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on the occasion of EARTH DAY 22 April 2020

“Climate Action”

On Earth Day we come together and demonstrate the solidarity, cooperation and action needed to meet the challenges ahead of us. Our immediate priority is to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and stand in solidarity with all people, including the most vulnerable, affected by the disease. But on this 50th anniversary of Earth Day, we also need to tackle the challenges linked to climate change and the degradation of our natural environment.

Human actions are the basis for the environmental and health challenges before us. Climate change, deforestation, land-use change, unsustainable agriculture including livestock production and the illegal wildlife trade are the results of our actions. The consequences are, including on our health, felt by all people. The way out of these unsustainable paths is through human action – collective and individual steps to build a sustainable future.

The response to the challenges of climate change, much like the response to COVID-19, requires guidance from sound science. And the science couldn't be any clearer. We need to act now.

Climate change and biodiversity loss are intertwined. They must be addressed as one interconnected problem with linked solutions.

Climate change is a major driver of biodiversity loss. Marine biodiversity is affected by ocean acidification related to levels of carbon in the atmosphere. Terrestrial biodiversity, including species and ecosystems, is influenced by climate variability, such as extreme weather events. All of this has a direct influence on ecosystem health and the ecosystem goods and services upon which we all depend.

Better conservation, restoration and management of ecosystems, will produce a carbon cycle that can lead to a balanced regulation of Earth's climate. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) suggests that restoring natural lands or preventing their destruction could deliver more than a third of the action needed by 2030 to keep global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius.

As we celebrate 50 years of Earth Day, and stand together as one global community, let's set the scene for action that will allow us to build back better, and take the actions needed for a sustainable future.

