

Summary of the Fourth Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific: 2-7 October 2021

As the Asia-Pacific region struggles to recover from a global pandemic that has pushed up to 80 million more people into extreme poverty, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Fourth Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific convened, seeking to contribute regional perspectives on the recovery that is needed. The Forum also put forward policy priorities for the resumed session of the fifth United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5.2), when the world’s environment leaders will meet in Nairobi, Kenya, in February 2022.

UNEA-5.2 is notable as countries will commemorate UNEP’s 50th anniversary in a two-day Special Session. In addition, in June of 2022, the Government of Sweden will host a high-level event, ‘Stockholm+50’, to mark 50 years since the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment convened. Both occasions invite stocktaking of the achievements of global environmental diplomacy over the last half-century, and envisioning the long-term future of UNEP. The Forum also represented an opportunity for the Asia-Pacific region to reflect on these two milestones and discuss ways the region can contribute to these special events.

In addition, the Forum provided a litmus test of Asia-Pacific leaders’ level of ambition in the lead-up to two important global meetings in 2021: the Glasgow Climate Change Conference and the first phase of the Kunming Biodiversity Conference. Both occasions speak to urgent needs in the Asia-Pacific region: for investment in renewable energy to gather pace, and for strong commitments to biodiversity and ecosystem protection.

Former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, now heading up the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), reminded delegates at the Forum that “you cannot negotiate with nature” as government leaders engaged in dialogue with a range of stakeholders on the most urgent priorities for countries in the region.

Many called for pandemic recovery efforts to invest in nature. Initiatives to tackle marine pollution and related water and waste management issues were front and center. Technology and innovation, especially in relation to sustainable consumption and production (SCP), Big Data, and green jobs also emerged high on the agenda.

More specifically, ministers and senior officials at the Forum supported several draft resolutions for UNEA-5.2 on:

- sustainable lake management, covering protection of water quality and fisheries;
- extension of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on SCP (10YFP) up to 2030;
- sustainable nitrogen management to manage its impacts, particularly from agriculture on water, air pollution, and human health; and
- establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC) to launch a formal negotiating process toward a global agreement on marine litter and plastic pollution.

These decisions followed a week of stakeholder meetings, in which youth, civil society, and the private sector engaged in dialogue with governments, and each other. For the first time, regional meetings of the Science-Policy-Business Forum and the Youth Forum were convened.

Youth focused on the need for governments to ramp up investment in green technology, and provide training for “green jobs,” which, they stressed, needs to be defined more clearly. They called for involving children and young people in decision making, and for building an active youth constituency to engage with UNEP and other organizations at the regional and sub-regional levels.

In This Issue

| | |
|--|----|
| A Brief History of the Forum | 2 |
| Report of the Forum | 2 |
| Asia Pacific Regional Youth Environment Forum | 2 |
| Asia Pacific Peoples’ Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGOS) Forum | 8 |
| Senior Officials Meeting | 10 |
| Ministerial Segment | 13 |
| Upcoming Meetings | 16 |
| Glossary | 17 |

Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGOS) sounded an urgent call for development justice in the pandemic recovery. This, they said, will require greater efforts in building climate resilience, caring for the ocean, protecting migrant workers' rights, promoting land distribution and tenure for marginalized groups, and rethinking agriculture to include livelihood security and landscape management goals.

At the regional Science-Policy-Business Forum, participants announced support for the Data for the Environment Alliance (DEAL), launched by the Government of Estonia, which will harness the power of Big Data and "technology for good," supporting UNEP's World Environment Situation Room. Other recommendations from the Forum included greater transparency in tracking and traceability of plastic waste and recyclables, building capacity for recycling and circularity downstream, and leveraging public procurement policies to achieve SCP.

The Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific, which normally takes place every two years, was organized jointly by the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). More than 340 delegates participated, representing 32 Member States, as well as intergovernmental and international organizations, MGOS, and UN entities.

Due to pandemic-related restrictions, the Fourth Forum adopted a hybrid modality. While most meetings took place online, a limited number of senior officials and ministers met on site at the Suwon Convention Center, Suwon City, ROK.

This report covers five days of meetings, namely: the Asia Pacific Youth Environment Forum organized by the Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP from 2-3 October; the Asia-Pacific Peoples Forum organized by MGOS on 4 October; the Senior Officials Meeting on 6 October; and the Ministerial Segment on 7 October. A separate summary of the 5 October Regional Science-Policy-Business Forum is available: enb.iisd.org/UNEP-Science-Policy-Business-Forum-Asia-Pacific/summary

A Brief History of the Forum

The Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific stems from a decision taken at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), which convened in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 13-22 June 2012. Paragraph 88(g) of the Rio+20 Outcome, "The Future We Want," called for strengthening the regional presence of UNEP to assist countries, upon request, in implementing their national environmental policies. The Forums take place in the context of overall strengthening of UNEP.

In 2016, UNEA-2 adopted a resolution to strengthen the regional environment ministerial forums as part of the preparatory process for UNEA sessions. UNEA, UNEP's high-level decision-making body with universal membership, first convened in 2014. Forum outcomes are communicated to various regional and global fora besides UNEA, including the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). The

Forums replace the Subregional Environmental Policy Dialogues that UNEP convened from 2003 to 2014.

Due to the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic and associated travel restrictions, UNEA-5 was scheduled in two parts, under the theme, "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals." The first session (UNEA-5.1) took place online in February 2021 and focused on urgent and procedural decisions. The resumed fifth session (UNEA-5.2), currently planned as an in-person session from 28 February – 2 March 2022, will discuss substantive matters, including whether to establish an INC for a global instrument on plastic pollution and marine litter.

First Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific: This Forum took place from 19-20 May 2015 in Bangkok, Thailand, and contributed to negotiations on the SDGs, which the UN General Assembly adopted in September 2015. Delegates identified challenges for the region, namely: air pollution and its health impacts; the need for sound chemicals and waste management, including transboundary approaches; and the promotion of the green and blue economies.

Second Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific: This Forum took place from 5-8 September 2017 in conjunction with the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific. It was organized jointly with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Bangkok, Thailand. The joint meeting, referred to as the First Asia-Pacific Ministerial Summit, reviewed implementation of sustainable development commitments and presented examples of policy and practice supporting delivery of the SDGs, multilateral environmental agreements, and UNEA commitments. Ministers supported concerted action on issues, including waste management, environmental health strategies, transboundary pollution, and marine litter.

Third Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific: This Forum took place from 23-25 January 2019 in Singapore. The meeting was the first such Forum to be organized jointly by UNEP with a Member State, and to take place outside Thailand, where the regional secretariat of UNEP is based. The Forum focused on innovations in SCP.

Delegates shared their national actions and experiences with implementing solutions to SCP, discussed progress within the region on achieving the SDGs, and provided their perspectives on draft UNEA resolutions proposed by Asia-Pacific countries. The resolutions addressed such issues as marine litter, ecosystem protection, sustainable infrastructure, dust storms, and waste management. During the ministerial segment, delegates took part in two high-level panels addressing policy support and financing.

Report of the Forum

Asia Pacific Regional Youth Environment Forum

Opening: Zuhair Ahmed Kowshik, Regional Facilitator, Asia Pacific Youth Constituency, UNEP, moderated the opening session on Saturday, 2 October. He said the Forum aims to facilitate meaningful youth engagement and capacity building for

environmental action, explaining it will convey a statement from youth representatives to the Ministerial Segment.

Vidyut Mohan, Young Champion of the Earth, UNEP, said young people's greatest asset is their ability to take risks and collaborate. He emphasized that the energy, compassion, and optimism of youth will be key in taking the necessary action on climate change.

Karuna Singh, South and Southeast Asia Regional Director, Earth Day Network, said youth have the idealism to take the environment agenda forward. She urged young people to speak up and demand, for example, that ministers institute compulsory climate education to ensure the masses are carried along in efforts to deal with climate change.

Joshua Elukut Amaitum, International Forestry Students' Association (IFSA), urged the Youth Forum to call for: institutionalization of youth in policymaking; formalization of youth involvement, especially at the local and national levels; involvement of youth in national delegations to international environmental meetings such as UNEA; better environmental education; and better environmental journalism.

Dechen Tsering, Regional Director and Representative for Asia and the Pacific, UNEP, said children and youth are those most vulnerable to the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, which can negatively affect mental health, among other impacts. She underscored the need to address inequality of access to modern technologies, especially for marginalized youth. She also urged everyone to seize the opportunity presented by the COVID-19 crisis to accelerate the pace of change that the world needs.

Asia Pacific and Youth: Where Are We? This brief "scene setting" session provided an overview of UNEP processes in the Asia-Pacific regional context.

Clarence Gio Almoite, Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP, briefed participants on the youth consultation that took place the previous day. He stressed the importance of grassroots participation in the planning of UNEP@50 and Stockholm+50 processes, stating that not only young people themselves but also those from poverty-stricken areas and persons with disabilities should be part of the negotiations. He called for viewing environmental action through different lenses, so its value is also seen from the perspective of education, jobs, and the economy.



Karuna Singh, Earth Day Network



Moderator **Zuhair Ahmed Kowshik**, Regional Facilitator, Asia Pacific Youth Constituency, UNEP

He upheld the idea of "conscious leadership based on pure intentions" for protecting the environment.

Participants then took part in two parallel sessions on "nature for climate" and "nature for jobs."

Nature for Climate: Shar Thae Hoy, ClimatEducate Project, moderated this session. Atkia Samia Rahman, ClimatEducate Project, urged youth to engage more in environmental protection, starting from their own homes and localities, and leading up to global platforms. She highlighted the importance of climate education in addressing the climate crisis, outlining her organization's efforts in this regard. Noting every locality is different and that generalized guidelines cannot work for every region, Rahman stressed it will be crucial for adaptation efforts to be led at the local level.

Noor Mauliddina, IFSA, urged youth to challenge themselves, for example, by promoting eco-tourism and harnessing the power of social media to promote conservation. She called for increased engagement with indigenous communities.

Esha Mitra, IFSA, stressed that the youth are the generation, which can best evolve and adapt, and teach future generations to be more concerned for the environment. She called for a change of mindset towards environmental protection, and for opportunities for youth involvement not just in discussions but in actual decision making.

In the ensuing discussion, participants highlighted the importance of climate education, the high cost of environmentally-friendly products such as alternatives to plastics, and the importance of empathy.

Nature for Poverty Eradication, Jobs and Economic Prosperity: Almoite moderated this session. Nishu Kaul, Director, Earth Day, South and Southeast Asia, said nature provides solutions for sustainable development. She urged young people to tap into green jobs that can decarbonize the economy and reduce biodiversity loss, among other benefits. She highlighted examples of youth engagement, such as the Earth Day Network's #MyFutureMyVoice campaign, which provided youth with a voice to discuss actions to preserve nature, protect biodiversity, and reduce waste, among other goals. Kaul urged youth not to give in to climate anxiety but to develop creative solutions that will have a cumulative effect.

Tunnie Srisakulchairak, UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), presented opportunities for youth to

contribute towards a green recovery. She reported that global recovery spending has so far missed the opportunity for green investment. She urged youth to adopt SCP models such as the circular economy, eco-labelling, and sustainable lifestyles. She highlighted the potential of biomimicry, which involves examining and emulating the models, systems, and processes of nature to solve human problems.

Michael Chhandama, Jain (Deemed-to-be University), highlighted his work in developing biodiesel from microalgae. He reported on activities in the State of Mizoram in India to promote youth entrepreneurship during the COVID-19 lockdowns through producing local products such as soaps.

Warefta Murshed, Gross International Nature, discussed actions for making the circular economy a reality in waste management, and climate mitigation and adaptation. She reported on her organization's efforts to provide transboundary solutions for transboundary environmental problems, though a bottom-up approach that prioritizes community-based organizations.

Ministerial Youth Roundtable: Rubina Adhikari, Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP, moderated the session. Mahendra Reddy, Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment, Fiji, urged youth to be part of political decision making, as they are the ones who will bear the greatest impacts of today's policy decisions on climate change. He noted youth make up 16% of the world's population, are digitally connected, and are well placed to network. He called on young people to use these advantages to campaign against actions that threaten sustainability. He likewise urged policymakers to give space to youth and allow them to take a lead in discussions.

Reddy described how Pacific Island nations, including Fiji, are experiencing the impacts of climate change through erratic weather patterns that have displaced people from their traditional homes along the coasts and waterways, sites that are intricately tied to culture, heritage, and livelihoods. He recounted Fiji's actions to promote ecosystem restoration through small grants that support, for example, mangrove and seagrass restoration, and the rehabilitation of degraded land. He highlighted that the Fijian Parliament had passed a Climate Change Bill the previous week, which creates protocols to ensure the country can meet its



Atina Schutz, University of the South Pacific

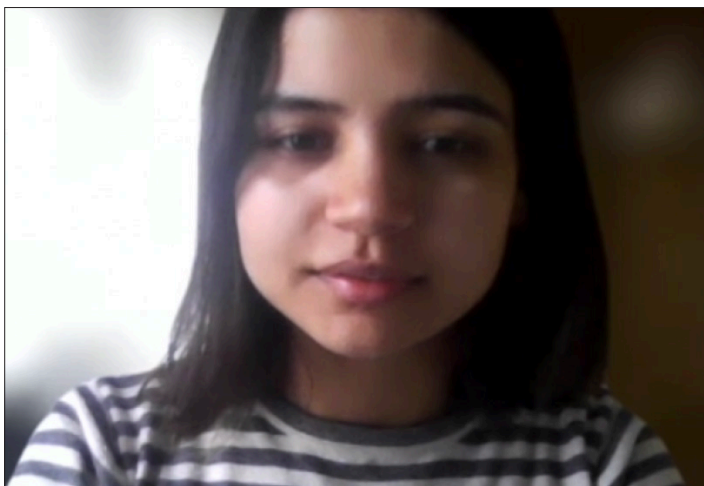
climate-related goals through a whole-of-government approach. In closing, he called on everyone, including youth, to work together to "collectively define the future."

In response to questions from participants, Reddy noted Fiji's education curriculum is currently under review to reflect the importance of climate proofing, biodiversity enhancement, and environmental protection. He highlighted the challenge of educating people to accept non-conventional solutions, providing the example of a nature-based sea wall project that used mangroves, rocks and vetiver grass for coastal protection, rather than standard building materials. He noted such nature-based solutions, which cost much less than conventional solutions, can reduce the plight of the poor while still being within reach of government budgets.

International and Regional Environmental Law: Pierre-Jean Bordahandy, University of the South Pacific, moderated this session.

Atina Schutz, University of the South Pacific, explained the important role of shipping in international trade and globalization, and its negative environmental impacts. She highlighted that Pacific Island nations are calling for an equitable transition to a decarbonized shipping industry. She presented a joint proposal from the Marshall Islands and the Solomon Islands to the International Maritime Organization for an international shipping levy on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. She said the proposed levy would: be universal and mandatory, applying to GHG emissions from all international ships; start in 2025 at a fixed rate of USD 100 per ton of carbon dioxide; be reviewed every five years and ratcheted upwards; and go towards funding research and development of adaptation and mitigation measures for climate-vulnerable countries. Schutz concluded that an international shipping levy on GHG emissions is the only equitable solution to the issue of shipping decarbonization, especially for small island developing states, and least developed and other developing countries, so no country is left behind.

Georgina Lloyd Rivera, Asia and the Pacific Regional Coordinator for Environmental Law and Governance, UNEP, discussed the role of environmental law and adjudication in addressing environmental justice for future generations. She noted the UN Human Rights Council, at its current session, is considering a resolution to globally recognize the human right



Rubina Adhikari, Children and Youth Major Group

to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Rivera also highlighted “Step UP,” a joint commitment by the heads of UN entities to promote the right of children, youth, and future generations to a healthy environment and their meaningful participation in decision making at all levels. She further noted the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) had just finalized a set of [Principles and Policy Guidance on Children’s Rights to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment in ASEAN Region](#), containing general and thematic principles, including participation in decision making and access to information and children’s right to play and recreation.

Science-Policy-Business Forum Youth Segment: Gyubin Hwang, Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP, moderated the session.

Ying Wang, Coordinator, World Adaptation Science Programme, UNEP, presented the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) for Youth, Asia and the Pacific. She said the Asia-Pacific region is the world’s most disaster-prone region. She discussed challenges facing the region, such as illegal wildlife trade, poor air quality, coral loss, and food and water insecurity. She underscored the need for innovative food production strategies, including regenerative farming, and harnessing semiochemicals—naturally-occurring chemicals in insects of plant—to manipulate insect behavior for effective pest management in crops. Wang referred to youth as “game changers” in acting on environmental challenges, noting the majority do not feel helpless, but rather capable of collective action.

Cathy Yitong Li, International Youth Climate Movement, and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Youth Constituency (YOUNGO), discussed collaboration with the Climate Technology Centre and Network. YOUNGO, she reported, is broadening its outreach and awareness, supporting youth lobbying and advocacy, and promoting youth and gender roles in the technology mechanism.

Tanya “Anya” Francesca Granados, Head, Youth for Our Planet, said the world is facing a growing climate refugee crisis. She lamented the rights of those displaced by climate-related disasters are not recognized. She emphasized the need for policymakers to take action to improve environmental protection, saying, “When our grandchildren ask what we did when the ocean rose to engulf our nations, we hope we can tell them how policymakers across the globe came together to save us all.”

In ensuing discussions, participants discussed ways of engaging in effective climate activism. Some lamented ongoing disparities, noting those in the limelight for their climate activism are not those at the frontlines of climate-related disasters.

Town Hall Meeting: Participants viewed an award-winning animated film from Bangladesh, “Tomorrow,” which anticipates the impacts of climate change and actions that can be taken for a better future. Tevita Rakula, Project HEAVEN Trust, Fiji, called for addressing challenges from sea-level rise, noting the need to work in collaboration with NGOs and the private sector to combat climate change.



Sujay Natson, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office

Children for Nature and Environmental Protection: Sahana Kaur, Malaysia, moderated this session on Sunday, 3 October, which began with the viewing of a video by the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), titled “The Climate Crisis Is a Child Rights Crisis.”

Sujay Natson, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, said children have a unique vulnerability to the climate crisis. He presented statistics from the East Asia and Pacific regions showing that, for example, more than 200 million children are exposed to cyclones, 142 million are exposed to water scarcity, and more than 88% of under-five child mortality can be attributed to the climate crisis. Discussing the Children’s Climate Risk Index, he said children in the region are among those most affected by the climate crisis, adding the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed 150 million additional children into poverty. He highlighted that the Convention on the Rights of the Child includes the right to a safe and healthy environment.

Ralyn “Lilly” Satidtanasarn, a 14-year-old environmental activist from Thailand, described her campaign against single-use plastics over the last few years and identified successes, such as Thailand’s ban on these plastics. She emphasized that the best way to make change is to do so collectively, working together not against one another.

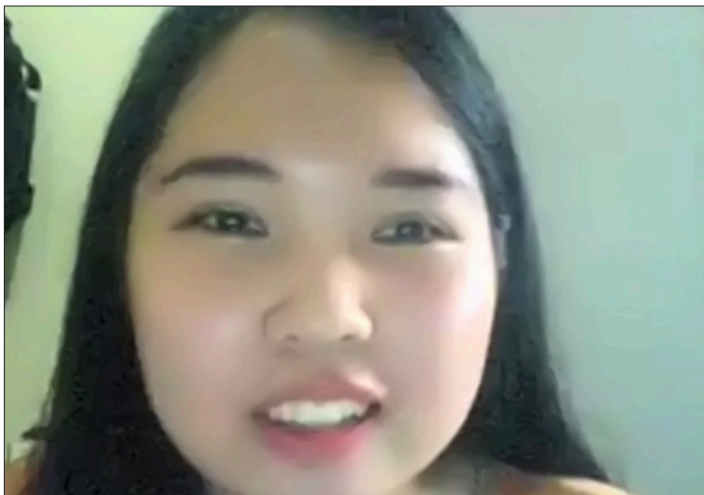
In the subsequent discussion, participants and speakers highlighted:

- the need for climate adaptation solutions for Myanmar, which is one of the most climate-vulnerable countries;
- the role of “climate-smart” education;
- ways to communicate the urgency of addressing climate change to developing countries, given other priorities such as poverty reduction; and
- the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children’s lives and their socialization, especially on children from marginalized backgrounds with no internet access.

Participants then took part in parallel sessions on “nature for food” and “nature for health.”

Nature for Sustainable Food Ecosystems: Sharifah Norizah Syed Ahamad Kabeer, Indonesia, Children and Youth Major Group, moderated the session.

Rebecca Leonard, The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity programme at UNEP ROAP, reported that



Sofia Anne Dela Rosa, International Forestry Students' Association

biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation both affect food systems, and that up to one-third of GHG emissions stem from agriculture. Other impacts of intensive agriculture, she noted, include nutrient run-off from the burning of agricultural waste, and the loss of forests, peatlands, wetlands, and mangroves. She called for a shift from focusing solely on agricultural production, to incorporating systems thinking and the goals of livelihood security and planetary health. Leonard explained that farming and agrobiodiversity can co-exist, such as in sustainable rice systems, and recommended producing food locally and developing rural markets.

Marci Baranski, UNEP ROAP, discussed UNEP's work with the Sustainable Rice Platform to promote climate-smart sustainable rice production to increase food supply, improve farmers' livelihoods, and reduce the environmental impact of rice production. She recommended UNEP's Anatomy of Action and its Action Toolkit to youth advocates, noting it includes an action area on food.

Esha Mitra, IFSA, observed youth in the region are generally reluctant to participate in actual food production, preferring to take "modern" jobs or be involved in research. She urged them to participate directly in food cultivation practices in order to apply knowledge and innovation.

Jim Leandro Cano, Chair, Youth Alliance for Zero Hunger, underlined the role of youth as knowledge brokers in their spheres of influence, taking the knowledge of sustainable farming to their rural communities. He highlighted the need for transparency of food systems, to ensure traceability of the "journey of food to our plates," including how food is harvested or produced, and its carbon footprint. He discussed how virtual tourism can support this, by raising awareness of the reality for many local communities.

Responding to questions, speakers said: youth should identify their place in the food system and know the tools they can use to help farmers; the entire value chain must be considered when trying to reduce food waste, from food production to storage to consumption; and hyper-local solutions, such as food community gardens, are a small but important step in achieving zero hunger.

Nature for Human and Ecosystem Health: Hendri Surya Widcaksana, YOUNGO, moderated this session.

Mohamed Eissa, International Federation of Medical Students' Associations, called for equipping youth with skills and competencies to participate in a green recovery from COVID-19.

Kaye Patdu, UNEP ROAP, estimated that around four billion Asia-Pacific people are exposed to poor air quality. She highlighted UNEP's recent [First Global Assessment of Air Pollution Legislation](#), citing progress in some areas due to measures, such as improved vehicle emission standards, clean energy, and access to clean cooking fuels. She said young people play a pivotal role as agents of change in implementing child-centered clean air solutions.

Sofia Anne Dela Rosa, IFSA, reported increased awareness on the role that deforestation and biodiversity loss have played in exposing humans to COVID-19. She noted the need for scientific research to mitigate against future pandemics, and advocated for youth mobilization and collaboration with grassroots movements to tackle socioeconomic challenges related to COVID-19.

In discussions, participants noted that although air quality has improved due to reduced mobility during the COVID-19 lockdowns, sustainable solutions are required. They also discussed: relationships between dietary practices and climate health; contributions of agriculture; and the need to advocate for impactful policies and strong actions.

Participants then convened in Pacific, Southeast Asia, East Asia, and South Asia sub-regional groups to develop their contributions to the Declaration of Youth Manifesto.

Interaction with Policymakers: Participants reconvened in plenary, and policymakers and officials made closing remarks.

Han Jeoung-ae, Minister of Environment, ROK, said nature-based green recovery strategies are required to overcome the climate and environment crises. She highlighted the need to phase out reliance on fossil fuels through clean energy solutions, to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. She emphasized the importance of youth participation, highlighting the 2021 Partnering for Green Growth and the Global Goals 2030 (P4G) Seoul Summit held on 30-31 May 2021, where youth and other stakeholders called for creative and innovative solutions to tackle climate change and other challenges.



Han Jeoung-ae, Minister of Environment, Republic of Korea

Tina Birmpili, Deputy Executive Director, UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), said transforming the relationship between nature and humans requires changes in our consumption and production patterns, and using innovative and creative tools to restore the balance between humans and nature. She urged youth to make their voices heard in topics around biodiversity, food systems, and land degradation, and to lead by example in their local communities, schools, farms, and cities. She highlighted the opportunity for their engagement through the UNCCD Global Youth Initiative for Combating Desertification.

Tsering took note of the Forum's call for accelerated action from governments to commit to a green future and green jobs, and of the desire expressed by youth to participate in processes, including Stockholm+50 and UNEP@50. She highlighted some of UNEP's activities supporting youth, such as the low-carbon lifestyle challenge.

Jenny Johanson, Ministry of Climate and Environment, Norway, representing the UNEA-5 Presidency, expressed the commitment of the Presidency to ensuring meaningful engagement of all stakeholders including civil society and youth in UNEA-5. She encouraged youth to participate in discussions on expected key outcomes from UNEA-5.2, including a draft resolution on marine litter and the zero draft of the ministerial declaration.

Luisa Fragoso, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Portugal to Kenya and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, stressed that civil society contributions are crucial for the multilateral process and appreciated the Youth Forum as an opportunity to enhance youth engagement.

Closing: Almoite briefed participants on youth engagement in upcoming UNEP-related processes. On participation in UNEA-5.2, he referred to the possibility of funding for youth participation and expressed appreciation for UNEP's support for youth engagement thus far. On UNEP@50, he referred to youth discussions that took place with Hassani Billel, Deputy Permanent Representative of Algeria to UNEP, and Ulf Bjornholm, Secretary of Governing Bodies and Stakeholders, on modalities of the event. He also highlighted the Asia-Pacific youth discussion that took place on 1 October with the Swedish Ambassador for Stockholm+50, Johanna Lissinger Peitz, and UN Assistant Secretary-General Ligia Noronha, Head of the UNEP Office in New York. He reminded everyone that children are part of the Children and Youth Major Group and should not be left behind in these processes.

Participants then heard reports from the sub-regional drafting groups, which had provided input to the Youth Manifesto.

Kumar, for the South Asia subregional group, called for planned, sustainable allocation of land, noting that, in Bangladesh, 6000 acres of forests have been destroyed to accommodate refugees. She also called for modernizing technology and adopting practices in harmony with the environment, noting measures to tackle the climate crisis already exist.

Hendri Surya Widcaksana and Niken Adellia, for the Southeast Asia sub-regional group, called for greater attention to: the



Hendri Surya Widcaksana, YOUNGO

situation of Indigenous Peoples who are affected by climate change, and are excluded from policies to address its impacts; youth-led technology and frameworks; improvement in waste management, waste reduction, and action on pollution; renewable energy; funding for scientific research; prioritization of disaster risk reduction; provision of stakeholder platforms focused on best practices; and greater collaboration between ASEAN and youth.

The East Asia and Pacific sub-regional groups presented jointly. Representatives of the groups expressed concern about the prevalence of flooding, landslides, and temperature increases that are directly affecting people's lives. They called for action on renewable energy and achievement of the SDGs.

Joshua Amponsem, Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, highlighted urgency around the energy transition towards the "net zero by 2050" target. He noted communities in many countries also need energy for livelihoods, quality of growth, and quality of life, and that their needs for energy and infrastructure should be part of the advocacy leading up to UNEA@50 and Stockholm+50. He called for coherence across sectors and partnerships, and expressed confidence in the ability of young people to achieve this more quickly than traditional institutions are able to.

Kevin Petrini, UN Development Programme Pacific Office, highlighted approaches in the Pacific region, where youth are calling for a green, low-carbon COVID-19 recovery. He stressed the importance of ocean ecosystems for the planet, stating "every second breath we take comes from the ocean." He recommended adopting an integrated approach to challenges, drawing inspiration from traditional concepts of peace in Samoa: harmony with self; harmony with community; harmony with the environment; and harmony with the cosmos.

During a final question-and-answer session, Forum participants discussed various topics. One participant highlighted the price gaps between sustainable and unsustainable products. Tsering responded noting the need to make sustainability more attractive in the quality and value addition of products while also ensuring accessibility and affordability.

With regard to increasing youth participation in meetings, Amponsem said the savings from meetings held virtually should be channeled into supporting youth participation through providing internet connectivity, among others.

On a question on increasing collaboration, Tsering noted that diverse initiatives based on different themes or subregions such as ASEAN, ESCAP, and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), enable increased cooperation.

Regarding Stockholm +50, Amponsem said coherence in action is important, Petrini highlighted integration as key in ensuring all planetary threats are tackled together, and Tsering said young people need to stay engaged and inspired

Petrini called for integrated development solutions driven by country priorities that transform structures and ensure no one is left behind. He said the role of youth and children in bringing new ideas is crucial. Johanson said Stockholm+50 and UNEP@50 are moments of stocktaking, to learn from the past 50 years, avoid past mistakes, and build on the framework created.

Thanking participants and speakers for their contributions, Adhikar closed the Forum at 4.05 pm Bangkok time.

Asia Pacific Peoples' Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGOS) Forum

Welcome Remarks: This Forum convened on Monday, 4 October, with Rey Asis, Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants, moderating. Mara Medrano, Asia Pacific Research Network, in opening remarks, said the Forum would consider: progress and challenges in implementing the SDGs; impacts of COVID-19; and how the environment and climate crises are affecting Asia-Pacific communities.

Wali Haider, Roots for Equity, emphasized that COVID-19 has hit the region hard and transformed a health crisis into a social and economic one. He emphasized the need for development justice, which would reduce resource inequalities among people and countries. He said the Forum would consider key structural issues that are hindering development in the region.

Voices from the Region: Jan Mohammad, Afghan National Education Coalition, noted the government has limited capacity to undertake climate change activities in local communities across his country. He stressed the importance of civil society involvement to ensure a diversity of voices is taken into account by governments, to provide oversight and ensure accountability, as well as to raise awareness and mobilize local communities. Mohammad also underlined the need to promote women and youth engagement and capacity building, noting women have been traditionally excluded from decision-making processes.

Emeline Siale Ilolahia, Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations, called for recognizing the leadership of the Pacific people and supporting their relationship with nature and the ocean, noting it is the foundation of their climate resilience. She warned of the impacts of deep-sea mining for minerals, stressing this activity should not be justified in terms of the zero emissions transition. On climate action, she highlighted adaptation, financing, and loss and damage, as issues of importance to the Pacific region.

Framing the Context: Ajay Jha, Centre for Community Economics and Development Consultants Society, India, noted the Asia-Pacific is one of the most vulnerable regions to

climate change impacts. He highlighted the need to scale up renewable energy and lamented that fossil fuel subsidies remain a hindrance, for example, in China, where they are three times higher than clean energy subsidies. He observed that poor health infrastructure in most countries has been further stretched by the COVID-19 crisis and slow progress of vaccination.

Sarojeni Rengam, Executive Director, Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific, lamented the massive contamination of the environment due to agriculture. She reported that close to 350 million farmers in the region are affected by acute pesticide poisoning. Rengam highlighted that a people-driven movement had pushed back against corporate capture at the September 2021 UN Food Systems Summit, and called for just, equitable, healthy, and sustainable food systems.

Tsering said the outcomes of the Asia Pacific Peoples' Forum will provide valuable input to UNEA-5.2. She reported slow progress in achieving the SDGs in the region, with regression in critical environment-related goals such as climate change and water. Tsering said the "global coal story is really an Asia-Pacific story," and called for ambitious updated nationally determined contributions (NDCs). Pandemic recovery strategies, she said, need to focus on nature-based solutions to decarbonize economies, as well as on other measures that will generate co-benefits for gender equality, food security, health, and human rights.

Hong Jeong Kee, Vice-Minister of Environment, ROK, highlighted his country's efforts to support multi-stakeholder action needed for the low-carbon transition and adoption of green lifestyles. He mentioned: hosting of the P4G Summit to reaffirm global climate action; passing of a bill enshrining carbon neutrality by 2050, including measures for a just transition; and establishment of a Carbon Neutrality Commission.

Min Ji Choi, Director of International Cooperation, Ministry of Environment, ROK, drew attention to ROK's work on scaling up solutions, including building floating offshore wind and solar power plants, and laying the institutional framework to address plastic waste. She said the rise in single-use plastics during the global pandemic is alarming, and that her country is doing its part to achieve zero plastic waste. She welcomed the role of stakeholders, not only in monitoring government policies, but



Emeline Siale Ilolahia, Pacific Islands Association of NGOs



Azra Talat Sayeed, Roots for Equity

also in facilitating public-private partnerships and supporting government action for sustainability.

Session 1: Identifying Opportunities and Challenges for Nature Action: Wardarina Thaib, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, moderated the session, which explored the themes of nature for food, climate, health, and jobs.

On nature for food, Azra Talat Sayeed, Roots for Equity, highlighted best practices implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. She described how women who had invested in livestock and owned cattle were able to maintain their household food security, gain income by selling milk, and use animal dung as cooking fuel. She noted farmers who had their own land were able to provide food for themselves and their livestock. Her recommendations to the Ministerial Forum proposed steps toward a healthy and equitable food system, including supporting women's entitlement to land and their role as farmers, preserving indigenous livestock, and ensuring distributive justice.

On nature for climate, Ana Celestial, Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment, identified best practices, including: moratoria on logging, mining and other products that destroy forests, carbon sinks, and vulnerable peoples' ability to cope with disasters; community-based resource management; and community-based climate disaster response. She outlined priorities including adaptation, resilience, loss and damage, accountability mechanisms, and the provision of finance to developing countries by developed countries. She called for development justice that puts people and the planet before profit, and that brings about system change not climate change.

On health, Villaney Remengesau, Pacific Disability Forum, discussed challenges faced by persons living with disabilities in the region, including stigmatization and marginalization. She highlighted difficulties in accessing healthcare services in remote areas and challenges due to inadequate facilities, such as ramps and accessible toilets, and lack of sign language interpreters in healthcare. She added that mental health is a major concern in the region. She recommended several measures, including: development and implementation of healthcare standards for accessibility; support for community-based disability programmes; removal of barriers including through training; and more regional collaboration to promote compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

On jobs, Aaron Ceradoy, Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants, said massive job losses and reduction in wages and working hours due to COVID-19 have worsened job insecurity in the region, particularly for migrant workers. He highlighted shrinking civic space for collective action by grassroots and civil society organizations, and reported killing of labor activists alongside environmental defenders. He urged long-term solutions, including prioritization of labor rights over profits and the enhancement of positive migration, to reduce exploitation of cheap migrant labor.

On trade and investment, Ranja Sengupta, Third World Network, discussed systemic barriers in the global economy and financial framework, which, she said, are not conducive to sustainable development. She reported that low levels of tax revenues in the region remain bottlenecks to development. She called for establishing a universal intergovernmental UN tax commission and adoption of a UN Tax Convention to address tax abuse and illicit financial flows. She said the UN should take on a central role in development cooperation and ensure all development actors deliver on their commitments. She called for a moratorium on trade and investment agreements that compromise governments' policy space, warning that investor-state dispute settlement mechanisms in free-trade agreements are a barrier to state action on environment and public health.

Sengupta stressed that inequalities in technology and data access—the data divide—are major barriers and recommended establishing a global technology assessment mechanism at the UN. She also recommended strengthening governance of digital technologies to protect human rights and prioritizing democratic institutions over corporate interests.

Wardarina concluded the session by providing some highlights from consultations that took place ahead of the Forum. She said action for nature must:

- prioritize sustainable production systems that are based on agroecological models, transferring power, ownership, and decision making around production systems back to farmers, women, and Indigenous Peoples;
- ensure a just and equitable transition that moves away from a consumption-based extractive and exploitative economy, and includes a systemic shift in global economic governance and changes to national fiscal and monetary policies; and
- restore countries' capacity to regulate in the public interest without the fear of international trade repercussions or debt obligations.

Session 2: UNEP of Our Vision: Elenita “Neth” Daño, Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (ETC Group), introduced speakers and invited their views on “the UNEP we want.” She expressed concern at the slow rate of progress in the region toward global environmental goals. She highlighted challenges since the 1972 Stockholm Conference, including a global population that has more than doubled, environmental and health consequences of excessive fertilizer use, and continued reliance on coal. She also noted some positive developments, for example, in limiting the use of ozone-destroying substances and the rise in environmental activism since the 1970s.

Simon Høiberg Olsen, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), noted that paragraph 88 of the Rio+20 Outcome provides for strengthening UNEP, but this has only been partially implemented. He highlighted opportunities, through the occasions of UNEP@50 and Stockholm+50, to “restart the conversation” about what is needed. He emphasized that global environmental law must be binding, as UNEP’s guidance can be disregarded. On UNEP’s Medium-Term Strategy, he noted terms relating to markets far exceed terms relating to governments or networks. He cautioned against relying on markets to solve global environmental challenges, and acknowledged the political nature of UNEP’s work. He suggested ways forward include promoting greater recognition of the human right to a healthy environment and supporting UNEP’s work in strengthening national government agencies. He recommended UNEP advocate for redefining human wellbeing to be less reliant on material consumption.

Uchita de Zoysa, Executive Director, Centre for Environment and Development, said the vision for UNEP to be the world’s leading environmental authority and an authoritative advocate for the global environment is not the reality for all countries, as some do not experience UNEP’s presence on the ground. He called for UNEP to “focus on us” and to radically rethink its strategies based on what people and nature require, rather than trying to achieve “pacifying” outcomes, processes, institutions, and diplomacy.

In the subsequent discussions, speakers observed that political will seems to be lacking among countries to upgrade UNEP to a specialized agency with greater powers. They also argued the world does not need more agreements and should instead focus on action and implementation of existing agreements.

Finalizing the Forum Statement: Mara Medrano, Asia Pacific Research Network, facilitated this session, in which participants discussed a prepared statement that would convey key messages from MGOS to ministers and environment authorities later in the week.

The statement contains an introduction and sections on:

- Nature for climate and biodiversity, which calls for an end to coal dependence, and urges all major economies in the region to substantially ramp up ambition in their updated NDCs;
- Nature for food, which calls for agricultural production that is based on agroecology and food sovereignty;
- Nature for jobs and economic prosperity, which calls for respecting labor laws and trade unions, ending discrimination against migrant workers, creating jobs, and protecting livelihoods in climate-sensitive sectors, such as agriculture, horticulture, livestock, and fisheries; and
- Nature for health, which urges governments to restore public health infrastructure and address vaccine inequality, by measures including removing all intellectual property and trade barriers to vaccines as a global public good.

Following participants’ comments and proposed edits, the draft was finalized under the title “Rebuilding People’s Power, Democracy and Multilateralism for Protecting Rights,

Strengthening Nature Action, Sustainable Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic, and Achieving the SDGs.”

The Forum adjourned at 3.10 pm India Standard Time.

Senior Officials Meeting

Opening: Naresh Pal Gangwar, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, INDIA, and Senior Officials Bureau, Third Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific, welcomed participants.

Hong Jeong-kee, Vice-Minister, Ministry of Environment, ROK, stated his country’s determination to increase support to bridge the gap between developed and developing countries, and mentioned its bid to host the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP 28) in 2023.

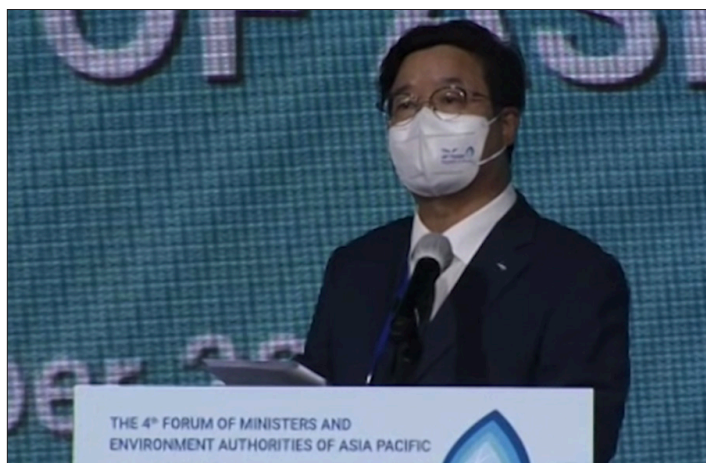
Yeom Tae-young, Mayor, Suwon City, ROK, shared Suwon City’s initiatives, including launching net-zero climate coalitions to align the city’s efforts on sustainable development, stressing scaled-up local solutions and solidarity and collaboration.

Dechen Tsering, Regional Director and Representative for Asia and the Pacific, UNEP, commended the region’s engagement and commitment to cooperation and its hosting of important UN meetings, including on climate change, biodiversity, plastic litter, and pollutants.

Laksmi Dhewanthi, Vice President, UNEA-5 Bureau, and Director General of Climate Change, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Indonesia, emphasized the importance of a strong message of political will from the region and progress on implementation of resolutions on environment and sustainable development.

Election of Officials and Adoption of the Agenda: The Forum elected Anil Jasinghe, Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Sri Lanka, as Chair, and Eunhae Jeong, Director General, National Institute of Environmental Research, Ministry of Environment, Republic of Korea, and Monyneth Vann, General Secretariat of the National Council for Sustainable Development, Ministry of Environment, Cambodia, as Vice-Chairs. Delegates then adopted the provisional agenda.

Review of Implementation of UNEA Resolutions in Asia Pacific: Subrata Sinha, UNEP, presented on implementation in the region based on the background document on this item



Yeom Tae-young, Mayor, Suwon City, Republic of Korea

(UNEP/APEnvForum (4)/1). He mentioned six focal areas: climate change; healthy ecosystems; environmental governance; resource efficiency; chemicals, waste, and air quality; and the environment under review. He drew attention to achievements, including:

- strengthening capacity in 41 countries to develop and implement action plans and access technology finance;
- facilitating ecosystem approaches such as Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning to address marine pollution;
- establishing a regional “waste crime” network;
- strengthening biosecurity systems and environmental dimensions of the One Health approach;
- conducting COVID-19 impact assessments; and
- developing the GEO-6 Youth report.

In country statements, BRUNEI DARUSSALAM highlighted achievements in tackling marine pollution, including the No Plastic Bag Every Day campaign to discourage the use of single-use plastics and encourage reusable bags and recyclable packaging. She further highlighted marine debris clean-up campaigns to reduce marine plastic waste.

INDIA reported an amendment of rules to increase the thickness of plastic carry bags from 50 microns to 75 microns from September 30, 2021, and to 120 microns from December 31, 2022. He also mentioned the development of the National Clean Air Programme, aimed at meeting prescribed annual average ambient air quality standards, and programmes to reduce the use of urea and thus nitrogen in the agriculture sector.

IRAN discussed the recently concluded workshop on the Space Technology Applications for Drought, Flood and Water Resource Management, aimed at identifying and monitoring the effects of a changing climate, including the onset of drought, flash floods, and general water resources conditions.

JAPAN reported on its publication of Guidelines for Harmonizing Ocean Surface Microplastic Monitoring Methods, and its support to Indonesia and Viet Nam for the development of their own national guidelines. He highlighted Japan’s active participation and support of the Open-ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics.

MONGOLIA referred to the country’s new NDC, which includes new sectors such as agriculture, waste, and some industrial sectors. He reported on efforts towards increasing clean energy capacity through renewable energy, and reducing emissions from the transport sector through increasing railway networks and e-mobility.

ROK highlighted significantly increased official development assistance for capacity building for climate change adaptation, as well as its work towards a UN resolution on Clean Air for Blue Skies to reduce air pollution.

SINGAPORE expressed dissatisfaction with its representation in UNEP’s report on mineral resource governance. He called for “the highest standards of accuracy” in reporting on the issue of sand mining and export for use in building and construction. He stressed that Singapore promotes the use of alternative building materials.



Anil Jasinghe, Ministry of Environment, Sri Lanka

SRI LANKA emphasized efforts on nutrient pollution and progress on nitrogen management, including a ban on the import of chemical fertilizers, and called for support from the region for the Colombo Declaration on Sustainable Nitrogen Management.

The UN Country Team China pointed to China’s high-quality environment and human-based growth model, backed by smart policies and strong leadership, as an example of green development.

THAILAND addressed implementation of the UNEA resolution on marine plastic and waste management and the Bangkok declaration on combating marine debris, including through its 20-Year Pollution Management Strategy 2017-2036, as well as other management plans and regional projects addressing marine litter management.

INDONESIA focused on SCP efforts, noting the establishment of the Regional Capacity Center for Clean Seas in Bali, and on accelerated mangrove rehabilitation and peatland protection.

MALAYSIA highlighted his country’s marine litter and action plan, including a roadmap toward zero single-use plastics by 2030, circular economy initiatives to divert solid waste from landfills, and application of extended producer responsibility.

Regional Input to UNEA-5.2: Jasinghe chaired this session. Tsering presented the background document on this topic (UNEP/APEnvForum (4)/3), noting the region is not on track to achieve any of the SDGs and has regressed on SDG 13 (climate action) and SDG 14 (life below water). She reported on actions and opportunities to achieve the SDGs based on four focal areas. On nature for poverty eradication, jobs and economic prosperity, she highlighted green and blue stimulus packages to build back better. On nature for climate, she mentioned “nature-positive” solutions, and the need to increase ambition in NDCs. She said the One Health approach is key in the area of nature for human and ecosystem health. On nature for sustainable food systems, she underscored the need to shift to nature-positive and equitable production systems, and to repurpose agricultural subsidies for nature conservation.

In country statements, delegates then described their priorities, initiatives, and success stories on the theme, “Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific.”

PAKISTAN discussed efforts towards building climate-resilient communities and mentioned the Clean Green Pakistan Movement, which focuses on safe drinking water, waste management, sanitation and hygiene, and tree planting. She cited the 10 Billion Tree Tsunami to restore 350,000 hectares of forests and degraded land, under which a green stimulus has been created to help local communities conserve their own environment. The revision of her country's NDC, she added, will consider strategies to address gender vulnerability and greater inclusion of women and youth.

ROK highlighted the recently launched Korean Green New Deal to support the green economy through digital services. He reported that the Deal will strengthen climate action through green infrastructure, renewable energy, and green industry.

CHINA underscored the concept of ecological civilization and commitment to harmonious growth respecting humans and nature. He highlighted advances on its low-carbon transformation, increasing energy efficiency, pollution and waste reduction, improvements in water and land quality, and expansion of forest cover.

VIET NAM outlined various initiatives and plans related to its green growth strategy, including on reducing emissions, laws protecting marine and island resources, spatial and master planning of sustainable exploitation, and public-private partnerships to address plastic pollution.

THAILAND noted the added challenges resulting from the pandemic and called for enhancing cooperation given the transboundary nature of the problems we face. He also underscored the need to combat illegal trade in wildlife.

A representative from the Science-Policy-Business Forum presented on outcomes from the Forum, stressing the interconnected nature of the three planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, and, therefore, the need for coordinated approaches. The Forum, she said, highlighted, *inter alia*: the need for open access to Big Data and technology for the environment; the potential of citizen science; the use of inclusive wealth measures instead of gross domestic product; and the One Health approach to human, animal, and environment health.

A representative of MGOS drew attention to the increase in vulnerable people in the region as a result of the pandemic and, stressing the systemic nature of the problem, said efforts to address environmental issues without overcoming structural barriers to human wellbeing will be futile.

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation mentioned its working group to promote innovative, green, and sustainable micro, small and medium enterprises; roadmap on combating illegal unreported and unregulated fishing; and roadmap on marine debris, which encourages members to take voluntary steps.

ICIMOD drew attention to its assessment report on the Hindu Kush Himalayan region as an "alarm bell" and called for better coordination of actions on the ground.

The South Asia Co-Operative Environment Programme highlighted its work on the UN global campaign on sustainable



nitrogen management, as well as its USD 50 million regional project for plastic-free seas, which is working in all eight member countries and is partly supported by a USD 37-million grant from the World Bank.

The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme referred to its Pacific Regional Declaration on the Prevention of Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution and Its Impacts, calling for action to protect the world's food security and human health. She noted the Pacific Ocean hosts the world's largest tuna fishery and is home to many threatened species.

The Asian Institute of Technology highlighted its work in education, research, and innovation in the areas of: climate change; smart communities; food, energy and water; infrastructure; and technology and society.

IGES urged all countries to support the '30-by-30' campaign to protect 30% of the world's land and oceans by 2030, and called for increasing coherence among the climate and biodiversity conventions.

The International Labour Organization said putting the right policies into practice will lead to 24 million new green jobs by 2030, and pledged to cooperate with countries on a just energy transition.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN highlighted the essential role of biodiversity in supporting productivity, food security, rural livelihoods, and climate resilience. He urged scaling up of positive practices such as agroecology to enhance productivity, food security, and climate resilience.

The UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction urged participants to celebrate the International Day for Disaster Reduction on 13 October 2021, which will focus on the sixth of the seven Sendai targets, namely "International cooperation for developing countries to reduce their disaster risk and disaster losses."

UN Women drew attention to the new UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025 on how UN Women will achieve empowerment of all women and girls, and support achievement of the SDGs.

The UN Country Team Mongolia discussed the first-ever High-level National Forum on the SDGs held with parliamentarians, ministers, diplomatic missions, CSOs, academia and others, held in Mongolia on 4 October 2021.

The Sustainable Development Policy Institute said the best way to celebrate UNEP's golden jubilee is to encourage



Sveinung Rotevatn, UNEA-5 President

and reinvigorate environmental multilateralism and promote international cooperation and funding.

Input to Draft Resolutions for UNEA-5.2: INDONESIA proposed a resolution on sustainable lake management given the pressure faced by lakes everywhere and the vital environmental services they provide. He called for preliminary work to be done towards developing a UNEA-5 resolution on SCP.

JAPAN presented a draft resolution on marine plastic pollution, which proposes the establishment of an INC to pursue work on a global agreement on the issue. He invited comments, noting the aim to submit the resolution by the end of October.

THAILAND supported a global framework on the marine plastics crisis, based on the precautionary approach as well as on common but differentiated responsibilities.

SINGAPORE welcomed the proposals of Indonesia and Japan and stressed the importance of a science-based, practical, and feasible approach.

Noting evidence of dead zones in the ocean and impacts on fisheries due to excess nitrogen accumulation, SRI LANKA called for further work towards a resolution on nitrogen which, she said, has only been addressed in a fragmented manner and has a major impact in the region.

ROK supported work towards a legally-binding agreement on plastic pollution and emphasized stepped-up efforts towards a circular economy, including through label-free items and organic waste for biofuels.

Finally, Committee of Permanent Representative Bureau Member Saqlain Syedah (Pakistan) reported on progress in the preparation of the declaration for UNEP's 50th celebration, noting its focus on strengthening governance and environmental law.

Input to the UNEA-5.2 Ministerial Declaration: Chair Jasinghe invited the senior officials and other stakeholders to provide regional inputs to the zero draft of the declaration (UNEP/APEnvForum (4)/INF/3c) that will be adopted at UNEA-5.2.

Dhewanthi reported on the process of consultation on the draft. She emphasized an inclusive and transparent process to develop a strong message from the region. She outlined the schedule for

consultation and presenting submissions, including an informal briefing on 26 October, convened by the UNEA Presidency, and a late November deadline for the submission of inputs before a revised draft is circulated in December.

The Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP highlighted outcomes of the first Asia Pacific Regional Youth Environment Forum. He called for the ministerial declaration to include strong provisions for youth engagement, and for youth to receive funded support to participate in UNEA-5.2.

Endorsement of the Report of the Senior Officials Meeting of the Fourth Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific: Senior officials and other stakeholders endorsed the report of the meeting. Chair Jasinghe closed the meeting at 5.54 pm KST, and participants proceeded to a reception dinner hosted by the Minister of Environment, ROK.

Ministerial Segment

Opening: The Ministerial Segment convened on Thursday, 7 October, opening with a dance and choir performance on site in Suwon City, ROK. Han Jeoung-ae, Minister of Environment, ROK, welcomed participants. She noted that, while each country in the region has a different level of economic development and experiences varying severity of climate impacts, countries can create tailored, complementary action plans. She called on the Asia-Pacific region to demonstrate the "power of solidarity" to overcome the climate crisis.

In a video message, Sveinung Rotevatn, President, UNEA-5, and Minister of Environment and Climate, Norway, expressed hope that the expectations of the launch of an INC on marine plastic pollution at UNEA-5.2 will become a reality.

Joyce Msuya, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, UNEP, quoted an African proverb: "If we look after the environment, the environment will look after us." She called on delegates to use the opportunity of the Forum to unlock their powers to facilitate change for sustainability.



Moon Jae-in, President, Republic of Korea

In a video message, Moon Jae-in, President, ROK, noted that 40% of the world's natural disasters in 2019 occurred in the Asia-Pacific region, and that overcoming climate change is paramount to the region's recovery. He highlighted his country's commitment to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, including through his country's Green New Deal and confirmed the ROK's aspiration to host UNFCCC COP 28.

Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa, Prime Minister, Samoa, hailed the Forum as an important milestone to mobilize the transformation needed to combat global warming, biodiversity loss, and marine ecosystem depletion. She underscored that island people cannot speak of a future without change, and that investing in people is a cornerstone of her country's sustainable development journey.

Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary, ESCAP, said not enough has been done in the region on climate change and pollution, adding that raising ambition, taxing carbon, and phasing out coal are in everyone's common interest. She welcomed the interest in ESCAP's proposal for a resolution on Clean Air for Blue Skies and its international day. She said ESCAP will work to take it forward in the hope it will lead to "a region-wide modality" for cooperation.

Amy Khor, Senior Minister of State, Ministry for Sustainability and Environment and Ministry for Transport, SINGAPORE, stressed the important role played by the Asia Pacific Forum in bringing the region together and taking resolutions to UNEA. She called on all members to recommit to the sustainability agenda. She also highlighted Singapore's Green Plan 2030 and its emphasis on leveraging innovation and transitioning to a circular economy.

Zuhair Ahmed Kowshik, Regional Facilitator, Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP, shared recommendations from the Declaration of Youth Manifesto resulting from the Youth Forum. He highlighted: ensuring ambitious action on green technology and facilitating youth training and green jobs; establishing an ecosystem restoration reporting framework; supporting funded participation of youth, including in delegations; and operationalizing youth as an active constituency in the Asia-Pacific region and in sub-regional organizations and commissions.

Ban Ki-moon, Chair, Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), and former UN Secretary-General, urged countries to raise their ambition and ensure multilateral collaboration, saying "we cannot negotiate with nature." He urged countries to enact binding laws to address climate change, noting so far only 14 countries have done so. He drew attention to GGGI's work of supporting more than 20 countries to implement green recovery measures and increase green jobs.

Election of Officers and Adoption of the Agenda: Khor, as Chair of the Third Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific, invited delegates to nominate one Chair and two Vice-Chairs of the Ministerial Segment.

The Forum elected Han Jeoung-ae, Minister of Environment, ROK, as Chair, and Demétrio do Amaral de

Carvalho, Secretary of State for the Environment, Timor-Leste, and Mahinda Amaraweera, Minister of Environment, Sri Lanka, as Vice-Chairs. Delegates also adopted the meeting agenda (UNEP/APEnvForum(4)/L.1).

Han expressed hope the session would provide meaningful, visionary input to UNEA-5.2, and stated that stronger solidarity in the region will be key to achieving "the changes we want."

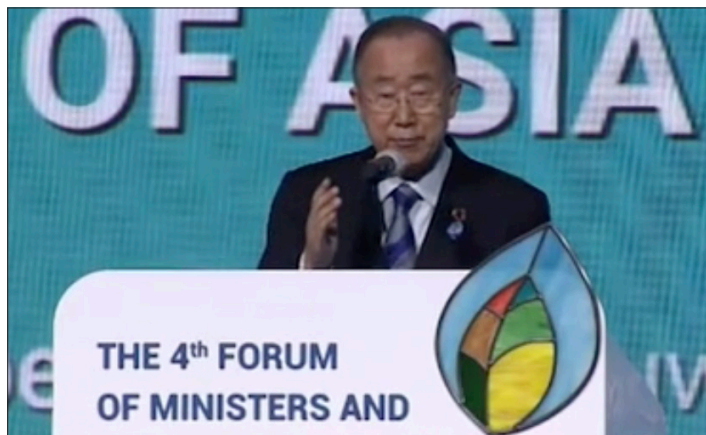
Delegates viewed a UNEP video encouraging all Member States to pay their fair share of respective contributions, based on the agreed Voluntary Indicative Scale of Contributions. The video reminded viewers that doing so will help ensure the UN body can continue to provide unbiased science, catalyze policy reforms, and enable action.

Leadership Dialogue on Strengthening Nature Actions to Achieve the SDGs in Asia and the Pacific: The Secretariat introduced the agenda item and supporting document (UNEP/APEnvForum(4)/INF/B6). Delegates viewed a video introducing the topics of discussion: nature for poverty eradication, jobs, and economic prosperity; nature for human and ecosystems health; nature for climate; and nature for sustainable food systems

In country statements, AUSTRALIA highlighted its National Waste Policy Action Plan, which has banned the export of waste plastic, paper, glass, and tires since the second half of 2020. She further reported on the National Plastics Plan, aimed at increasing plastic recycling, and finding alternatives to unnecessary plastics.

BHUTAN said the climate, biodiversity, and health crisis have served to remind us of the interconnected nature of our world. He reported the Gross National Happiness (GNH) Index applied in his country has enabled achievement of progress across several SDGs. He also mentioned his country's 12th Five-Year Plan 2018-2023 to address "the last mile" challenge of development and ensure continued progress towards creating an inclusive and prosperous GNH state.

CHINA highlighted the concept of "ecological civilization" to guide the sustainable economic development agenda by addressing the ecological economy and green development. She discussed priorities, such as carbon reduction, pollution



Ban Ki-moon, Chair, GGGI, and former UN Secretary-General



Dechen Tsering, Regional Director and Representative for Asia and the Pacific, UNEP

control, and biodiversity loss prevention. She explained that her country has ceased development of new coal power plants abroad in a bid to help other countries achieve green and low carbon energy.

BRUNEI DARUSSALAM said a sustainable nation is a resilient one, and underscored opportunities to tackle climate change and build a sustainable and circular economy. He drew attention to his country's National Climate Change Policy introduced in June 2020.

CAMBODIA reported on conservation efforts through the promotion of payments for ecosystem services and carbon financing. He highlighted his country's Roadmap for Food Systems for Sustainable Development released in September 2021 to support agriculture and food industries as foundations of economic recovery.

INDIA called its clean energy transition the most ambitious in the world, stating it is on course to exceed many of its targets. He reported on actions and ecosystem-based approaches taken, including on biofuels, circular economy, marine conservation areas, and wetland protection.

FIJI highlighted its climate change legislation, making the 2050 carbon neutrality goal legally-binding. He also reported on work on nature-based solutions to address coastal erosion and on measures to reduce plastic waste, expressing support for an INC on marine litter and plastic pollution.

INDONESIA reported a 75% reduction in deforestation in 2020. She also highlighted the establishment of a legal basis for addressing plastic pollution, including a national action plan for combating marine litter, and the establishment of the Regional Capacity Center for Clean Seas in Bali as an international knowledge hub.

IRAN highlighted the importance of creating green jobs and supporting SCP. He noted the impacts of sand and dust storms, and called for harnessing countries' experience and strategies to address the issue.

JAPAN, with the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, stated that the '30-by-30' target can be achieved through conserving not only pristine areas but also secondary

habitats. He looked forward to seeing UNEP strengthen synergies among global agreements.

The LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC called on UNEP to play a role in assisting vulnerable countries to access climate finance, saying this is much needed in the post-pandemic era.

MONGOLIA shared its green development long-term policy to overcome desertification, land degradation, water scarcity, and pollution.

PAKISTAN described its green stimulus projects: the 10 Billion Tree Tsunami for tree planting and revitalizing forests; creating 15 new national parks and 5,000 related jobs; and diverting glacial meltwater to recharge wetlands and groundwater aquifers.

The PHILIPPINES lamented that delivery of the Rio+20 outcome "has been lacking." He noted his country submitted its revised NDC in April 2021.

ROK highlighted goals to double financing of environmental projects by 2030 and offered to co-sponsor the UNEA-5.2 resolution launching an INC for a plastics agreement.

SINGAPORE described its plan to be a "city in nature" by 2030 by planting one million more trees, providing 200 hectares of new nature parks, and taking action to recover populations of marine turtles, sponges, and rare coral species.

SRI LANKA mentioned its Presidential Task Force on Creating a Green Sri Lanka with Sustainable Solutions to Climate Change and discussed plans to meet challenges in areas such as fertilizer use and waste management.

THAILAND discussed several actions, including those under its national Bio-Circular-Green Economic Model and its National Energy Plan 2022 to achieve carbon neutrality by 2065-2070 through increased use of renewable energy.

VIET NAM called for consensus at the highest political and economic fora to combat climate change, ecological collapse, and the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. He highlighted his country's approaches to shifting to a green and circular economy, including a new Law on Environmental Protection, which takes effect on 1 January 2022 and will



Demetrio do Amaral de Carvalho, State Secretary for the Environment, Timor Leste

introduce increased responsibility of the business sector, among other requirements.

BANGLADESH reported on its 2021-2041 plan, Making Vision 2041 a Reality, which includes strategies for green growth and climate resilience.

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) reported on the recently concluded IUCN World Conservation Congress, which called on world leaders to invest at least 10% of global post-COVID-19 recovery funds in nature.

Multistakeholder Dialogue on the 50th Anniversary of UNEP (UNEP@50): Vice-Chair Carvalho introduced this agenda item (UNEP/APEnvForum (4)/INF/2), along with a video on UNEP's work.

FIJI commended UNEP's work, including its efforts on early warning systems, ocean health, ozone depletion, and marine litter. He called for "ambition proportional to the challenges," restoration of all degraded ecosystems, and strengthening UNEP's sub-regional office in Fiji.

INDONESIA said its partnership with UNEP has helped identify critical bottlenecks and enabled policy implementation. She said strengthening UNEP's leadership is essential to help manage current global emergencies.

The PHILIPPINES called for more direct support for UN agencies, especially UNEP.

ROK called for embedding a "One UN" approach, citing her country's positive experience with the [Partnership for Action on Green Economy](#) initiative, involving collaboration between five UN agencies to support capacity building and planning for sustainability.

AnnaMaria Oltorp, Head of Research Cooperation, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, noted the world today has the largest youth population in history and that 90% of the global youth population resides in low-income countries. She called for an intergenerational approach to addressing the wellbeing of people and the planet, and highlighted three key words in relation to the upcoming Stockholm+50 conference: implementation, interconnectedness, and intergenerational. She expressed hope Stockholm+50 and UNEP@50 will be complementary stepping stones towards transformative action for a sustainable future.

Brian Preston, Chief Judge, Land and Environment Court, New South Wales, Australia, highlighted UNEP's importance in the process of reification of environmental principles, encouraging multilateral environmental agreements and converting them into institutions, helping countries incorporate international law domestically, and strengthening the science-policy interface to counter denial of environmental crises.

Saying we are at a turning point where the next 10 years are critical, Lu Zhi, Professor and Executive Director, Center for Nature and Society, Peking University, China, called for strong global governance and implementation. She highlighted UNEP's work in facilitating collaboration, building capacity in developing countries, and supporting policy making.

Ashok Khosla, Chairman, Development Alternatives Group, India, said UNEP is the only global organization capable of convening a platform to bring together the diversity

of existential planetary threats due to the rich cross-sectoral and transboundary information in its possession.

Oyun Sanjaasuren, Director of External Affairs, Green Climate Fund (GCF), reported rapid growth in the GCF's project portfolio in the Asia-Pacific region, which currently stands at more than USD 3.4 billion and is worth USD 12 billion when co-financing is considered. She praised UNEP for its central role in collaborating with the GCF and countries in the region to implement projects and invited further collaboration.

Presentation of Reports on the Senior Officials Meeting and Ministerial Segment: Jasinghe presented the Chair's Summary of the Senior Officials Meeting. The report includes discussions on: the review of implementation of UNEA resolutions in the region; regional inputs and a declaration to UNEA-5.2; and information on the first Asia Pacific Regional Youth Environment Forum.

The report highlights a number of issues and priorities from the region for consideration at UNEA-5.2, including:

- sustainable lake management, including protection of water quality and fisheries, integration of lake management plans into national planning, and capacity development for communities for lake management;
- nitrogen management, given the impact of nitrogen on water and air pollution, particularly from agriculture, where large populations face a health risk, and where eutrophication is also a risk for coastal populations; and
- marine plastic pollution, taking into account discussions on the formation of an INC to discuss a new global instrument on marine plastic litter.

The Chair's Summary contains country statements in the Leadership and Multistakeholder Dialogues, as well as outcomes from the Senior Officials Meeting reviewing implementation by countries of UNEA-4 resolutions and regional perspectives.

Adoption of Outcomes: Due to the hybrid nature of the meeting and "the extraordinary situation" of the pandemic, Han Jeoung-ae, Minister of Environment, ROK, as Chair, proposed allowing 24 hours for all government delegations to review and provide final comments on the Chair's Summary of the Ministerial Segment (UNEP/APEnvForum (4)/7). In the meantime, she invited all to take note of the Chair's Summary of the Senior Officials Meeting (UNEP/APEnvForum (4)/6). Delegates took note of the document.

Closing: In closing remarks, Dechen Tsering thanked all participants. She outlined the priorities identified at the meeting, particularly the need for a sustainable pandemic recovery and strong action for nature. She welcomed the role countries have played on these issues, saying the increasingly integrated nature of the region, in terms of culture and economy, provides a good basis for coordinated action. Han Jeoung-ae, Minister of Environment, ROK and Chair of the Ministerial Segment, underscored the need for solidarity. Thanking everyone, she closed the meeting at 5.42 pm KST.

Upcoming Meetings

UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP 15): COP 15, the tenth meeting of the COP serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, and fourth meeting of the

COP serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization is being held in two phases. Phase one takes place virtually and will include a High-Level Segment from 12-13 October. Phase two will be an in-person meeting in Kunming, China, from 25 April to 8 May 2022. **dates:** 11-15 October 2021 **location:** virtual **www:** cbd.int/conferences/2021-2022

Fourth Asia Pacific Day for the Ocean: ESCAP will host this event to accelerate delivery of SDG 14 (life below water) and launch the Regional Decade Program for the Ocean. Interactive dialogues will convene on: advancing cooperation on monitoring of plastic pollution in the region; sustainable maritime connectivity; accounting for ocean pollution through data integration to protect marine and coastal ecosystems; and ocean and climate synergies. This is an open event for governments, businesses, civil society, and educational institutions. **date:** 27 October 2021 **location:** online **www:** www.unescap.org/events/2021/fourth-asia-pacific-day-ocean-4

Glasgow Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 26): COP 26, the 16th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, and the third meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement are expected to convene one year after the originally scheduled meeting was postponed due to the pandemic. **dates:** 1-12 November 2021 **location:** Glasgow, UK **www:** unfccc.int

Fifth UN Conference on Least Developed Countries (LDCs): This conference will undertake a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the LDCs for the decade 2011-2020. **dates:** 23-27 January 2022 **location:** Doha, Qatar **www:** un.org/ldc5/

Resumed Session of UNEA-5: Convening under the theme “Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the SDGs,” UNEA-5.2 will provide a platform for discussing and implementing nature-based solutions that contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by holistically addressing its social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Building on the February 2021 online session, the meeting will discuss ways to ensure policies for economic recovery following COVID-19 lead to a resilient and inclusive post-pandemic world. It is also expected to take a decision on whether to establish an INC for a global agreement on marine litter and plastic pollution. A special UNEA session to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP will convene from 3-4 March 2022. **dates:** 28 February – 4 March 2022 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** www.unep.org/environmentassembly/unea5

Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) 2022: The APFSD serves as a regional preparatory meeting to the HLPF. The theme of this meeting is “Building back better from COVID-19 while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific.” The APFSD will provide space for an in-depth review of the goals to be reviewed at the HLPF in 2022: SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 14 (life below water), SDG 15 (life on land), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the Goals). Sub-regional preparatory meetings will take place in October and November 2021, prior to the APFSD. **dates:** 28–31 March 2022 **location:** Online **www:** www.unescap.org/events/apfsd9

Stockholm+50: Sweden will host an international event marking the 50th anniversary of the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment and the creation of UNEP. **dates:** 2-3 June 2022 **location:** Stockholm, Sweden **www:** government.se/government-policy/stockholm50/

Seventh International Marine Debris Conference: The Seventh International Marine Debris Conference will be held at the Busan Exhibition and Convention Center, bringing together close to 50 countries and regions to discuss a range of topics, including: prevention of microplastics; private sector collaboration; and effective implementation of laws, regulations, and policies. This is the first time the conference, held under the auspices of the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, will take place in a country other than the US. **dates:** September 2022 **location:** Busan, ROK **www:** marinedebris.noaa.gov/our-work/international-marine-debris-collaboration

HLPF 2022: The 10th session of the HLPF will take place over eight days in July 2022 to review implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs, with a focus on SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 14 (life below water), SDG 15 (life on land), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the Goals). **dates:** July 2022 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf

For additional upcoming events, see sdg.iisd.org/

Glossary

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| ASEAN | Association of Southeast Asian Nations |
| COP | Conference of the Parties |
| ESCAP | UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific |
| GCF | Green Climate Fund |
| GHG | Greenhouse gas |
| GGGI | Global Green Growth Institute |
| HLPF | High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development |
| ICIMOD | International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development |
| IFSA | International Forestry Students' Association |
| IGES | Institute for Global Environmental Strategies |
| INC | Intergovernmental negotiating committee |
| MGOS | Major Groups and Other Stakeholders |
| NDC | Nationally determined contribution |
| ROAP | Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific |
| ROK | Republic of Korea |
| SCP | Sustainable consumption and production |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| UNCCD | UN Convention to Combat Desertification |
| UNEA | UN Environment Assembly |
| UNEP | United Nations Environment Programme |
| UNFCCC | UN Framework Convention on Climate Change |
| YOUNGO | Youth Constituency to the UNFCCC |