

Colombo Declaration

on Sustainable Nitrogen Management

We, the Member States of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) participating in the Ceremonial Launching of the United Nations Global Campaign on Sustainable Nitrogen Management, 'Nitrogen for Life', held in Colombo, Sri Lanka,

Recognizing the relevance of Nitrogen and the need for national coordination between different Ministries such as Environment, Agriculture, Health, Education and Science as well as agencies and other stakeholders, in addressing Sustainable Nitrogen Management using the Whole of Society approach,

Acknowledging that Nitrogen is not just another problem, but rather it must be part of the solution for many of our environmental challenges, as it is an essential element for building structures of living organisms and as a critical element for the survival of all living things,

Recognizing that unreactive di-nitrogen is extremely abundant in the atmosphere and is converted naturally to reactive forms through lightning and biological nitrogen fixation, which cycle through roots of plants into food chains and made available to life, health and environment,

Appreciating agricultural wisdom and traditional best practices of ancient civilizations relevant for sustainable nutrient management, as this has descended over generations,

Noting that human activities continue to fertilize soils with reactive nitrogen in order to sustain global food and feed production,

Reaffirming the resolution on Sustainable Nitrogen Management (UNEP/EA.4/Res.14), adopted at the Fourth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-4), emphasizing that global economy-wide nitrogen use is currently inefficient with extremely large proportion of anthropogenic reactive nitrogen lost to the environment,

Concerned that mismanagement and overuse of nitrogen has negative effects on land, water, biodiversity, human health and air, leading to worsening of climate change impacts,

Recognizing the International Nitrogen Initiative's commitment, made at the 'Our Ocean Conference 2018' in Bali, Indonesia, to support a Global ambition to halve nitrogen waste by 2030, which would offer quantified co-benefits for water quality, air quality, biodiversity, human health, climate resilience, food and livelihoods,

Acknowledging the efforts of the United Nations Environment Programme, the Global Environment Facility and the International Nitrogen Initiative, in the establishment of the International Nitrogen Management System to link science and policies on sustainable nitrogen management, including contributions from the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management, the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme and the 'GCRF South Asia Nitrogen Hub' established with support from the Global Challenges Research Fund of UK Research and Innovation,

Noting the outcome of the Fourth Session of the International Nitrogen Management System, held at UNEP in Nairobi on 29-30 April 2019 as a follow-up to the UNEA-4 resolution (UNEP/EA.4/Res.14) and the proposed 'Roadmap for Action on Sustainable Nitrogen Management 2020-2022',

1. Endorse the proposed Roadmap for Action on Sustainable Nitrogen Management 2020-2022, including its activities as one of the instruments to establish an Inter-convention Nitrogen Coordination Mechanism and secretariat to better facilitate communication and coherence across nitrogen policies, consistent with mandates of existing conventions and MEAs,
2. Call upon UN agencies and other international organizations, development partners, philanthropic agencies, academic and civil society organizations, to support the implementation of this Declaration, through the establishment of mechanisms of cooperation to mobilize human, financial and technical resources, including capacity building and transfer of know-how and technology, for this purpose;
3. Agree that countries should consider, in line with their national circumstances and where relevant, to:
 - 3.1 Develop and implement comprehensive policies on Sustainable Nitrogen Management;
 - 3.2 Develop national roadmaps for sustainable nitrogen management, with an ambition to halve nitrogen waste by 2030;
 - 3.3 Conduct comprehensive assessments on quantitative and qualitative nitrogen cycling covering scientific aspects, policy, regulation and implementation;
 - 3.4 Promote innovation on anthropogenic nitrogen use and recycling, emphasizing the opportunities for the circular economy;
 - 3.5 Sensitize the citizens to understand the natural nitrogen cycle and how anthropogenic activities alter its balance;
 - 3.6 Identify the best of descended traditional agricultural wisdom and assess the opportunities offered for nitrogen management, where appropriate mainstreaming it through policy, implementation and regulatory channels;
 - 3.7 Cooperate to submit a joint resolution to the Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly; and
 - 3.8 Report on the progress of implementing this Colombo Declaration at the Sixth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly;
4. Request the UNEP Executive Director to:
 - 4.1 Facilitate the implementation of the Colombo Declaration, and the Roadmap for Action on Sustainable Nitrogen Management, 2020-2022,
 - 4.2 Catalyze a global comprehensive analysis of global nitrogen budgeting, impacts and solutions, including valuation of natural nitrogen fixation.

Done on 24th October 2019 in Colombo, Sri Lanka