

Green recovery of the economy and society after COVID-19: UK statement

Mr Chair,

COVID-19 has led to an unprecedented shutdown of large parts of the global economy, with severe consequences for all countries. We recognise this immense challenge and that all countries will be developing response plans tailored to their circumstances. As you said in your opening remarks, as we recover the decisions we make today will either lay the foundation for sound, sustainable and inclusive growth, or lock-in polluting emissions for decades, and in doing so make our society and the planet more vulnerable.

As COP Presidency the UK is committed to increasing climate ambition. We will uphold the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as crucial frameworks for guiding the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. Last week the COP Bureau agreed to our proposal to reschedule COP26 to the 1st to the 12th of November 2021, held in Glasgow. The new date gives the world the best chance of delivering an inclusive and ambitious COP. Bureau members were clear that a delayed summit, and the short-term impact, must not mean delayed action.

Coronavirus has provided a stark reminder of what happens when humanity's relationship with nature breaks down. As we recover we have an opportunity to protect and restore nature, reducing our exposure to deadly viruses and climate impacts.

Mr Chair, Friday is World Environment Day. Since 1974, World Environment Day has been celebrated every year on 5 June – engaging governments, businesses, celebrities and citizens to focus their efforts on a single pressing environmental issue. This year's event, hosted by Colombia in partnership with Germany, focuses on biodiversity with a campaign theme of 'Time for Nature'.

Nature and biodiversity are central themes of our COP26 Presidency, focussing on the importance of nature-based solutions, which should be a win for livelihoods, climate, and biodiversity, which is also particularly salient in the context of COVID-19, a zoonotic disease.

UK Business Secretary and COP President-designate Mr Alok Sharma has stressed the importance of nature for achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. And the UK will soon announce a £64 million package to support Colombia to tackle deforestation and build a cleaner and more resilient economy in areas affected by Covid-19 and conflict.

World Environment Day also sees the official launch of 'Race to Zero', the global COP26 campaign to mobilize leadership and support from businesses, cities, regions and investors – all committed to the goal of achieving net zero emissions by 2050 at the latest. The campaign will also serve as a

multi-stakeholder reactivation of the 'Climate Ambition Alliance', launched by the UN Secretary General's Climate Action Summit in 2019. This will send a resounding signal that business, cities, regions and investors are united in meeting the Paris goals and creating a more inclusive and resilient economy.

A science-led, clean and resilient recovery will create employment in the industries of the future while ensuring we address the linked challenges of public health, climate change, and biodiversity.

Thank you.