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“Innovative Solutions for Environmental Challenges and Sustainable Consumption and Production – SCP”

**Statement by the Brazilian Delegation**

**Mr. Ricardo Salles, Minister of the Environment**

Nairobi, Kenya, 14 March 2019

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

 The Brazilian delegation presents its solidarity to the UN organizations’ and the member states’ officials victims of the terrible plane crash which left us shocked and deeply sad. Our condolences to the families of those who died in service of the noble cause of preserving our planet while promoting sustainable development. We and the future generations will not forget these missionaries. In their honor we must continue their fight.

There is only one Earth. The 7.7 billion people currently inhabiting our planet all depend on its resources for their livelihoods. Using these resources sustainably is not an option, it’s mandatory. The world needs solutions that simultaneously allow for economic growth and protect the environment for the current and future generations.

We have recently witnessed a mine tailings dam break in Brazil with losses of lives, in addition to social, environmental and economic impact. We are reviewing our dam-safety policies, including aspects of environmental impact assessment, to make mining and other activities safer for the populations and the companies. Man-made or nature-born extreme events need to be addressed by the international community. These events tend to hit the most vulnerable populations the hardest. UN Environment and its member states need to make greater effort to meet these frequent challenges, and this includes developing and making available technological innovations, capacity-building, international cooperation, and finding sustainable sources of financing.

Today, 55% of the world population live in urban areas, and the World Bank projections indicate this number would reach 78% in 2050. Tackling the environmental impacts of urban living requires efforts in a multitude of areas: air and water pollution, water scarcity, sanitation, sustainable transportation, energy efficiency, waste disposal, recycling, sustainable production and consumption, decreasing food waste, increasing green areas. How to make cities environmentally sustainable and healthy is one of the biggest challenges we have ahead of us. Creative and innovative solutions are urgently needed, and this is my Ministry’s first priority.

The oceans are the new frontier for environmental protection and conservation. With the ubiquitous presence of personal cameras and easier access to information, the world has discovered with surprise and sadness how our way of living has affected marine life. Images of blanched coral reefs, whales with stomachs full of plastic, turtles and dolphins caught in ghost fishing gear have come to haunt us. It is estimated that marine litter will surpass marine biodiversity in weight in 2050 if we don’t change paths.

The world needs to reduce traditional plastic production and consumption, especially single-use plastics, and we need a serious upgrade in recycling capabilities, as well as develop and stimulate new technologies for sustainable biodegradable plastics. Brazil has a National Policy for Solid Waste Management in place since 2010, which requires a series of action for proper disposal, recycling and management of the whole life-cycle of products. Furthermore, on March 22 we will launch the National Plan to Combat Marine Litter as part the first “National Agenda for Urban Environmental Quality”, aiming at improving life quality in cities. This Plan has the personal support and engagement of President Jair Bolsonaro, the cooperation of the Brazilian Navy, and it was one of our commitments at the 2017 United Nations Ocean Conference. It is a great contribution towards preserving the health of our oceans.

The Brazilian government is particularly honored to receive the first results-based payments for REDD+ activities approved by the Green Climate Fund (GCF), in the amount of USD 96.5 million, for successfully reducing greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation. They dropped 71,5% from 2004 to 2018. At the same time our grain production increased by 63%. The GCF resources will further strengthen our belief that promoting sustainable development is a mean of preventing illegal deforestation while alleviating poverty. Indeed, the Human Development Index (HDI) was 0,545 in 1980 and it rose to 0,759 in 2018. Although much remains to be done, the country’s agriculture development model embodies social benefits with progressive and substantive reduction in the use of natural resources.

Based on land use data from 2014, there are 9.4 million hectares in the process of natural vegetation recovery, to which we can add 2 million hectares of newly planted forests (2006-2016). Based on those results, Brazil is moving on track to meet its Paris Agreement NDC to reforest and restore 12 million hectares by 2030. This is already a remarkable achievement! This notwithstanding, 80% of our energy matrix is renewable, and 33% of the biomass has agriculture origin.

Regarding the development of the Brazilian private led tropical agriculture, from 1977 to 2017 grain output increased fivefold (from 47 million tons to 237 million tons), and the planted area remains around 7% of the national territory. With only 30% of its territory used for agriculture production, Brazil is the second largest agriculture exporter and feeds around 20% of the world population. Our soybean 9,6 million ha No-Tillage System area in 2016 has already overcome the UNFCC 2020 goal of 8 million ha. Likewise, the Biological Nitrogen Fixation (BNF) target of 5,5 million ha is almost the double with 9,97 million ha. We play a crucial role in the global food security system while remaining in full compliance with our environmental international commitments.

Although some countries use up to 77% of their territories for agriculture, Brazil has 64% of its territory protected by law (including 13% of indigenous territories, federal lands not formally designated as protected areas, and private lands whose restriction of use protects 22% of the native vegetation). This makes Brazil the country with the largest protected area in the world.

Brazil has 2,309 public and private protected areas, with 2.5 million square kilometers (18.6% of the continental territory; about five times the size of France) of fully protected or sustainably used areas in the continent. 26.4% of its jurisdictional waters are protected. We have fully met Aichi target 11 well before the 2020 deadline! With the support of the Global Environment Fund (GEF), USD 35 million will be used to protect and monitor marine and coastal areas until 2024.

Protected areas are crucial to the protection and conservation of biodiversity. However, they are also increasingly important for tourism. In 2018 we witnessed a 6.15% increase in tourism in protected areas, with a total of 12.4 million visitors, mainly in national parks. We plan to expand concessions to private companies for public use of national parks and other categories of protected areas. Private companies will have the opportunity to offer services that parks do not provide directly, thus broadening the economic base of the region and the local communities surrounding parks or living inside the protected areas. Visitation in protected areas have a positive impact for local populations, and concession contracts can improve the visitors’ experience.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to recognize the substantial efforts made by the International Resource Panel that has produced the “Global Resources Outlook 2019: Natural Resources for the Future We Want”. Although some future scenarios have been studied, the Brazilian agriculture has shown that it is possible to achieve productivity gains in full compliance with sustainable development commitments. Furthermore, Brazil does not agree with the alarming tone sometimes used to criticize the developing countries’ agriculture output. We prefer to see it as a positive outcome of the concerted action of the United Nations food, agriculture and rural development organizations, of the global and regional financial institutions, and a contribution from the network of national, regional and global research and development institutions. The Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa) itself has approximately two thousand Ph.D. scientists dedicated to this task. Moreover, the scenario which recommends a 50 per cent reduction in meat production neglects scientific studies that show that the Brazilian meat production and environment do not conflict each other. Our grazing livestock is a successful response to curbing greenhouse gas emissions, while matching the target of recovering 11 million ha of degraded pastures. Not to mention that 30% of the Brazilian biodiesel production derives from cattle fat. This shows how these panel recommendations should be carefully scrutinized by governmental authorities and by the international community.

Environmental challenges are myriad. Meeting the requirements for a dignified livelihood for current and future generations is not an easy task. Sustainable development requires a delicate balance between environmental, social and economic concerns. Much needs to be done. Much can and will be done. We all need to rise up to these challenges.

Thank you.