

**Keynote Speech  
(Video Message)**

# Inger ANDERSEN

Under-Secretary-General, United Nations (UN)  
Executive Director, UN Environment Programme (UNEP)

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Their Imperial Majesties, the Emperor and Empress, the Honourable Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues.

Let me start by thanking Japan for announcing a 2 trillion yen as part of its economic stimulus package to recover from the pandemic. This move sets Japan on the road to a net-zero future and is exactly the kind of global leadership we need right now.

Thank you also for inviting me to address you at such a crucial juncture for the planet. Congratulations to Wataru Takeshita, the Chairman of Global Environmental Action, for making this event possible.

For decades, organizations like Global Environmental Action have been laying out how humanity is driving the climate crisis, the biodiversity and nature crisis, and the pollution and waste crisis. The global pandemic shows that these three planetary crises are not dissipating. As the Secretary-General said our planet is broken and making peace with nature is the defining task of the 21st century.

Today, I would like to deliver four messages on how we can make peace with nature by increasing ambition and action through international frameworks, accelerated by a post-pandemic green recovery.

## **One, we must deliver emissions reductions to address the climate crisis.**

We are falling desperately short on reducing greenhouse gas emissions – as two recent UNEP reports show.

UNEP's Emissions Gap report, released last week, told us that, despite a dip in emissions of up to 7 per cent in 2020 due to the pandemic, we are still heading for a temperature rise this century in excess of 3°C. This is far beyond the Paris Agreement goals of limiting global warming to well below 2°C and pursuing 1.5°C. Letting it happen would be a catastrophe.

The Production Gap report, meanwhile, found that the world will need to decrease fossil fuel production by around 6 per cent per year until 2030 to have a chance of hitting the 1.5°C target. Countries are instead projecting an average annual increase of 2 per cent.

So, we must urgently get to work on the climate priorities set out by the UN Secretary-General.

We must put a price on carbon. End fossil fuel subsidies and financing. End coal. Tax carbon and polluters. Integrate carbon neutrality goals into all economic and fiscal decisions. Align public and private finance with the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals. Step up adaptation efforts to help those countries suffering the most, despite being least responsible for the climate crisis.

The Emissions Gap Report tell us that we have the opportunity to kick-start change in a post-pandemic green recovery. Such a green recovery could cut 25 per cent off the emissions we would expect to see in 2030, bringing them broadly in line with the 2°C goal. But off course, we need to do much more to reach the 1.5°C target.

The signs are encouraging. 126 countries including Japan have now committed to net-zero emissions: covering over 63 per cent of global carbon dioxide emissions – if the incoming US administration delivers on its intention. However, these commitments must be urgently translated into strong, near-term policies and actions and included in strengthened Nationally Determined Contributions, NDCs, ahead of COP26 in Glasgow.

By using a post-pandemic green recovery to get a head start, and pushing on with real systemic change, planned and tracked through stronger NDCs, we could hit the 2°C target and have a shot at attaining the 1.5°C goal.

But we have to get serious right now.

## **Two, we must address the biodiversity and nature crisis.**

Nature underpins 14 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. More than half of the world's GDP depends on it. But nature is in decline. Around one million species face extinction. Billions of hectares of land are degraded. Forest area equivalent to the size of Denmark is lost each year.

The UN Biodiversity Summit signalled greater ambition from world and business leaders. At this summit, Japan announced the expansion of Satoyama Initiative – which promotes the integration of conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity in production landscapes – from 73 to over 100 countries. This is an important step towards meeting global biodiversity goals.

We must carry this momentum into 2021, when countries will meet in Kunming to create a post-2020 biodiversity framework. But what do we need to see from this new agreement, which will guide our actions on protecting biodiversity?

We need to act on those sectors that have the biggest footprint on biodiversity. We need to focus on biodiversity-positive agriculture and fisheries. And end negative subsidies that harm biodiversity. We have to move away from harmful, extractive resource mining, towards more sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Japan can lead on all of these threads.

### **Three, beat pollution and waste.**

Pollution and waste is a growing problem. Air pollution causes seven million premature deaths a year. By 2025, the world's cities will produce 2.2 billion tonnes of waste every year. In the Asia-Pacific region, pollution is one of the main causes of biodiversity decline.

Japan's support and leadership on this crisis has been invaluable. Thanks to Japan's support, UNEP is able – through projects such as CounterMEASURE – to share scientific knowledge on plastic pollution in the Ganges, the Mekong and other rivers in Asia. As a result, the Mekong River Commission and its member states are developing a plastic waste management and monitoring plan for the Mekong River basin by 2022.

With its first-hand experience of Minamata disease, Japan has played a leading role in global mercury reduction and national capacity building. UNEP hosts the Minamata Convention on Mercury, and we look forward to furthering partnerships to end mercury poisoning.

Japan also hosts the International Environmental Technology Centre and the country's leadership in the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics is also much appreciated.

But with your expertise and experience, and with our global advocacy and outreach, we can aim even higher.

Next year, the International Conference on Chemicals Management will agree on the beyond-2020 framework on chemicals and waste. The goal is to minimize the negative effects of chemicals on environment and health. Doing so could, according to the World Health Organization, prevent at least 1.6 million deaths per year. Japan is in pole position to play another leadership role in shaping a new framework on sound management of chemicals and waste.

### **Four, we must prioritize integrated action as we recover better.**

A post-pandemic green recovery can help to get climate action back on track. But it can do much more. A green recovery provides an opportunity to reset our economies, shift our consumption and production patterns, and invest in green jobs, renewable energy, sustainable food systems and green infrastructure. Such actions can bring benefits across all three crises while backing sustainable development. In fact, the ILO estimates that a shift towards a greener economy will create 24 million new jobs by 2030.

As we at UNEP see it, Japan can lead in three areas.

### **The first area is green technology.**

Japan has an opportunity to accelerate nature-supportive policy goals by further promoting and sharing renewable energy and research and development of key technologies – as Prime Minister Suga mentioned when he pledged Japan’s net-zero target.

### **The second area is the circular economy**

Japan has been working on the circular economy since 1991, with efforts bearing fruit. Japan kept 95 per cent of its waste off the ground in 2007. Over sixteen years, Japan lowered its domestic material consumption intensity by 37 per cent. Japan has the skills, creativity and knowledge to keep transforming its own economy and help others transform theirs.

### **The third area is sustainable infrastructure.**

We must prioritize sustainable infrastructure solutions to tackle the three crises. In light of Japan’s leading role in the G20 work on ‘quality infrastructure’, we ask that Japan support links between the G20 quality infrastructure agenda and UNEP’s Sustainable Infrastructure Partnership. We also propose a G20-UN dialogue on sustainable and quality infrastructure.

Your excellencies,

To address the three planetary crises, we must pursue all of these actions, and more, to make peace with nature.

We must use pandemic stimulus packages to accelerate the systemic changes we need, guided by the constellation of the SDGs, the Paris Agreement, the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework, and the Beyond 2020 Chemicals Framework.

We must make 2021 the year when we flip the green switch and put the planet on a sustainable path.

Japan, I am sure, will play a leading role in carving out this better future for our entire planet.

I wish you a most successful meeting.

Arigato-gozaimasu. Thank you.