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73/284. United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030)

The General Assembly,

Recalling the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012, entitled “The future we want”,¹ in which the role of ecosystem restoration in achieving sustainable development was highlighted,

Recalling also Economic and Social Council resolutions 1980/67 of 25 July 1980 on international years and anniversaries and 1989/84 of 24 May 1989 on guidelines for international decades in economic and social fields and General Assembly resolutions [53/199](#) of 15 December 1998 and [61/185](#) of 20 December 2006 on the proclamation of international years,

Recalling further the proclamation of the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010–2020),² the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity, 2011–2020,³ the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028,⁴ the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, 2021–2030,⁵ and the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (2019–2028),⁶

Reaffirming its resolution [70/1](#) of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, in which it adopted a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals and targets, its commitment to working tirelessly for

¹ Resolution [66/288](#), annex.

² Resolution [62/195](#), para. 3.

³ Resolution [65/161](#), para. 19.

⁴ Resolution [71/222](#), para. 3.

⁵ Resolution [72/73](#), para. 292.

⁶ Resolution [72/239](#), para. 1.



the full implementation of the Agenda by 2030, its recognition that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, and its commitment to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – in a balanced and integrated manner and to building upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and seeking to address their unfinished business,

Reaffirming also its resolution [69/313](#) of 27 July 2015 on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, supports and complements it, helps to contextualize its means of implementation targets with concrete policies and actions, and reaffirms the strong political commitment to address the challenge of financing and creating an enabling environment at all levels for sustainable development in the spirit of global partnership and solidarity,

Emphasizing the need for collective efforts to promote sustainable development in its three dimensions in an innovative, coordinated, environmentally sound, open and shared manner,

Underlining that several targets related to ecosystem restoration contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development have a deadline of 2020 and that urgent action is therefore needed to achieve them,

Emphasizing that forests, wetlands, drylands and other natural ecosystems are essential for sustainable development, poverty alleviation and improved human well-being,

Stressing the importance of the ecosystem approach for the integrated management of land, water and living resources and the need to step up efforts to tackle desertification, land degradation, erosion and drought, biodiversity loss and water scarcity, which are seen as major environmental, economic and social challenges for global sustainable development,

Recalling United Nations Environment Assembly resolutions calling for the conservation and restoration of ecosystems,⁷

Reaffirming the New Urban Agenda, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), held in Quito from 17 to 20 October 2016,⁸ and its vision for cities and human settlements that protect, conserve, restore and promote their ecosystems, water, natural habitats and biodiversity, minimize their environmental impact and change to sustainable consumption and production patterns,

⁷ Including resolutions 1/5 on chemicals and waste and 1/8 on ecosystem-based adaptation (see *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 25 (A/69/25)*, annex); resolutions 2/8 on sustainable consumption and production, 2/13 on sustainable management of natural capital for sustainable development and poverty eradication, 2/16 on the mainstreaming of biodiversity for well-being and 2/24 on combating desertification, land degradation and drought and promoting sustainable pastoralism and rangelands (see *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-first Session, Supplement No. 25 (A/71/25)*, annex); and resolutions 3/4 on environment and health (UNEP/EA.3/Res.4), 3/6 on managing soil pollution to achieve sustainable development(UNEP/EA.3/Res.6), 3/7 on marine litter and microplastics (UNEP/EA.3/Res.7) and 3/10 on addressing water pollution to protect and restore water-related ecosystems (UNEP/EA.3/Res.10).

⁸ Resolution [71/256](#), annex.

Stressing the need for cooperation, coordination and synergies in the work related to ecosystem restoration among relevant United Nations entities, according to their mandate,

*Recalling decision XII/19 on ecosystem conservation and restoration, adopted at the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity,⁹ in which it was noted with concern that, according to the fourth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook*, not enough progress had been made towards achieving Aichi Biodiversity Targets 14 and 15,¹⁰ decision XIII/5 of the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties,¹¹ by which the parties adopted a short-term ecosystem restoration plan, decision 14/5 on biodiversity and climate change, adopted at the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and decision 14/30 on cooperation with other conventions, international organizations and initiatives, adopted at the same meeting, in which the parties welcomed the initiative of the Government of Egypt to promote a coherent approach for addressing biodiversity loss, climate change and land and ecosystem degradation, as well as the Cancun Declaration on Mainstreaming the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for Well-being, adopted at the high-level segment of the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties,¹²*

Recognizing the importance of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in China in 2020, in formulating a post-2020 global biodiversity framework that will contribute to the conservation of biodiversity on the planet and thus facilitate and reduce the need for ecosystem restoration,

Recalling that, in the preamble to the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,¹³ the parties recognized the importance of the conservation and enhancement, as appropriate, of sinks and reservoirs of the greenhouse gases referred to in the Convention,

Recalling also that sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases include forests, oceans, wetlands and soil, and recalling further their essential role in the adaptation to and mitigation of climate change and in enhancing the resilience of ecosystems and societies to its impacts,

Acknowledging the additional contribution and importance of carbon sequestration resulting from the restoration of ecosystems to the achievement of the long-term temperature goal of the Paris Agreement,

Acknowledging also that the achievement of the objective of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,¹⁴ and of a land degradation-neutral world will contribute to and be facilitated by the restoration of ecosystems and that those efforts are connected to the climate change, sustainable economic development and poverty eradication agendas,

Welcoming the efforts under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, to support the development of viable

⁹ See United Nations Environment Programme, document UNEP/CBD/COP/12/29.

¹⁰ See United Nations Environment Programme, document UNEP/CBD/COP/10/27, annex, decision X/2.

¹¹ See United Nations Environment Programme, document UNEP/CBD/COP/13/25.

¹² United Nations Environment Programme, document UNEP/CBD/COP/13/24.

¹³ See FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1, decision 1/CP.21, annex.

¹⁴ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1954, No. 33480.

large-scale private projects on land rehabilitation and sustainable land management worldwide through the launch of the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund,¹⁵

Taking note of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016–2024, adopted at the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat,¹⁶ which includes targets for the restoration of wetlands, including in connection with biodiversity and climate change mitigation and adaptation,

Noting that the world's forest area decreased from 31.6 per cent to 30.6 per cent of global land area between 1990 and 2015, but that the pace of loss has slowed in recent years,

Noting also the invitation extended to countries by the Committee on Forestry of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, at its twenty-fourth session, to actively pursue more integrated approaches to the restoration of degraded lands, support the development of financing mechanisms dedicated to ecosystem restoration and better engage the private sector in restoration initiatives,¹⁷

Recalling the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030¹⁸ and the need to reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation and contribute to the global effort to address climate change,¹⁹

Acknowledging the emergence of voluntary restoration initiatives and commitments at all levels, created to spur ambition and action to restore ecosystems across the world,

Taking note of existing restoration initiatives such as the Pan-African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration for Increased Resilience, undertaken with a view to reversing the loss of biodiversity and ecological infrastructure, combating land degradation and desertification, mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change, enhancing resilience and improving people's well-being,

Welcoming the fact that, to date, almost 60 countries have announced political commitments to bring more than 170 million hectares of degraded land under restoration as part of the Bonn Challenge,

Noting that, in spite of political commitment, additional momentum is needed to generate the necessary transformational impact at all levels in order to conserve and restore ecosystems and to achieve sustainable development,

Noting also that restoration needs to be carried out in ways that balance social, economic and environmental objectives and with the engagement of relevant stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and local communities,

¹⁵ The establishment of the Fund was welcomed in paragraph 6 of the Ordos Declaration, adopted at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, held in Ordos, China, from 6 to 16 September 2017 (ICCD/COP(13)/21/Add.1, decision 27/COP.13, annex). More information on the Fund is available at www.unccd.int/actions/impact-investment-fund-land-degradation-neutrality.

¹⁶ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 996, No. 14583.

¹⁷ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, document COFO/2018/REP, para. 20 (d).

¹⁸ See resolution 71/285.

¹⁹ Global forest goal 1 of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030.

Recognizing the crucial role that women play in ecosystem conservation and restoration, and stressing the need for the full participation of women at all levels of policymaking and implementation for ecosystem conservation and restoration,

Noting in this context the importance of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security,²⁰ adopted in 2012 by the Committee on World Food Security, and the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management, endorsed by the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations at its 155th session,

Recognizing that protecting ecosystems and avoiding harmful practices against animals, plants, microorganisms and non-living environments contributes to the coexistence of humankind in harmony with nature,

Recognizing also that ecosystem restoration is a complement to conservation activities and that priority should be given to conserving biodiversity and preventing the degradation of natural habitats and ecosystems by reducing pressures and maintaining ecological integrity and the provision of ecosystem services,

Concerned about the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services worth more than 10 per cent of annual global gross domestic product, due to land degradation,

Noting that land degradation is a pervasive, systemic phenomenon occurring in all parts of the terrestrial world and that urgent and timely action is needed to avoid, reduce and reverse it, and noting in this regard the relevant work of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services,²¹

Noting also that coral reefs are projected to decline by a further 70 to 90 per cent at a temperature increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius, with larger losses at 2 degrees Celsius, and that there has been a decline of about 35 per cent in both marine/coastal and inland natural wetland areas studied between 1970 and 2015,

Recalling the commitment to halting and reversing the decline in the health and productivity of our ocean and its ecosystems and to protecting and restoring its resilience and ecological integrity,

Noting the invitation to the General Assembly by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its fourteenth meeting, in its decision 14/30, to designate the decade 2021–2030 the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration,

1. *Decides* to proclaim 2021–2030 the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, within existing structures and available resources, with the aim of supporting and scaling up efforts to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide and raise awareness of the importance of successful ecosystem restoration;

2. *Stresses* that ecosystem restoration and conservation contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,²² as well as other

²⁰ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, document CL 144/9 (C 2013/20), appendix D.

²¹ See, for example, Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, *Assessment Report on Land Degradation and Restoration: Summary for Policymakers* (Bonn, Germany, 2018), in which the Platform reaffirmed the global dimension of land degradation and reconfirmed the economic sense of urgent and concerted action and investment in avoiding land degradation and restoring degraded lands.

²² Resolution 70/1.

related United Nations major outcome documents and multilateral environmental agreements, including the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,¹³ and the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets¹⁰ and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework;

3. *Encourages* Member States:

(a) To foster political will, the mobilization of resources, capacity-building, scientific research and cooperation and momentum for ecosystem restoration at the global, regional, national and local levels, as appropriate;

(b) To mainstream ecosystem restoration into policies and plans to address current national development priorities and challenges due to the degradation of marine and terrestrial ecosystems, biodiversity loss and climate change vulnerability, thereby creating opportunities for ecosystems to increase their adaptive capacity and opportunities to maintain and improve livelihoods for all;

(c) To develop and implement policies and plans to prevent ecosystem degradation, in line with national laws and priorities, as appropriate;

(d) To build on and reinforce existing restoration initiatives in order to scale up good practices;

(e) To facilitate synergies and a holistic view of how to achieve international commitments and national priorities through the restoration of ecosystems;

(f) To promote the sharing of experiences and good practices in ecosystem conservation and restoration;

4. *Invites* the United Nations Environment Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to lead the implementation of the Decade, in collaboration with the secretariats of the Rio conventions, other relevant multilateral environmental agreements and entities of the United Nations system, including by identifying and developing possible activities and programmes, within their mandates and existing resources, and through voluntary contributions, as appropriate;

5. *Invites* Governments, international and regional organizations and other relevant stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector and academia, to actively support the implementation of the Decade, including through voluntary contributions, as appropriate;

6. *Stresses* the importance of the full involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including women, children according to their evolving capacities, young people, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and local communities, in the context of the Decade at all levels;

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its eighty-first session on the status of the implementation of the present resolution, including its contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

69th plenary meeting
1 March 2019