

Open Working Group on SDGs

Key messages of Norway/Denmark/Ireland on Biodiversity, Forests, Oceans and Seas

Biodiversity

- Biodiversity encompasses the entire variety of life on Earth. It is the **Earth's life support system and is vital for sustainable development.**
- **Ecosystems** provide direct and indirect services that are essential for food and nutrition security, for pollination, medicines and clean water. It is crucial for people's livelihood, not least for many indigenous peoples, and is of cultural and recreational value throughout the world. Ecosystem services help regulate local and global climate and reduce the effects of climate change and natural disasters.
- **Genetic diversity** is vital for plant and animal breeding, and for strengthening the resilience of the agricultural sector to environmental stresses
- **Loss of biodiversity** makes us more vulnerable, undermines our food and nutrition security and increases susceptibility to disease. Allowing the natural base to deteriorate at the present rate is the most effective way to grind prosperity to a halt and narrow down development options. We run the risk of passing tipping points where changes in ecosystems become irreversible and the benefits they provide will be in danger.
- We need to consider the role of the private sector in protecting biodiversity and ecosystems. We should develop partnerships and other initiatives to engage the private sector as well as local communities in the sustainable management of biodiversity and the protection and restoration of ecosystems.
- **The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and its 20 Aichi targets** adopted by Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity is a good basis for future action and must be implemented, also helping us integrate biodiversity and ecosystem services into the SDG framework.

Forests

- **Forests host more than 80% of the world's terrestrial biodiversity.** Forests contribute important socioeconomic and environmental benefits to societies. They provide food, raw materials and ecosystem services; they maintain local fresh water production, regulate rainfall patterns and help prevent natural disasters. **Resilient forests are essential for climate change mitigation and adaptation,** as well as for disaster risk reduction.

- **Intact forests are of great importance to countless local communities and indigenous peoples. It is estimated that around 1.3 billion people are wholly or partially dependent on forests for their livelihoods.** They are at risk of getting their livelihoods degraded or destroyed by deforestation or forest degradation.
- **Sustainable forest management** is therefore crucial. In order to reduce deforestation and forest degradation, the underlying causes have to be addressed, such as unsustainable practices in agriculture and lack of access to sustainable energy. Furthermore, community ownership of local forests must be assured as well as support for poor communities to sustainably manage them.

Oceans

- **Healthy oceans** are fundamental for sustainable development.
- The ocean covers over 70% of the planet and an estimated 50-80% of all life on earth is found under the ocean surface.
- **Oceans host huge reservoirs of biodiversity** and are characterized by a number of complex ecosystems. Mangroves and coral reefs provide vital physical barriers against erosion and extreme weather.
- Oceans have a key role in regulating the global climate and weather and water cycles. We need to protect these vital ecosystems from **pollution, including marine debris, misuse and overexploitation.**
- The harvesting of marine resources contributes to the **livelihood of millions** of people, including for many of the world's poorest communities and people in Small Island Developing States, and to global food security. Oceans are also important for production of energy and mineral extraction, for tourism and transport. All these sectors must be managed in a responsible and sustainable manner.
- **International law**, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources.
- **Pollution** from marine and land-based sources and acidification from greenhouse gases are today gradually destroying the health of marine organisms and reducing the provision of healthy food from the oceans. We must step up our efforts to restore healthy marine ecosystems, including through the framework of the International Maritime Organization (IMO).
- Unsustainable fisheries must come to an end. **We must combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing** and destructive fishing practices through appropriate legislation and regional and global cooperation. This is essential for the robustness of important fish stocks, other marine species and for the livelihoods of communities depending on those stocks.
- We need to implement and further develop our tools for managing the oceans, the coastal areas and their natural resources. A continuous interaction between marine

research, modern fisheries management and environmental best practices is the key.

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- **In conclusion: We depend upon the biological resources and the ecosystem services** they provide for our daily and long term survival. Responsible management of these resources is important to sustain the basic foundation of our lives and livelihoods.
- We must manage our natural resources sustainably, based on the **best available knowledge, the precautionary principle and an ecosystem approach**. The SDG framework should reflect and build upon this.