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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 15 October 2019, at 3.15 p.m.

Co-Chair: Ms. Juul (President, Economic and Social Council) (Norway)*Co-Chair:* Mr. Niang (Chair, Second Committee). (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Opening statements

1. **Ms. Juul** (Co-Chair) said that the joint meeting would focus on how ecosystem approaches grounded in nature-based solutions could shift the world onto a sustainable path. Climate change and species loss were accelerating at an unprecedented rate, and natural disasters were becoming more frequent and significant in scale. Ecosystems were collapsing, agricultural land was being lost to desert, and millions were facing food or water shortages or fleeing their homelands as conflicts over natural resources intensified.

2. Business as usual would not solve anything: solutions with transformative effects on climate change were needed. The meeting would therefore focus on innovative approaches that made use of new technology, as well as practices from the past and indigenous knowledge. Nature-based solutions to climate change grounded in sound biodiversity science could be low cost and low risk, and protect the ecosystems on which humankind depended. Because nature-based solutions were a relatively new concept, a deeper understanding of them was needed if they were to be used to maximum benefit. The panel discussion should not only offer food for thought but also provide practical ideas and recommendations on how to act fast to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. **Mr. Niang** (Co-Chair) said that nature-based solutions could help to overcome the world's sustainable development challenges. The food and water consumed by humans depended on the health of ecosystems, and millions directly depended on ecosystems for their livelihoods. Not only was biodiversity decreasing worldwide, but the rate of loss was accelerating, largely as a consequence of human activity. Without a shift to more holistic approaches, internationally agreed sustainable development targets could not be met.

4. In order to effectively manage terrestrial ecosystems, conserve their essential resources and preserve biodiversity to ensure the survival of humanity, contemporary lifestyles and routes to development had to change. The way people thought about nature and its inherent value must undergo a paradigm shift in order to create future societies that were sustainable and resilient enough to support human existence. The good news was that efforts in the right direction were already under way: growing awareness among Governments, the private sector and civil society was leading to new approaches and more accurate measurements of nature's value.

Panel discussion: "Ecosystem approaches for shifting the world onto a sustainable pathway"

5. **Mr. Sengupta** (Global Coordinator for the Climate Change Portfolio, International Union for Conservation of Nature), panellist, accompanying his statement with a digital slide presentation, said that the International Union for Conservation of Nature had been founded in 1948. Its unique membership was comprised of not only States and government agencies, but also of non-governmental organizations, and, as of the latest session of its governing body, indigenous people's organizations. Its triple helix structure was formed of its membership, six expert commissions and a secretariat.

6. Global economic and social well-being depended on a healthy biosphere and as such, Sustainable Development Goals 6, 13, 14 and 15, which respectively addressed clean water and sanitation; climate action; life below water; and life on land, were vital to the achievement of the remaining 13 Goals. The International Union for Conservation of Nature focused on the deployment of nature-based solutions in response to societal challenges as one of three major areas of work. Nature-based solutions were defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature as "actions to protect, sustainably manage and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits".

7. From a climate perspective nature-based solutions offered clear benefits: they could provide over a third of the cost-effective climate mitigation needed by 2030 if global warming was to be kept below 2°C, one of the Paris Agreement targets. Moreover, land-based carbon removal options, including forests, wetlands and soils, offered the potential to reduce emissions by 12 gigatons annually. As an example, the world's largest tropical peatland, located in the Congo Basin, could store three years' worth of the total global fossil fuel emissions, or 20 years' worth of fossil fuel emissions from the United States of America.

8. The Bonn Challenge, launched in 2011 by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the Government of Germany, was a global initiative aiming to bring 150 million hectares of deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020, and 350 million hectares by 2030, outcomes that would sequester up to 1.7 billion tons of carbon per year, equivalent to 14 per cent of global emissions. To date, pledges to restore 170 million hectares had been secured. The financial benefits of nature must not be underestimated: in 2012, wetlands

had helped the United States to avoid \$625 million in direct flood damages during Hurricane Sandy. More generally, coastal wetlands in the United States were estimated to provide storm protection services worth \$23 billion annually.

9. The University of Oxford and the International Union for Conservation of Nature had recently conducted a meta study of States' levels of ambition with regard to the implementation of nature-based solutions as part of their nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement. The resulting study issued in the joint report entitled "Nature-based Solutions in Nationally Determined Contributions", contained recommendations on how to include nature-based solutions in future nationally determined contributions more substantively in order to raise climate ambition. While at least two thirds of Paris Agreement signatories included nature-based solutions as a means towards achieving their mitigation or adaptation goals, more concrete, evidence-based targets for nature-based solutions were urgently needed. For instance, although over 70 per cent of nationally determined contributions contained references to efforts in the forest sector, only 20 per cent of those included quantifiable targets, and only 8 per cent included targets expressed in tons of carbon dioxide emissions.

10. The study had also shown that nature-based solutions that synergized adaptation and mitigation were underused. Only 17 countries aimed to address the two together, but healthy ecosystems in fact simultaneously supported adaptation, mitigation and disaster risk reduction. There was a major opportunity to scale up the use of nature-based solutions in non-forest, carbon-rich ecosystems, such as grasslands, drylands, mangroves and peatlands, which were relatively poorly represented in nationally determined contributions.

11. Furthermore, the study had revealed that low-income countries included nature-based solutions much more prominently in their nationally determined contributions than high-income countries did. While that fact could in part be due to high-income countries' implicit, rather than explicit, inclusion of nature-based solutions, it nevertheless indicated that nature-based solutions could play a greater role than many countries currently envisaged. The primary takeaway was that all countries could strengthen their future nationally determined contributions through the substantial incorporation of nature-based solutions. That general recommendation had been broken down into five specific recommendations.

12. First, States should include nature-based solutions across a wide range of naturally occurring ecosystems,

not only forests. Second, they should use more nature-based solutions that addressed both climate change adaptation and mitigation, while also supporting sustainable development and biodiversity conservation. Third, they should include more specific, measurable and robust targets for nature-based solutions in their nationally determined contributions and associated implementation plans. Fourth, they should align nationally determined contributions with other relevant national plans and international processes. Lastly, they should mobilize greater funding for nature-based solutions. Most countries that had explicitly included nature-based solutions in their nationally determined contributions had made their implementation conditional on the receipt of external support and finance.

13. Despite the need to increase the use of nature-based solutions, there were good reasons for optimism. Global awareness of the importance of nature-based solutions was growing, as evidenced by the Nature-based Solutions for Climate manifesto, an outcome of the Climate Action Summit 2019. Investment in nature-based solutions was increasing and 2020 had been dubbed a "super year" for nature in which the momentum for global and national actions was set to increase, spurred by the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity; the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; and the World Conservation Congress 2020, to be hosted by the International Union for Conservation of Nature itself.

14. **Ms. McQuaid** (Innovation Catalyst, Trinity Centre for Social Innovation, Trinity Business School), panellist, accompanying her statement with a digital slide presentation, said that nature-based solutions for sustainable cities were being used across Europe as part of Horizon 2020, Europe's largest research and development programme. Trinity Business School was ranked in the top 1 per cent of business schools worldwide. It sought to lead by example when it came to climate change: the new Business School faculty was housed in a near zero-energy building featuring two green walls, which increased the health and well-being of staff and students, provided a much-needed filter against air pollution and increased biodiversity within the city centre.

15. Through a collaborative initiative called "Connecting Nature", Trinity Centre for Social Innovation and Trinity School of Natural Sciences were supporting cities across Europe in the use of large-scale nature-based solutions to address societal challenges. There were currently 31 participants in the initiative from 16 countries, and regional hubs in China, Brazil,

South Korea and the Caucasus. The four major groups involved were urban communities and citizens, who identified societal challenges and co-defined potential nature-based solutions to those; city authorities, who had the budget and remit to implement large-scale, systemic nature-based solutions; academics, who supported city authorities in various ways; and industry partners, primarily small- and medium-sized enterprises that were engaged in developing innovative nature-based solutions.

16. The project's research was framed by the European Union's definition of nature-based solutions: inspired and supported by nature; cost-effective; simultaneously providing environmental, social and economic benefits; and helping to build resilience. The European Union had already invested more than €200 million in research, development and innovation on nature-based solutions, which were prioritized under Horizon 2020. Much of that funding had gone into large-scale projects on issues such as water, climate resilience and urban regeneration, with a view to establishing a robust evidence base and reference framework. Funding had also been used for research and innovation to find solutions to some of the challenges associated with the mainstreaming of nature-based solutions, such as governance, business and financing models, and investment from the insurance industry. Nature-based solutions contributed to numerous policy areas, including sustainable urbanization and air quality, but biodiversity was a critical cross-cutting theme.

17. Sixty-eight cities across Europe that were systemically implementing large-scale nature-based solutions formed a community of practice. They were collectively building an evidence base and quantifying the impacts of nature-based solutions on the environment, the economy, health and well-being. Nature-based solutions had the potential to contribute to achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals, but "Connecting Nature" was focused particularly on Goal 11, on sustainable cities. Cities were estimated to produce 75 per cent of global carbon dioxide emissions and recent research had shown that many citizens felt disempowered by climate change and biodiversity loss. Urban nature-based solutions presented an opportunity to reconnect people with nature and empower them to make changes in their own lives that would positively impact biodiversity in their own communities.

18. Many urban nature-based solutions, like urban parks, street trees and community gardens, had been around for decades. However, only recently had researchers begun to quantify their benefits, such as providing buffering against flooding, mitigating air and noise pollution and toxins, reducing the heat-island

effect in cities in summer and acting as carbon sinks. Such solutions also had positive effects on mental and physical health and well-being, as was increasingly being proven. Green walls and living rooves were more modern nature-based solutions. One German business working with the programme was even using nature as a building technology: it constructed green living rooms, mobile structures that could be assembled and used temporarily on a carpark or an urban transport hub, for instance, to provide relief from the heat in summer. The mobile rooms were already proving popular in Germany.

19. While community buy-in was crucial at all stages of the process, from co-design to co-production and co-governance, it was not easy to secure. In that connection, the European Commission had established five task forces to provide support with some of the challenging aspects of implementing large-scale nature-based solutions. "Connecting Nature" benefited from the assistance of a task force that concentrated on governance, business models and finance. Roughly one third of European nature-based solutions were large-scale infrastructure-type projects costing more than €4 million, while approximately 40 per cent were small-scale community projects costing less than €500,000. The cost of projects was important when deciding what kind of investor to seek. In Europe, public finance paid for approximately 75 per cent of nature-based solutions, while financial institutions only paid for 2 per cent; interestingly, community and philanthropic funding was paying for an increasing proportion of nature-based solutions, currently its share stood at 10 per cent.

20. The first challenge for the task force was the dominance of public sector funding for urban nature-based solutions or, viewed from another angle, the low level of investment from financial institutions. The problem was that many nature-based solutions were simply too small for financial institutions to invest in, and also that there was a lack of clarity on the returns on investment. Common indicators to make it more straightforward to quantify economic, social and environmental impacts were lacking. Therefore, in the short term, Trinity recommended increasing public funding, or seeking to increase use of alternative forms of financing, such as impact investing, community financing and crowd funding.

21. The second challenge was the compartmentalization of government funding. Nature-based solutions were often competing for funding with other public services such as health or education, without due recognition of the shared benefits that they could create. Systemic change was needed in the public sector; priority should

be given to the establishment of cross-departmental teams to address climate change and biodiversity loss.

22. Perhaps the most significant challenge related to governance: although many cities were keen to transition from public sector leadership of nature-based solutions to collaborative governance approaches, there was a lack of knowledge on how to achieve such a transition. There were many departments, agencies and groups involved in putting nature-based solutions in place, and it was difficult to bring all those stakeholders together. Thus, further research, demonstrations, case studies and tools were needed to support the transition from public sector management to public-private-people partnerships.

23. In order to bring stakeholders together and clearly share information about the value proposition of nature-based solutions and how that value would be captured, Trinity had developed something called a business model canvas. The canvas, which set out important information about nature-based solutions in a clear visual format, had already been useful in gaining access to new departments and new sources of funding, and in telling the story of nature-based solutions to new audiences.

24. In conjunction with University College Dublin, Trinity was also conducting work on nature-based enterprises and entrepreneurship. They were currently developing a typology of nature-based enterprises based on the type of nature-based solutions they implemented, with a view to identifying market opportunities for nature-based entrepreneurs and creating a database of existing nature-based enterprises.

25. **Mr. Guillon** (Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Conservation Investment Management), panellist, accompanying his statement with a digital slide presentation, said that Conservation Investment Management was the first and only registered investment advisor in the United States specialized in conservation investments. It was dedicated to managing investments that offered attractive financial returns while achieving positive conservation impacts, and was based in Denver, Colorado. His company did not focus on nature-based solutions as such, but on restoring ecosystems, and it made a point of ensuring that all its projects benefited local communities.

26. In less than 15 years, Conservation Investment Management had provided the funding for more than 1,300 projects across the United States, typically costing between \$3 million and \$20 million. It managed between \$3 and \$4 billion worth of private investment per year, and that figure was growing at a rate of roughly 20 per cent annually. One of its recent projects, which

was illustrative of the type of work it concentrated on, had been the reconfiguration of a stream bed close to Washington, D.C. and the surrounding land to dramatically reduce the impact of heavy rains on the city. The stream formed part of a watershed that had been mismanaged in the past, resulting in frequent flooding of parts of the city. Fields upstream now allowed heavy rain to disperse, and also formed a natural filter for sediment. Conservation Investment Management generally concentrated on water management to reduce flooding and pollution; it did not yet work on many climate change projects.

27. The three primary drivers for conservation investment could be categorized as regulatory, pre-regulatory and voluntary. Regulatory drivers consisted of government mandates or incentives, such as the Clean Water Act in the United States. Pre-regulatory drivers were anticipated government mandates that motivated action; for instance, although there was not yet a federal carbon cap, companies and States knew that one was coming, and many were already taking emissions-reduction measures accordingly. Certifications and optics were voluntary drivers: independent third-party endorsements of environmental practices, for instance through membership in the Wildlife-Friendly Enterprise Network, could drive consumer behaviour; and many companies made a point of their corporate social responsibility, for which consumers were willing to pay a premium.

28. The primary factors that had enabled his company's success in the United States were the existence of clear regulatory drivers, its ability to attract capital with the promise of both positive environmental impacts and financial returns, and its empowerment of entrepreneurs to identify and start projects, most of which were not government-initiated. Regulatory drivers fell into three main categories. The first category was related to the mitigation of environmental impacts, such as the Endangered Species Act, which required businesses to restore the habitat of endangered species if they damaged those habitats. The second category concerned pollution-reduction obligations, such as incentivizing the use of nature-based solutions. For example, New York City had confronted a difficulty with the purity of its water, which came from the Catskill Mountains. Instead of retrofitting all of its treatment plants, as per the costly recommendation made by the Environmental Protection Agency, the city authorities had managed to resolve the problem with a simpler and cheaper solution involving the farmers in whose land the water originated. Lastly, there were cap and trade systems, whereby businesses could sell their

offsets, including from sequestration, incentivizing carbon emissions reduction.

29. An enormous amount of private capital was available for investment in nature-based solutions. Over the next 10 years an estimated \$30 trillion in private wealth would be transferred to the millennial generation, and younger investors were increasingly seeking out investments aligned with their values and hoping to partner with the public sector on impactful projects. In order to leverage that opportunity, it was imperative that Governments gather more data. Investors wanted to know exactly how their money was preserving the environment or improving people's health, and the paucity of clear indicators was a hindrance to securing major investments. Governments should also engage early with international investors in order to educate them about local opportunities and key projects; all too often Governments were wary of foreign investors, but in reality impact investors sought to do as much good as possible with their money. If Governments were interested in increasing foreign conservation investment, Conservation Investment Management was able to review contracts and identify any legal loopholes. Governments should also offer blended finance to allow projects to be tested in developing countries; providing investors with an initial guarantee while they acquired experience with a particular country or nature-based solution was the best way to engage risk-averse investors and get new projects off the ground.

30. Most important was empowering entrepreneurs to identify and start projects. Local experts must be involved, because nature-based solutions must be tailored to the specific site. It was also critical to build local support: the affected community must understand and agree with the rationale for a project and must share in both the environmental and economic benefits.

31. Conservation investment could be in impact mitigation, for instance the restoration of a damaged ecosystem; cap and trade schemes; pollution reduction, which could involve the development of green infrastructure and water-related investments; certification; and climate change adaptation, such as coral reef restoration and the use of mangroves to limit hurricane damage.

Interactive exchange

32. **Ms. Moe** (Norway) said that ensuring the health of the planet remained essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Loss of nature drove climate change, biodiversity collapse and poverty, and threatened health, livelihoods, culture and security. The

world needed more nature, not less. That meant that first and foremost it was necessary to protect remaining ecosystems, like tropical rainforests, which provided vital services such as water filtration and regulation of regional rainfall patterns. Protecting and restoring vital ecosystems was essential to achieve shared global goals.

33. Two recent reports provided key information on the way forward. The report of the Food and Land Use Coalition, *Growing Better: Ten Critical Transitions to Transform Food and Land Use*, indicated that paradoxically, humans' food production was destroying the ecosystems on which they depended. The report outlined 10 important transitions that would protect the planet and people in an economically sustainable way. They included producing more food using less land, a change that necessitated government regulation and support for smallholder farmers. More food needed to be harvested from the oceans in a sustainable way. Diets also played a large role: healthier food was better for both people and the planet. People also needed to waste less. Done right, a transition could create better rural jobs and protect people from trillions of dollars' worth of costs in climate-change-related disasters and health bills.

34. Second, the High-level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy had concluded, in a research study, that ocean-based climate action had the potential to reduce the emissions gap by up to 20 per cent by 2050. At the Climate Action Summit 2019, the Panel had launched an ambitious call for actors globally to accelerate progress on a number of key ocean-based climate actions. Those included investment in nature-based climate solutions, such as scaling up offshore and ocean-based renewable energy, supporting rapid decarbonization of ocean industries and advancing the deployment of carbon capture and storage below the seabed. A sustainable ocean economy had a vital role to play in much-needed emissions reductions, while also providing jobs, sustaining food security, maintaining biological diversity and enhancing resilience.

35. Norway was committed to supporting nature-based solutions to advance progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, meet international commitments and achieve sustainable and equitable development.

36. **Mr. Varganov** (Russian Federation) said that the promotion of a systematic approach to the sustainable use of ecosystems by the United Nations and its Member States was welcome. The Russian Federation had supported various recent initiatives based on a holistic understanding of nature, including the adoption of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030,

the declaration of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028 and the restoration of ecosystems.

37. An ecosystem approach was one of the major pillars of his Government’s environmental policies. The Russian Federation took the interdependence of environmental components into consideration when creating new or expanding existing nature reserves, and in its management of river basins, seas and forests. There was an undeniable link between water resources, the maintenance of a fertile climate on the planet and forest ecosystems. Forest conservation was currently a particular focus for Russia. On 1 January 2019 a law had entered into force which made it obligatory to restore forested areas, on the same scale and in the same area where trees had been felled. Forests’ sequestration capacity should be fully taken into account under the Paris Agreement. Nature-based solutions could also be achieved using nature-inspired technologies, using systems and processes that worked according to the laws of nature. Such technologies could be used in the production or development of energy from renewable sources.

38. In July 2019, the second Global Manufacturing and Industrialization Summit of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization had been held in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg. At the event, the relevance of seeking out highly-effective, scientific, energy-based solutions by observing them in nature and using mega-science mechanisms had been reiterated. All interested stakeholders were invited to cooperate on scientific and manufacturing issues for the sustainable development of biotechnology.

39. **Ms. O’Connor** (United Kingdom) said that biodiversity loss and climate change were intrinsically linked, and must be tackled together. Although nature-based solutions had the potential to address both, and could cost-effectively deliver up to a third of the climate mitigation required by 2030, they received less than 4 per cent of global climate finance. Nature-based solutions also provided adaptation benefits, improved biodiversity and supported sustainable development.

40. The United Kingdom had set ambitious domestic targets with its 25-year environment plan and its net-zero legislation. It was developing and implementing nature-based solutions through the Clean Growth Strategy, for example by funding woodland expansion and peatland restoration. It would also create or restore 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat outside protected sites, as part of a nature recovery network. It would be doubling its international climate finance to at least £11.6 billion over the next five years, with a focus

on the nature-based solutions that worked for people, climate and the environment. The United Kingdom was also increasing its investment in biodiversity protection, with a new £220 million fund and £40 million earmarked for reforestation.

41. The United Kingdom was committed to playing its part to deliver a global post-2020 biodiversity framework that was ambitious, measurable and drove action. In partnership with Italy, the United Kingdom was set to host the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2020. Along with other important meetings, it meant that “super 2020” offered an opportunity to amplify links between climate and biodiversity, as well as the role of nature-based solutions. The Prime Minister had committed to adopting a joint approach to climate and biodiversity, recognizing them as two sides of the same coin, with a strong focus on nature-based solutions to climate change. However, the work needed to address climate change went beyond the current discussions: it was necessary to transform the current energy mix and change the way economies functioned.

42. **Mr. Lawrence** (United States of America) said that the United States was a leader in the development of the technologies and practices required for the appropriate deployment of nature-based solutions and associated ecosystem services, both domestically and around the world. Nature-based solutions were aligned with his Government’s goals of working with international partners towards enhancing prosperity and self-reliance, and the United States supported projects at home and abroad that integrated many of the principles of nature-based solutions. The United States Department of Agriculture had a long track record of restoring lands to provide value for the people of the United States. An example of his country’s international contribution was the SilvaCarbon programme, led by the United States Forest Service. SilvaCarbon leveraged his country’s technological leadership and technical expertise to assist international partners in mapping and monitoring their forests and other land, thereby enhancing their ability to assess and implement nature-based solutions.

43. **Mr. Guillon’s** presentation had been compelling; the creation of regulatory drivers, not only at the federal level but also at the state and local levels, was an important way to advance nature-based solutions. Tax incentives could also make a huge contribution to the use of nature-based solutions. His Government sought to find the most suitable solutions to the problems that it identified on the ground. Nature-based solutions offered benefits that the United States would continue to support and explore.

44. **Mr. Grigoryan** (Armenia) said that the world was indeed facing a range of challenges related to climate change, unsustainable urbanization and the loss of natural capital. Nature-based solutions might offer responses to societal challenges, including threats to food and water security, soil degradation, pollution and desertification. They could also create new jobs and support economic growth through the creation of new products and services that enriched natural capital rather than depleting it. Recognizing the linkages between economic and environmental issues, and convinced that the best economic decisions were made when their effects on the environment had been carefully assessed, his Government was closely integrating its economic and environmental policies.

45. His Government was working to mainstream environmentally friendly practices in sectors of the economy that had adverse environmental impacts. One area of particular importance for his Government was forest expansion: not only to capitalize on forests' protective role, but also to create sustainable forestry livelihoods for local communities. His Government had committed to dramatically expand its forest cover, and to double it by 2050. Over the last two decades Armenia had increased protected areas across the country and taken important steps to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt biodiversity loss and protect threatened species.

46. The inaugural Forest Summit, jointly organized by the Armenia Tree Project and the American University of Armenia Acopian Center for the Environment, would be held in Yerevan from 20 to 23 October 2019. The Summit would bring together forestry experts to discuss a wide range of policy issues, such as financing mechanisms for forest restoration and conservation, balancing energy demands in the context of poverty reduction and forest conservation, and the role of information and communications technology in forest conservation and management.

47. **Mr. Gayito** (Ethiopia) said that countries such as his own were living through the devastating effects of climate change, which was threatening hard-won development gains and causing much-needed development capacity to be diverted towards life-saving efforts. Nature-based solutions contributed significantly to resilience in the face of climate change. Cognizant of the crucial importance of sustainable land management, Ethiopia was preparing a 10-year forest sector development programme to promote sustainable and productive forestry for green economic growth and biodiverse forests. Approximately 4 billion trees had been planted in Ethiopia in the last three months under the programme. In 2020 a further 5 billion trees would

be planted under an initiative called "40 Trees Per Head for New Ethiopia". The two most important factors moving forward were political commitment and public mobilization. Political leadership had been at the front of the nationwide tree-planting programme, and more than 20 million people had been mobilized to participate, holding the conviction that their action would help to bring about the changes needed.

48. Ethiopia remained committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. Preserving the planet, ending poverty and achieving prosperity for all was possible, but required a reinvigorated partnership.

49. **Ms. Zeitler** (Observer for the European Union) said that the current meeting was important because nature-based solutions still tended to be discussed primarily in environmental circles, and were not usually addressed in international sustainable development discussions. The panellists' contributions had shown that regulatory measures, policies, research and funding all had roles to play in enhancing the use of nature-based solutions. The silo approach within governments, whereby each department worked in isolation, indeed needed to be overcome. Society also must learn to take a longer-term approach: nature-based solutions were often not the first choice because their benefits took time to become apparent, whereas technological solutions could frequently provide faster, although not necessarily better, outcomes.

50. As Ms. McQuaid had explained, as part of Horizon 2020, the European Union was focusing on nature-based solutions research. It sought to build a knowledge community that extended to researchers beyond Europe, and to collect as much data as possible. Organized data would make it possible to demonstrate which nature-based solutions could be scaled up or replicated in different countries or under different circumstances.

51. Financing for nature-based solutions represented a major challenge. In that connection, the Natural Capital Financing Facility of the European Union supported small businesses that wanted to put nature-based solutions into place but struggled to gain access to the necessary finance because they lacked concrete figures to demonstrate short-term benefits and profits. The Facility assisted small businesses with loans or additional guarantees that were provided partly through public support. The same kind of facility existed in development cooperation, under the European Union's External Investment Plan, which had dedicated allocations for areas such as sustainable agriculture and cities-related action. Under the Plan, creative, innovative entrepreneurs who wanted to be more sustainable but had difficulty gaining access to finance

could receive financial guarantees to support their endeavours. More broadly, the work the European Union was carrying out on sustainable finance was extremely important: large-scale investors, such as pension funds, needed to be able to accurately inform their clients who were seeking to invest in sustainable projects. To that end, the European Union was working on a taxonomy that would detail what was sustainable in different areas in relation to nature-based solutions. Lastly, the bridge between policymakers and businesses should be strengthened. Although there was some green partnership development between European Union countries, such partnerships could be usefully be expanded into conservation activities.

52. The next 12 months would be critical for nature-based solutions, which had received a lot of visibility at the Climate Action Summit 2019. They were relevant to many of the draft resolutions that the Second Committee would be considering in the next two months. The Committee should seize the opportunity to see where nature-based solutions could be integrated into those resolutions so that they were mainstreamed for the benefit of the 2030 Agenda overall.

53. **Mr. Liu Yanming** (China) said that nature-based solutions were an essential part of the global solution to climate change. Nearly 40 per cent of existing climate change initiatives were related to nature-based solutions; and at the Climate Action Summit 2019, they had featured as one of nine major areas of action, with discussions on the topic co-led by China and New Zealand.

54. Nature-based solutions offered a new perspective on the relationship between humans and nature, supporting a harmonious coexistence between them. They supported ecological conservation and the integration of sustainable natural resource use into the policy and action frameworks for tackling climate change, while maximizing the catalytic role of nature.

55. Nature-based solutions could also inspire new global responses to climate change. China had proposed more than 150 nature-based initiatives in the fields of forestry, agriculture, oceans, water resources and ecosystems; and it had established a nature-based solutions group of friends to promote follow-up of implementation and to enhance international cooperation in that regard. The aim was to tap into nature's mitigation potential of 10 to 12 gigatons of carbon dioxide per year.

56. Nature-based solutions would also galvanize momentum for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Clean water and lush mountains were invaluable assets. Improving the ecological

environment would help to boost productivity. In that regard, China had compiled more than 30 best practices in areas such as forests, carbon sinks, biodiversity conservation, and prevention and control of desertification, demonstrating the huge benefit of nature-based solutions to the coordinated development of the economy, society and the environment.

57. Looking forward, China would continue to take vigorous climate action, deepen its cooperation with other countries, advance the multilateral climate process and strive to build a clean and beautiful world with common prosperity and a shared destiny.

58. **Mr. Abdel-latif** (Observer for the International Renewable Energy Agency) said that from the presentations he had received the impression that renewable energy did not hugely feature in the nature-based projects discussed. Yet, renewable energies could be described as nature-based solutions: energy from the sun, the wind and the earth. The fact that they were not included reflected the silo approach that the panellists had mentioned. Energy, ecosystems, land management and water were in fact deeply related, and should be addressed holistically. The International Renewable Energy Agency was working toward such an approach, seeking to demonstrate how renewable energy could be incorporated into nature-based solutions. For instance, the previous month it had signed a memorandum of understanding with the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, to show how renewable energies could contribute to land restoration. He hoped that renewable energy could be integrated into nature-based solutions moving forward.

59. **Mr. Sengupta** (International Union for Conservation of Nature) said that a video on nature-based solutions produced by the International Union for Conservation of Nature was available on YouTube. The organization was in the process of developing an international standard for nature-based solutions. The standard was currently in the public consultations stage of the adoption process; the organization hoped to have it ready in time for its next congress, to be held in Marseilles in 2020. More information could be found on the official website (at iucn.org/climate), where the report on nature-based solutions in nationally determined contributions was also available.

60. As some speakers had emphasized, it was extremely important that policies be aligned with market objectives and wider societal goals. All societal actors must be involved, because no single actor could deliver climate action or nature-based solutions alone.

61. **Ms. McQuaid** (Innovation Catalyst, Trinity Centre for Social Innovation, Trinity Business School) said that the comments regarding the necessity of working across different policy areas had particularly resonated with her. The current meeting represented a small step towards ending the silo approach. The need for political leadership had also come across clearly. The many examples of government commitment and action mentioned were heartening; she looked forward to seeing the impact that they would have on climate change and biodiversity loss.

62. **Mr. Guillon** (Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Conservation Investment Management) said that the understanding of and commitment to nature-based solutions was refreshing. The need to eliminate the silo effect was indeed crucial: planting forests, for instance, impacted water, biodiversity and, more importantly, local communities.

Closing statements

63. **Ms. Juul** (Co-Chair) said that the meeting had shown that nature-based solutions supported nature conservation norms and principles, and could be implemented alone or in an integrated manner. They maintained biological and cultural diversity as well as the ability of ecosystems to evolve over time. The clear message from the meeting was that nature-based solutions offered concrete answers to problems that were plaguing the world and should be considered as complementary to, not incompatible with, technological solutions. Opportunities to embrace them and apply them to appropriate situations should not be missed.

64. **Mr. Niang** (Co-Chair) said that under the Great Green Wall initiative in the Sahel region of Africa, 100 million hectares of degraded land were being restored, 250 million tons of carbon sequestered and 10 million rural jobs created. More than 20 countries of the region were involved in that effort, through the African Union. Communities from Djibouti to Senegal were transforming the landscape, bringing it back to life and also bringing improved food security, jobs and stability to people's lives. When completed the Great Green Wall would be three times the size of the Great Barrier Reef. All participants were encouraged to take action and make the 2030 Agenda truly transformative for people and the planet.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.