

Statement by Ms. Joyce Msuya, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, delivered at the adjournment plenary of the online meeting of the 5th United Nations Environment Assembly, 23 February 2021

**Summary of key messages from the Leadership Dialogue:
Contribution of the environmental dimension of sustainable development to
building a resilient and inclusive post-pandemic world
22 and 23 February 2021**

Excellencies, we enjoyed two inspiring sessions of dialogue focused on the centrality of the environmental dimension of sustainable development to the post-pandemic recovery.

A total of **87 Ministers and high-level representatives** participated over two days of the Leadership Dialogue, including the engagement of UN Resident Coordinators.

I would like to briefly share some of the salient points emphasized.

1. **The health of nature and human health are inextricably linked.** The COVID-19 pandemic is the reason why we are having to meet remotely. More importantly, the pandemic demonstrates the consequences of the harm we have done to nature. For our own well-being we must make our peace with nature in a way that demonstrates solidarity. If we do not, we will increase the risk of future pandemics through zoonotic diseases.
2. **The nature crisis is inter-linked with the climate and pollution crises.** Degrading nature both contributes to increased emissions and makes us less resilient to the impacts of climate change. Pollution damages our health and undermines the ability of natural processes to regulate the climate. We must address these three crises together, in a coordinated, integrated and equitable way.
3. **The pandemic is both a threat and an opportunity.** It has exposed our vulnerability and it is undermining the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. But it also provides an opportunity. We now have the

chance to put in place a green recovery that will transform our relations with nature and heal our planet. We need to address the three crises in a way that we failed to do until now.

4. **The green recovery should put us on a pathway towards low carbon, resilient and inclusive post pandemic world.** It should invest in the transition to a circular economy to achieve sustainable consumption and production and make full use of the role that nature-based solutions can offer to address climate change, nature loss and pollution.
5. **The green recovery must address the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable.** It must generate new, green jobs and work to bridge the digital divide. Recognising the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, the green recovery will need to ensure that countries have the means of implementation that they need.
6. **Many Member States are already putting in place key components of a green recovery.** These include actions on chemicals and waste, plastic pollution, oceans, the energy transition, including enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions, sustainable cities, resilience and nature protection. These actions need to be scaled up and accelerated. But the green recovery is not the responsibility of national governments alone. Regional approaches are often effective. And a whole-of-society approach is needed that fully engages youth, local communities and business.
7. **2021 is the year when we must consolidate the transformation.** The meetings of the Rio Conventions, the Food Systems Summit and the launch of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration provide opportunities to raise ambition and, more importantly, catalyse action.
8. **UNEP, as the leading global environmental authority, has a crucial role to play.** The adoption of the Medium-Term Strategy, founded on good science, provides the necessary tools. The three planetary crises know no boundaries. Our response too must be globally coordinated. Multilateralism has never been more important.