 international meeting, to forward the present declaration as the input of the United Nations Environment Assembly to that meeting.
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