

Strengthening Cooperation for International Environmental Law

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2022 Political Declaration: Some Ideas

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Structure

1. Why do we need a political declaration in 2022?
2. The scientific background: Examples of the IPCC and IPBES
3. What could be the possible content of such a declaration: 5 ideas

1. Why a 2022 political declaration?

- **UN Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, 1972**
 - **Stockholm Declaration**
- **United Nations Environment Program was established as a result of the conference in 1972 (50 years UNEP)**
- **Mandate in UNGA Res. 73/333**
 - “to prepare a political declaration for a United Nations high-level meeting ... in the context of the commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm from 5 to 16 June 1972, with a view to strengthening the implementation of international environmental law and international environmental governance...”

1. Why a 2022 political declaration?

Critical juncture (despite 50 years of international environmental law and governance...)

- Science states very clearly that the state of the environment is critical
- We can still fix it
- Requires fundamental, transformative changes across all societal sectors («unprecedented in scope»)
- We have very little time: Most changes need to be in place by 2030 («crucial decade»)

2. What does science say?

“Human activities are estimated to have caused approximately 1.0°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels.... Global warming is likely to reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052 if it continues to increase at the current rate.”

(IPCC, 2018, SPM, A.)



2. What does science say?

“Pathways limiting global warming to 1.5°C [...] require rapid and far-reaching **transitions in energy, land, urban, infrastructure [...] and industrial systems. These **systems transitions** are unprecedented in terms of scale...”**

(IPCC, 2018, SPM, C.2)



2. What does science say?

“The biosphere, upon which humanity as a whole depends, is being altered to an unparalleled degree across all spatial scales. Biodiversity [...] is declining faster than at any time in human history.”

(IPBES, 2019, SFP, A.)

Global Assessment Report
on Biodiversity and
Ecosystem Services

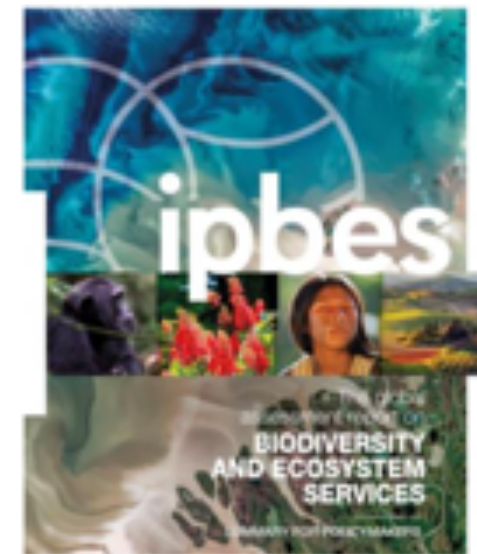


2. What does science say?

“Goals for conserving and sustainably using nature and achieving sustainability cannot be met by current trajectories and goals for 2030 (i.e. Paris Agreement, SDGs) and beyond may only be achieved through **transformative changes across economic, social, political and technological factors.”**

(IPBES, 2019, SFP, C.)

Global Assessment Report
on Biodiversity and
Ecosystem Services



3. The possible content of the political declaration: 5 Suggestions



3. Possible Content: Suggestion 1

Recognition of “crucial decade” (until 2030)

Transformative change of human systems (technological, economic, social) necessary to develop within “safe operating space for humanity” (planetary boundaries)

Sustainable development: balanced integration of the environmental, economic and social dimensions **within planetary boundaries.**

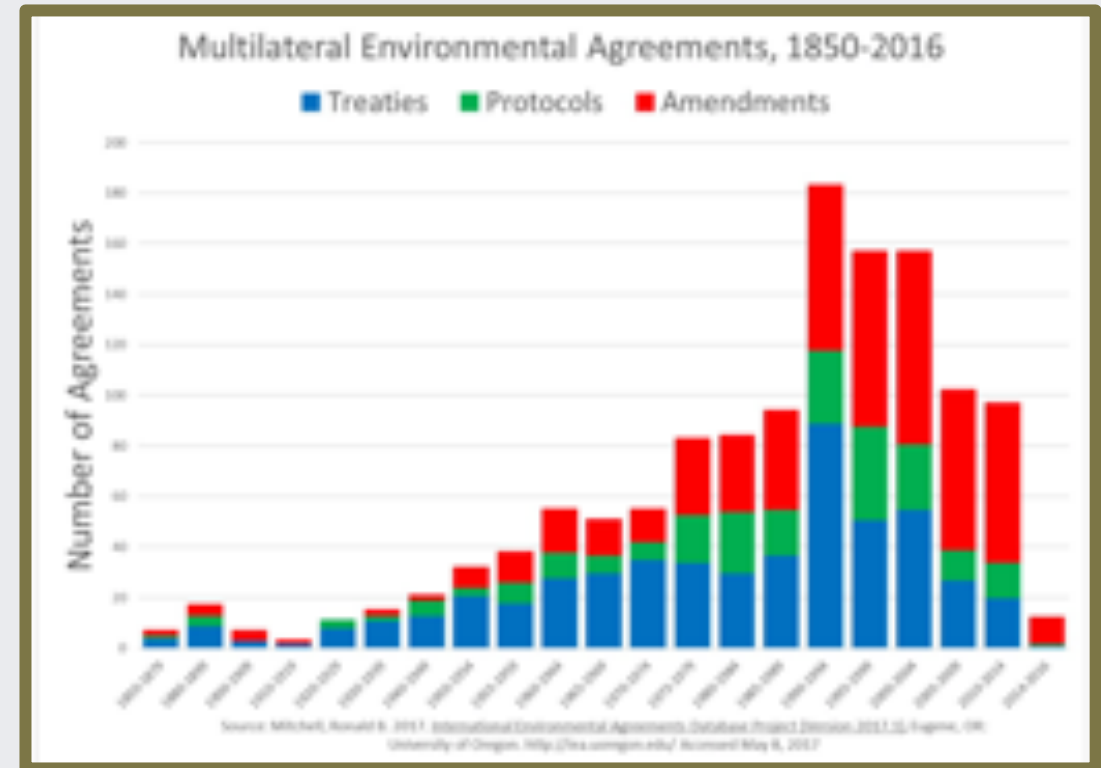


3. Possible Content: Suggestion 2

Urgent call for effective implementation of existing bi- and multilateral environmental treaties

We have what we need (with very few exceptions, e.g. gene editing, nanotechnology, treaties are in place)

Applying highest possible ambition and best efforts (due diligence) to environmental protection



3. Possible Content: Suggestion 3

Address Fragmentation of environmental law and governance

All UN treaties, bodies, committees should work for or support to transformative change, regardless of their subject matters (e.g. human rights, security)

Also coordination with areas of law: trade, investment, subsidies etc.



3. Possible Content: Suggestion 4

Right to a clean and healthy environment

- Recognized by over 150 nations in their national systems
- In international law, only few examples
- Rights-based approaches can be effective and equitable means to ensure a high quality of the environment, which is integral to enjoying a wide range of (other) human rights



3. Possible Content: Suggestion 5

New principles (some suggestions)

1. Non-regression

Economic recovery from shocks (e.g. pandemics, social unrest, or natural disasters) must not lead to lowering environmental standards (“back-sliding”)

2. Progression

Regular reviews of existing laws and regulations with a view to enhance the level of ambition and effectiveness



3. Possible Content: Suggestion 5 (ctd.)

3. Rights of future generations

Future/unborn generations more affected than present ones; but not represented in decision-making processes

Recognize the need to present the interests (and rights) of posterity in current processes (e.g. ombudsman, trustee, council)



2022 Declaration as an Opportunity

- Important for compelling states into action
- Declaration should:
 - Recognize the gravity of the problem,
 - Be science-based,
 - Be forward looking,
 - Be reflective of dynamic geo-political realities, and
 - Pay justice to future generations.
- Legacy of *this* generation

Thank you!

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