

## Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF): 7-10 February 2022

Following a two-year hiatus, civil society actors got an early start on contributing to a revitalized multilateral environmental agenda, as stalled dialogue processes begin to pick up pace. Although taking place virtually for the second time, the sense of urgency was palpable as the 19th session of the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF-19) convened ahead of the resumed fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5.2) and the UNEA Special Session to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the creation of the UN Environment Programme in 1972 (UNEP@50).

In preparation for the back-to-back UNEA meetings, which will take place at the UN Office in Nairobi as well as virtually from 28 February – 4 March 2022, Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS) offered their vision, as well as entry points for addressing the sustainability challenges of our time, namely how to: ensure the biggest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions and biodiversity loss, and pollution—notably in the chemicals and agri-food sectors—contribute more to repair the damage caused; and accelerate progress towards all of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in this final decade of action.

GMGSF-19 was organized around five thematic clusters aligned to UNEA-5.2 draft resolutions on: marine and plastic pollution; biodiversity and nature-based solutions (NbS); chemicals and waste; green recovery and circular economy; and strengthening international environmental governance, including a political declaration on UNEP@50. During a snap poll on the first day, participants identified plastic pollution as the issue of greatest concern for MGS.

Over four days of intensive breakout and plenary discussions, participants reviewed the draft resolutions, reaching broad agreement on MGS perspectives to be communicated to UNEA-5.2. However, despite protracted discussions around the draft resolution on NbS, participants diverged over whether or not to endorse the NbS concept until the close of the meeting.

There was, however, broad consensus on MGS positions relating to the other draft UNEA-5.2 decisions, with participants underscoring the need for UNEA to:

- strengthen systemic approaches to addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollutions, as well as other interconnected sustainable development issues, including through shifting food systems away from industrial models towards more regenerative practices;
- recognize the importance of the “One Health” approach for addressing linkages across human, animal, and environmental health and wellbeing;
- take firm action to advance progress in the chemicals, as well as marine and plastic pollution, clusters;
- ensure social and environmental safeguards, as well as the scientific independence of UNEP and UNEA’s advisory bodies, in environmental protection;
- strengthen follow up to UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution 73/333 on environmental governance through a focus on improved coordination of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), financing and enforcement, and MGS capacity building for more effective monitoring; and
- protect the legacy of the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference), which led to the establishment of UNEP, by accelerating implementation on the ground, backed up by financial support, capacity building, and robust enforcement and monitoring of environmental laws at higher levels.

During the closing plenary, MGS adopted two outcome documents: the Joint MGS Statement “The UNEP We Want,” and the Global Joint Statement Towards UNEA-5.2.

### In This Issue

A Brief History of GMGSF .....	2
Report of the Meeting .....	2
Opening Plenary .....	2
Thematic Resolution Clusters .....	4
Upcoming Meetings .....	10
Glossary .....	10

Building on a series of regional and international online MGS consultations, more than 650 participants took part in the different sessions of the GMGSF over four days, from 7-10 February 2022. The virtual Forum was self-organized by the Major Groups Facilitating Committee (MGFC), the European Environmental Bureau, and Women Engage for a Common Future.

### A Brief History of GMGSF

The first UNEP Global Civil Society Forum—later rebranded as the GMGSF—took place in Malmö, Sweden, in 2000. An associated meeting to UNEA, the Forum serves as a convening platform for exchange between UNEA-accredited MGS and other interested observers.

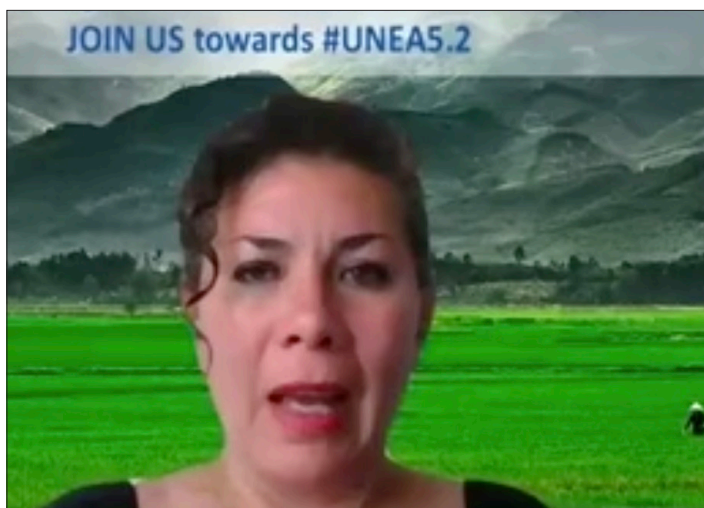
Reflecting the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, MGS convened a virtual meeting in February 2021 to prepare for the online session of the first part of UNEA-5. The Forum focused on a limited set of consultative sessions, primarily addressing issues included in the “lean” agenda of UNEA-5. Participants developed a joint global statement titled “Building Forward Better: Action Is Urgently Needed,” and collated input towards preparatory conferences commemorating the 50th anniversaries of the 1972 Stockholm Conference and the establishment of UNEP.

### Report of the Meeting

#### Opening Plenary

GMGSF-19 opened on Monday, 7 February 2022, with introductory remarks by the three MGFC Co-Chairs.

Ingrid Rostad, NGO Major Group (MG), welcomed participants, describing the two-part UNEA-5 session as “the longest UNEA ever.” Highlighting the unprecedented impact of COVID-19, Mohamed Abdel Raouf, Science and Technology MG, described a focus on green recovery as a chance to avoid past mistakes, while engaging different constituencies. He expressed hope that GMGSF-19 would send a strong message that civil society is crucial to realizing the 2030 Agenda for



**Carmen Capriles**, Women's Major Group.

Sustainable Development. He urged the UNEA presidency to create opportunities for MGS to engage effectively in UNEA. Espen Barth Eide, UNEA President and Minister of Climate and Environment, Norway Carmen Capriles, Women's MG, said UNEA-5.2 offers a chance to find real solutions to the challenges we currently face. However, she emphasized that strong political will is needed to implement transformative solutions that shift our relationship with nature and stressed that MGS must have a seat at the table.

Following these open remarks, Sascha Gabizon, Women's MG, facilitated a virtual introductory round in which participants identified what they considered as key issues on the UNEA-5.2 agenda.

Espen Barth Eide, UNEA President and Minister of Climate and Environment, Norway, reminded participants of the integral role input from civil society, business, consumers, and other stakeholders play in international negotiations, including by highlighting ways regulations and their implementation affects people and groups differently. He highlighted the growing recognition of the interconnectivity between the triple planetary crisis—climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution—across political levels, thus stressing the important contribution of UNEA toward a unified approach, including across relevant existing MEAs.

Erki Savisaar, UNEA Vice President and Minister of Environment, Estonia, shared expectations for UNEA-5.2. He emphasized the need to establish an intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC) to launch a process towards a legally-binding global agreement on plastic pollution. He stressed, among other issues, that the INC must clearly state the scope of work, include micro plastics, and embrace a circular approach. He also called for making a breakthrough on NbS to address a wide range of issues, such as coral reef restoration, coastal erosion, and enhanced protection from landslides. On the upcoming UNEA Special Session to commemorate UNEP@50, he called for a powerful political declaration to strengthen



**Espen Barth Eide**, UNEA President and Minister of Climate and Environment, Norway



**Patrizia Heidegger**, European Environmental Bureau, NGO Major Group, and European Regional Facilitator, MGFC

international implementation of environmental governance and law.

Alexander Juras, Chief, UNEP Civil Society Unit, expressed regret that expectations for an in-person GMGSF session had not materialized. However, he noted that online meetings are an increasingly viable and environmentally friendly alternative. With almost 800 registered participants, he stressed that this session has not only set a new participation record, but also offers an opportunity to prepare for multiple global dialogue processes in the coming months. In closing, Juras stressed that governments cannot tackle the triple planetary crisis without civil society, underscoring the role of MGS in ensuring maximum transparency and the impact of multilateral environmental governance.

**Overview of the Agenda for the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP (OECPR), UNEA-5.2, and the UNEA Special Session on UNEP@50:** This session was moderated by Ayman Cherkaoui, Mohammed VI Foundation for the Protection of the Environment.

Ulf Björnholm, Acting Director for Governing Bodies, UNEP, shared expectations for the OECPR and UNEA-5.2, highlighting that most members states were not in a position to actively support a proposal to postpone the meetings to the end of April due to COVID-19.

Björnholm shared the structure for UNEA-5.2 and UNEP@50, highlighting 17 resolutions and noting that some may be merged, like those on plastic pollution. He pointed to a procedural resolution on deciding the dates for UNEA-6, against the backdrop of the ongoing pandemic. He also discussed the need to agree on the format of the 7th edition of UNEP's flagship Global Environment Outlook (GEO) report, and how the process should be governed. He explained that the OECPR would prepare three categories of draft resolutions for consideration at UNEA-5.2: agreed resolutions recommended for adoption; resolutions with pending issues recommended for further consideration at UNEA-5.2; and resolutions on which further action would be deferred, with the possibility of consideration at UNEA-6 or in another forum.

Responding to questions, Björnholm noted civil society participants will have online access to all negotiating sessions, with some limited in-person presence due to COVID-19 restrictions. While noting MGS can make statements in Plenary, as well as during working group sessions, subject to the discretion of facilitators, he encouraged MGS "to do it sparingly and strategically," and to coordinate such inputs to ensure greater impact. He also drew attention to the UNEP PaperSmart portal as a useful information point that also offers MGS the option of adding comments, as well as relevant resources for various negotiating texts.

**Overview of Draft Resolutions, Decisions, and Declarations:** Patrizia Heidegger, European Regional Facilitator, MGFC, provided an overview of the 17 draft resolutions to be negotiated at UNEA-5.2, organized in five thematic clusters, namely:

- marine and plastic pollution, with two alternative texts on plastic pollution and a proposal for a ban on plastic production, including single-use plastic products;
- biodiversity and NbS, with four resolutions spanning the issues of sustainable lake management, NbS, animal welfare, and the biodiversity-health nexus;
- chemicals and waste, with three proposed resolutions on sustainable nitrogen management, sound management of chemicals and waste (omnibus resolution), and a science-policy panel (SPP) on chemicals;
- green recovery and circular economy, with four proposed resolutions on the topics of sustainable and resilient infrastructure, green recovery, circular economy, and sustainable mineral resource governance; and
- international environmental governance, including the UNEP@50 political declaration.

Previewing the UNEA-5.2 negotiations, Heidegger noted options to merge the three texts on marine and plastic pollution. She foresaw intense interest in the NbS resolution in the context of the GMGSF. She further emphasized the significance of ideas put forward in the green recovery and biodiversity clusters, in light of ongoing awareness of the need to build back better from the COVID-19 crisis, and to step up efforts towards a circular economy.

Heidegger highlighted three additional resolutions relating to UNEA procedural matters, namely on: equitable geographical representation in the UNEP Secretariat; the future of the GEO; and the date and venue for UNEA-6. She also introduced the ministerial and political declarations expected to be the outcomes of UNEA-5.2 and the UNEP@50.

**Presentation of the Interfaith Statement "Stop Plastic Pollution and Restore Our World":** Joanne Green, Tearfund, highlighted collaboration on a global interfaith response to the pollution and waste crisis, noting mapping activities to identify faith-based actions. She explained that the greatest area of action was around tackling plastic pollution and called on member states to agree to negotiate an ambitious legally binding treaty to tackle plastic pollution. Introducing the statement, she said it recognizes the wide-ranging and devastating impacts of plastics pollution



and calls for fundamental shifts to restorative consumption and production.

### ***Thematic Resolution Clusters***

During a plenary session on Monday, moderated by Christianne Zakour, Children and Youth MG, facilitators of the five thematic clusters introduced the draft resolution texts and offered insights on some entry points, as well as issues of concern for MGS on the respective texts. Participants then met in plenary sessions and in thematic breakout groups from Tuesday through Thursday to discuss input into the 17 draft resolutions.

**Marine and Plastic Pollution:** This cluster was co-facilitated by Jane Patton, Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), and Christopher Chin, Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research and Education (COARE). Introducing the cluster on Monday, Patton, highlighted the three resolutions put forward by Rwanda and Peru, Japan, and India on, respectively: a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution; an international legally binding instrument on marine plastic pollution; and a framework for addressing plastic production pollution, including from single-use plastic products. She explained that discussions during the OECPR would revolve around key elements and alignment of a MGS position on the resolutions.

Chin noted a task force has been working on these resolutions for a number of years and 950 endorsements and signatures had been received for a legally binding instrument with measurable and mandatory actions for reduction.

Opening the breakout discussions on Tuesday, Tom Gammage, Environmental Investigation Agency, noted all three draft texts: make clear that urgent action is required; recognize the importance of financing and technology mechanisms; recognize the importance of the circular economy and resource efficiency; and highlight the role of national action plans. On differences, he noted that the Japan and Rwanda/Peru resolutions call for a legally binding agreement, while the India proposal focuses on voluntary actions. On scope, he explained that: the Rwanda/Peru text conceptualizes pollution in the environment generally and takes a life cycle approach; the Japanese resolution is centered

on marine pollution and does not conceptualize the life cycle approach; and the Indian version is centered on single-use plastics. He noted they all agree on national action plans but diverge on what form they should take.

Explaining some key areas of convergence, Gammage said the Rwanda/Peru and Japanese resolutions call for quick negotiations in the lead up to UNEA-6 and are specific on the need for a legally binding agreement and convening an INC. He highlighted divergence on an open versus closed mandate, with the Rwanda/Peru resolution allowing consideration of other aspects and the Japanese version stipulating a closed mandate with less guidance on the design of the treaty. Some concern was expressed that goals regarding the reduction of “additional” marine pollution in the Japanese resolution were not ambitious enough.

In the ensuing discussion, participants highlighted the need for a source-to-sea approach for tackling marine litter, including paying attention to the dumping of plastics at sea, which requires thinking beyond silos and working in synergy with relevant global targets and existing mechanisms. Some also weighed in on the importance of considering issues of toxicity, and the effects on people and workers, which calls for a life cycle approach, and paying attention to socio-economic concerns. Several participants stressed the importance of not just focusing on consumer responsibility, but also highlighting the responsibility of industry, including with respect to reducing plastics production, enabling circular business models, and promoting the replacement of single-use plastics.

Regarding consumer responsibility, one participant highlighted the need to balance consumer versus producer responsibility with also recognizing the need for behavioral change across society, pointing to networks and institutions currently addressing this. One participant also highlighted the importance of considering just transitions for informal waste workers and ensuring the safety of livelihoods for people working across relevant industries.

Turning to the section on the Joint Global Statement to UNEA-5.2 on plastic pollution, Patton noted it was too detailed and called for the prioritization of essential elements. One participant proposed including a “wish list” in the annex to address this, while another suggested this “wish list” could be tabled once negotiations were underway.

Patton highlighted key mandates for a successful INC, noting the need for: a mandate to prepare a new legally binding instrument with measurable commitments with enforcement mechanisms; addressing sustainable production and consumption of plastics throughout the full lifecycle; adopting an open mandate; and for negotiations to be concluded quickly before UNEA-6.

One participant called for addressing false solutions and the need for harmonized definitions and best practices, which could be offered under the treaty. Another suggestion included that an advisory group should include traditional innovation given through informed prior consent. Another participant pointed out that poor waste management is an equity issue, because a lot of waste from the north ends up in the south. Heidegger invited



Jane Patton, CIEL

the facilitators to address the session's comments in the joint statement.

**Biodiversity and Nature-Based Solutions:** This cluster was co-facilitated by Clara Gobbe, World Federation for Animals, and Ayman Cherkaoui, MGFC Co-Chair. Introducing the cluster in plenary on Monday, Gobbe said discussions would cover four draft resolutions put forward by the EU, Ghana, Indonesia, and Eritrea on behalf of the African Group, on: the upscaling and strengthened implementation of NbS for supporting sustainable development; interlinkages between human and animal health and welfare; building awareness of and understanding the interlinkages between biodiversity loss and zoonotic diseases; and improving and strengthening sustainable lake management through international collaboration.

On Tuesday, the group discussed the resolution on animal welfare, with broad support for the current text, and with many agreeing it should remain a standalone resolution. In response to comments by a member state that animal welfare was outside the mandate of UNEP, several participants emphasized that addressing animal welfare was integral for fulfilling UNEP's cross-sectoral mandate.

A wide range of opinions were expressed regarding the draft text on NbS. Many expressed reservations regarding: the definition of NbS; adequacy of its current safeguards; accuracy of its promised benefits; and the risk of commodifying nature for the benefit of business interests, while detracting from vital work on systems transformation. Several speakers pointed to the concept of ecosystem-based approaches (EbA) as offering a better alternative given it is clearly defined within the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and covers many relevant benefits promoted under NbS. Nevertheless, some speakers believed in the potential of NbS, calling for placing greater emphasis on strengthening social, economic, and environmental safeguards. The group agreed that further discussion was needed for clarifying a unified response to the NbS terminology.

There was significant support for the biodiversity-health nexus text, with many reiterating the significance of the "One Health" approach in recognizing the linkages between human, animal,

and environmental health and wellbeing. Several participants also called for referring to the importance of shifting food systems away from industrial models towards more regenerative practices.

The draft resolution on sustainable lakes gained broad support, with one participant suggesting, based on the previous discussion, that reference to NbS be replaced with EbA.

**Chemicals and Waste:** This cluster was co-facilitated by Sascha Gabizon, Women's MG, and Sarojeni Rengam, Farmers MG. During plenary on Monday, Gabizon provided an overview of the three draft resolutions in this cluster: an omnibus text on the sound management of chemicals and waste proposed by Switzerland, and co-sponsored by Peru and Thailand; a proposed SPP on chemicals, waste and pollution, co-sponsored by Burkina Faso, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Senegal, Switzerland, Thailand, the UK, and Uruguay; and a draft text on sustainable nitrogen management proposed by Sri Lanka. She observed that the nitrogen resolution is also about the food system, which is out of balance, and further noted chemical aspects of mining and the circular economy. Rengam explained that, globally, pesticides poison 385 million people every year and also contaminate the environment. She expressed disappointment with the brief mention of pesticides in the sound management of chemicals resolution and called for strengthening this resolution.

On Tuesday, Michel Tschirren, Switzerland, provided an update on his country's two proposed chemical resolution. Regarding the omnibus resolution, Tschirren highlighted a call for governments and stakeholders, for the fifth International Conference on Chemicals Management, to put in place a comprehensive and ambitious new instrument to promote and support the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, including effective means of implementation. He also highlighted a focus on covering core issues that require action by UNEP and following up on issues raised at earlier UNEA sessions. He mentioned the proposal to extend the Special Programme on Institutional Strengthening for the Chemicals Cluster for five years and for UNEP to play a significant role in its implementation.

Tschirren also highlighted a reference to UNEP's "Assessment Report on Issues of Concern" in the draft omnibus resolution, which concludes that although progress has been made, global actions are insufficient to address the risk to human health and the environment posed by issues of concern or emerging policy issues.

On the proposed SPP, Tschirren noted that the current state of knowledge on chemicals is insufficient, particularly with respect to the effects on human health and the environment. He also highlighted the lack of accessible information—as acknowledged by UNEA-4—which is one of the gaps the SPP aims to address. He added that intergovernmental science-policy panels exist for climate change and biodiversity, but that chemicals do not have an equivalent scientifically robust process to guide action. He noted that the envisaged panel would aim to use existing knowledge and avoid duplication and that the resolution seeks



Sarojeni Rengam, Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific

clarification from member states on the process needed to establish the panel following UNEA-5.2.

During the ensuing discussion, a question was raised on potential connection between the chemicals SPP and ongoing work under the proposed plastics treaty. In response, Tschirren explained the new panel would be robust, address plastics, aim to break out of silos, and adopt a holistic approach. Another question related to the foreseen role of the panel in overcoming the fragmented discourse on pollution, chemicals, and waste, and giving more visibility to these issues. He explained the panel would also play a role in information sharing and awareness raising.

Olga Speranskaya, International Pollutants Elimination Network, then provided a brief overview of both draft resolutions, highlighting missing elements and suggestions for the MGS statement. On the sound management of chemicals and waste, she highlighted the following missing elements: the absence of the polluter pays principle; no call for a substantial increase of Global Environment Facility financing for the sound management of chemicals and waste; no request to modify the Special Programme's terms of reference to enable access by all relevant stakeholders, including civil society organizations; no specific calls or proposals for action on highly hazardous pesticides (HHPs); and no mention of other issues of concern including chemicals in products.

Speranskaya proposed that the draft resolution should, *inter alia*: call for global action on HHPs including their phase-out from agriculture by 2030; and link to the resolution on circular economy by highlighting the urgent need to strengthen work on chemicals in products in support of a toxic-free circular economy.

Giulia Carlini, CIEL, highlighted what MGS consider to be two important gaps in the proposed omnibus resolution: the need to add a preambular text acknowledging ongoing discussions on innovative financing options for the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM); and the importance of expanding support for the new phase of the Special Programme to more countries and stakeholders. On innovative financing, she highlighted proposals from the African Group for a contribution of a share of profits earned by the chemical industry for chemicals management. In response, Tschirren stressed the complexity of the resolution and welcomed additional comments from MGS via the UNEA-5.2 portal.

On expanding issues of concern under SAICM—such as chemicals in products—he said the issues addressed in the omnibus proposal were based on chemicals identified in UNEP's Global Chemicals Outlook, as requested at UNEA-4, notably lead, cadmium, and arsenic. He acknowledged the slow progress on emerging issues and shared the MGS conclusion that SAICM funding is insufficient. He further noted the important role of the proposed SPP in linking these issues to future work on the circular economy to avoid substituting “worse options.”

Among issues of concern, the discussions, *inter alia*, focused on precise language to: ensure the scientific independence of SPP members, — with safeguards against conflicts of interest; ensure gender and regional balance; include a mechanism for the

systematic consideration of data and knowledge from Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and NGOs; and ensure and recognize that such information may warrant additional data collection according to scientifically established methods and in line with the precautionary principle.

Resuming discussions on Wednesday, Gudi Alkemade and Mapopa Kaunda, Permanent Representatives to UNEP from the Netherlands and Malawi, respectively, and UNEA-5.2 Co-Facilitators for the cluster, reflected on progress. Kaunda expressed satisfaction with participation and efforts being undertaken to revise the resolutions, which he said would facilitate engagement going forward. Alkemade looked forward to revising language in light of comments received. She noted a lot of support for an SPP but said some issues still needed to be ironed out. On the sound management of chemicals and waste, she noted that while there was broad support from member states to extend the Special Programme, no specific comments had been received to date, indicating a lack of engagement.

Eirini Pitsilidi, Compassion in World Farming, introduced the third resolution in the chemicals cluster on sustainable nitrogen management, proposed by Sri Lanka and co-sponsored by the Philippines. She proposed that ambition to halve nitrogen waste from all sources should be strengthened and not just supported. She highlighted that nitrogen waste is a key driver of biodiversity loss, soil depletion, emissions, and water and air pollution. She also called for: a better definition of the principles of the circular economy in relation to nitrogen management; and interconnections between conventions, organizations, bodies, and existing arrangements. Other proposals included:

- making reference to the role of the industrialization of agriculture in nitrogen waste and pollution;
- highlighting the role of animal agriculture and feed production in nitrogen waste and pollution; and
- taking more specific action on citizen and consumer awareness.

Andreas Provodnik, Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, introduced the draft resolution on the circular economy. He



Andreas Provodnik, Swedish Society for Nature Conservation



noted that a key strategy is to address a number of targets in the Sustainable Development Goals. Materials, he said, should be designed in such a way that they can be recovered, reused, remanufactured, or recycled and, therefore, maintained in the economy for as long as possible. On missing elements, he cited lack of reference to the benefits of resource efficient materials, which minimizes the use of raw materials, chemicals, and energy. He added that although the contribution of the chemicals and waste conventions to support the circular economy is recognized, these instruments are not optimal to ensure toxic-free material cycles. He also noted the need to coordinate regulations at the global level to ensure full transparency of hazardous chemicals in materials and products. Provodnik said the resolution should also recognize the need to reduce overall consumption to keep the economy within the planetary boundaries.

Reporting back on the breakout discussions to plenary on Wednesday, Rengam noted the importance of financing for SAICM and the new agreement and for ensuring contributions from the chemicals industry in line with the polluter pays principle. She added a stipulation that funding from industry should not be conditional. A participant called for expanding funding under the Special Programme, and making it accessible to Major Groups. On issues of concern, she noted the absence of recommendations for elevated actions and obligations of stakeholders, especially on HHPs.

On the SPP, she highlighted suggestions to: ensure the systematic consideration of data knowledge from Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and NGOs; include data on preventive and protective provisions in line with the precautionary principle; and gather gender-disaggregated data and address gender-specific hazards in chemicals and waste management.

On the nitrogen management resolution, she highlighted calls for interconnections between conventions, organizations, bodies, and existing arrangements, including the CBD. A suggestion was made to include reference to industrial agriculture and pollution

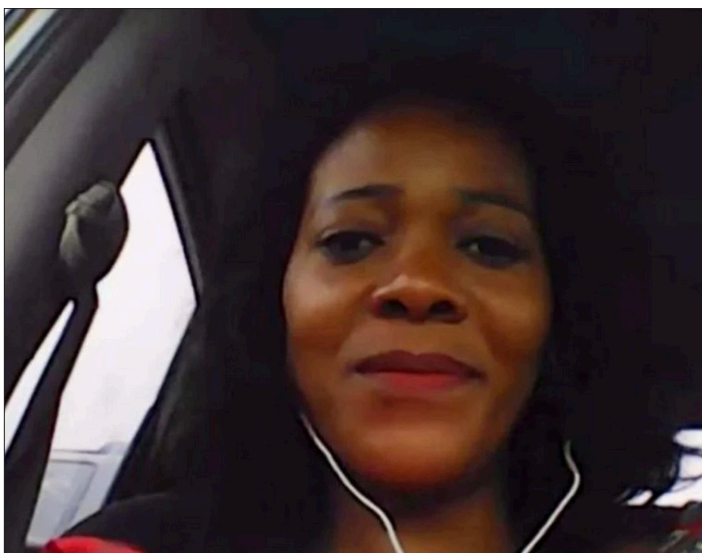
and to replace synthetic nitrogen fertilizers with agronomy practices. The importance of raising consumer awareness around the consumption of high meat diets was also noted. On the chemical aspects of the circular economy resolution, suggestions included aligning it with the omnibus resolution on the sound management of chemicals and waste. The lack of a global cross-sectoral, transparency standard for hazardous chemicals in materials and products was proposed for inclusion.

**Circular Economy and Green Recovery:** This cluster was co-facilitated by Caroline Usikpedo, Niger Delta Women's Movement for Peace and Development, and Bert de Wel, International Trade Union Confederation.

Usikpedo outlined the four draft resolutions under this cluster covering: sustainable and resilient infrastructure to align planning and investments with the SDGs; green and sustainable recovery measures for delivering mutual benefits and co-benefits for integrating inclusive social, economic, and environmental resilience concerns after the pandemic; measures for developing national and regional circular economy strategies and action plans; and addressing the environmental, economic, and social risks ahead of the increase in demands for minerals expected in the coming decades.

During the breakout discussions on Wednesday, discussion focused on options for strengthening the respective texts. Participants began with discussing the draft resolution on measures for developing national and regional circular economy strategies and action plans, submitted by Eritrea on behalf of the African Group. Although showing appreciation for the proposal, participants agreed that the text lacked calls for global coordination, and that it should be aligned with the omnibus resolution on chemicals and waste. Participants also recognized the need to pay attention to transparency measures, and lifecycles, of hazardous materials and chemicals, including closed systems within production cycles to ensure they are kept out of the biosphere. One participant called for explicit mention of biodiversity loss, as well as the need for the regeneration of ecosystems. Several actors agreed too much emphasis was placed on recycling, with not enough attention paid to the durability of products, which is key for achieving circular economy models.

On Wednesday, the group took up the next three resolutions in the cluster. Regarding the text on mineral resource management, submitted by Switzerland, there was general recognition of its importance, especially given the expected increase in mineral extraction to support achievement of some SDG targets, for example those linked to expanding renewable energy infrastructure. Several participants called for greater clarity and enhancement of the role of civil society, including a definition of the term "stakeholder" to ensure inclusion of NGOs, Indigenous Peoples, women, youth, local communities, farmers, and trade unions. Others called for increased reference to issues of global resource justice and democracy in decision making and practice, including equitable use, burden sharing, protection of environmental rights, and transparency of revenue streams. Many agreed that "green and sustainable mining is a myth" and that systemic change is needed in mining practices, in alignment with



Caroline Usikpedo-Omoniye, Women's Major Group

a new economic model that aims to achieve an overall reduction of resource consumption and extraction. One participant also highlighted the growing interest in mining in aquatic spaces, thus calling for focusing not only on terrestrial environments.

Participants generally agreed that the green recovery resolution proposed by Eritrea on behalf of the African Group was an important piece of text. Yet, some called for clearer definitions of certain concepts, especially regarding “just transition.” Calls were also made to include a reference to the “One Health” approach, as well as to the need for aligning work with addressing the triple environmental crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Several supported a suggestion that attention should also be paid to preventing future pandemics, which requires a focus on food systems, and moving away from industrial animal agriculture. Many suggested aligning work with environmental and social concerns, and ensuring infrastructure does not undermine ecological integrity or contribute to biodiversity loss. A few contributions stressed the need for capacity building and technology and knowledge sharing, and for ensuring that financial flows ensure resources reach communities and community-based civil society organizations. One participant stressed the need for clearer action points regarding how theory is translated into practice, as well as exploring complementarity between actions for addressing climate change and biodiversity loss.

Reporting back to plenary, De Wel noted no major conflicts had arisen during discussions, with all resolutions supported and groups mainly looking at how they could be strengthened. This included greater clarity on the various concepts used across the resolutions, for instance when referring to “stakeholders” and “just transition.” Regarding circular economy and mineral management, many supported referring to global resource justice and democracy, as well as greater transparency in resource use and decision making. Several groups called for more explicit reference to addressing biodiversity loss in all resolutions.

**International Environmental Governance:** Discussions on this cluster took place on Wednesday and Thursday, and were co-facilitated by Ingrid Rostad, MGFC, and Leida Rijnhout, Stakeholder Forum. Introducing the resolution on The UNEP

We Want/UNEP@50, Yugratna Srivastava, Children and Youth MG, provided an overview of activities relating to The UNEP We Want report, explaining that work began in October 2020 and involved a two-part survey, interviews with key experts, and communication activities. She explained that the MGS statement on UNEP@50 is also part of the report.

Stephen Stec, Science and Technology MG, highlighted the joint statement and scope of the report. He explained that the drafting process for the joint statement was transparent and open, involving 50 drafters working through various focal points. He noted the need to substantially shorten the draft by streamlining and making it more precise and direct.

Ingrid Rostad outlined preparations for Stockholm+50 in June 2022, noting discussions focus on lessons from 50 years of multilateral environmental governance. Observing there is no UNEA-5.2 resolution on this topic, she said discussions would focus on both MGS perspectives, as well as on the process leading to the global commemoration.

Leida Rijnhout introduced the body of work on international environmental governance and UNGA resolution 73/333 (framework on environmental law and governance). She noted the discussions build on previous UNEA and UNGA agreements on strengthening international governance and law and the outcome the OECPR discussions would be taken up in the UNEP@50 political declaration. Outlining the MGS agenda, she said a strong political declaration will enhance international governance, notably by calling for better coordination of MEAs, increased financing, capacity building, and stronger monitoring and enforcement of environmental laws.

During breakout discussions on Wednesday, Rijnhout observed that environmental governance and law is core business for UNEP. She stressed the need for monitoring and accountability mechanisms at the national level, and recognition of a safe, healthy, and sustainable environment as a human right. She added that national legal frameworks are not always appropriate or effective to assess environmental issues.

She emphasized the need for: a level playing field for corporate behavior; implementation of the human right to a clean, healthy, and safe environment; the need for monitoring tools for enforcement at the national level; coordination of MEAs; and filling in the gaps of existing environmental law. She further observed that the declaration “should be more than words” and initiate an inclusive development of a legally binding framework to strengthen environmental law and governance.

The ensuing discussion focused on: including a reference to ecocide and environmental defenders in the political declaration; and addressing the need for capacity building to ensure that Indigenous and local communities and NGOs are aware of existing environmental laws, can make use of them, and demand implementation at the national level. The challenge of integrating the right science in environmental policies was also considered in the context of addressing emerging issues and unsustainable technologies. The importance of recognizing Indigenous Peoples management of environmental resources was also proposed.



Ingrid Rostad, NGO Major Group





GMGSF participants at the end of the meeting

The case was also made for awareness raising in the lead up to Stockholm + 50.

**Adoption of the Joint MGS Statement on “The UNEP We Want”:** During the final plenary session on Thursday, Stephen Stec, UNEP@50 Task Force, introduced this MGS contribution to the political declaration on UNEP@50. He invited participants to review the document paragraph-by-paragraph, focusing on substantive issues.

One participant pointed out that pollution was not sufficiently reflected. Another noted that reference to UNEP becoming a specialized agency, under the section on strengthening and upgrading UNEP, had been removed. Stec explained that this reference had been omitted as consensus could not be reached. Several participants called for including HHPs in the text and another participant proposed including Farmers amongst the MGS mentioned.

On the coordination, prevention, and management of pandemics, there was a call to mention the critical role of the One Health High-level Expert Council, and the needs for it to be more proactive. There was divergence over the term “sustainable use,” in relation to whether its meaning had been clarified. Stec explained that terminology used would be addressed during the editing process. He clarified that One Health was mentioned in the text, however, cautioning against citing specific initiatives in this particular document.

One participant proposed enhancing the competences of local authorities, while another suggested all capacities should be enhanced including those of civil society organizations.

Paragraphs relating to Indigenous Peoples elicited substantial debate. One participant suggested that recognizing Indigenous Peoples cannot be dependent on them having to carry out conservation, as that goes against their rights to self-determination. Another stated that conservation must be human rights-based. Another participant proposed incorporating language on the use of Indigenous, local, and traditional knowledge in conservation. The proponents were invited to continue this discussion in parallel, revise the text, and present it to the MGFC.

In the context of UNGA resolution 73/333, one participant called for inserting language stating that “member states and other stakeholders should create a ‘coalition of the willing’

supported by UNEP to implement environment law and related instruments.”

Regarding science-policy alignment, there was broad support for a suggestion to include references to the role of social sciences in exploring and addressing the drivers of behavior change, including through influencing consumer habits. The remaining sections of the document, including texts referring to options for strengthening public participation mechanisms in UNEA meetings did not receive significant comments and the draft report was subsequently endorsed by the GMGSF.

**On the Road to Stockholm+50:** On behalf of the Stockholm+50 task force, Ingrid Rostad, MGFC, provided an overview of the preparatory process for the June 2022 commemorative events. Noting UNEA-5.2 will not result in a formal negotiated outcome on the event, she highlighted various opportunities for participation in the lead up to it to strengthen commitments and follow up actions to be agreed in Stockholm. She outlined the three proposed Leadership Dialogues around which discussions will be organized, stressing that achieving impact hinges on implementation on the ground, backed up by financial support, capacity building, and robust enforcement and monitoring of environmental laws at higher levels. The three Leadership Dialogues will focus on:

- reflecting on the urgent need for actions to achieve a healthy planet and prosperity of all;
- achieving a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- accelerating implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development in the context of the Decade of Action.

Yoko Lu and Jin Tanaka, representing the Stockholm+50 youth task force, highlighted participation avenues to ensure inclusive, as well as meaningful, engagement.

**Adoption of the Draft Global Joint Statement towards UNEA-5.2:** Patrizia Heidegger introduced the draft GMGSF outcome. She then guided participants through the different sections, outlining key areas of consensus and divergence, and invited them to adopt the text section by section.

Outlining the preambular section, Heidegger highlighted the importance of enabling transformative change in the relationship between humans and nature, as well as a reference to the newly recognized right to a healthy environment. She further noted that the MGS text expresses disappointment that the issue of sustainable food systems is not on the agenda, stressing the urgent need for this to be tabled at UNEA-6. Heidegger then reviewed the MGS statements responding to each of the UNEA-5.2 resolution clusters. She noted the GMGSF discussions had reached consensus on most resolutions, and invited MGS to continue to provide comments on remaining unresolved texts, specifically the proposed resolution on NbS. Participants discussed at length whether it would be best to move away from the NbS concept and instead reference EbA, which already contains well-established and accepted standards and safeguards under the CBD. Heidegger suggested, and the meeting agreed, that the co-facilitators would draft a new version of the statement.

This would reflect the diverse views of participants regarding NbS, and neither endorse nor reject the draft resolution.

Another issue raised in connection with the Global Joint Statement as a whole was whether to mention the role of faith-based organizations, with one contributor noting a rights-based approach requires that all voices are heard.

Heidegger encouraged participants to continue to provide input until 15 February to allow a task force with representatives from the MGFC and the facilitators of the thematic clusters to finalize the Joint Statement and forward it to UNEA-5.2.

**Closing of GMGSF-19:** Closing the session, Ingrid Rostad expressed appreciation for the excellent facilitation of a lengthy and complex discussions, noting it took “more than a village” to deliver these final outcomes. After a virtual group photo, she declared GMGSF-19 closed at 19:29 EAT.

## Upcoming Meetings

**UNEA-5.2:** This resumed meeting of UNEA-5 will take place under the theme “Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the SDGs.” Its aim will be to connect and consolidate environmental actions within the context of sustainable development and motivate the sharing and implementation of successful approaches. UNEA will also discuss whether to establish an INC towards a new agreement on marine litter and plastic pollution. The in-person session of UNEA-5 will be followed by a Special Session of the UNEA, on 3-4 March 2022, to commemorate UNEP’s 50th anniversary. **dates:** 28 February to 3 March 2022 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** [www.unep.org/environmentassembly/unea5](http://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/unea5)

**Youth Environment Assembly (YEA):** YEA is a collective youth participation in the process of UNEA, facilitated through the Children and Youth MG. It aims to build capacity among children and youth to enhance their understanding of the topics discussed in UN environmental processes, as well as about the structure of, and possible input to, negotiation processes. **dates:** 19-20 February 2022 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** [www.youthenvironment.org/yea](http://www.youthenvironment.org/yea)

**Stockholm+50 Preparatory Meeting:** The topics of dialogue at this meeting will be: (1) reflecting on the urgent need for actions to achieve a healthy planet and prosperity for all; (2) achieving a sustainable and inclusive recovery from COVID-19; and (3) accelerating implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development during the Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs. **dates:** 28 March 2022 **location:** New York, US **www:** [www.un.org/pga/76/2022/02/07/https://www.un.org/pga-76-wp-content/uploads/sites-101-2022-02-letter-from-the-pga-stockholm-prep-meeting-pdf/](https://www.un.org/pga/76/2022/02/07/https://www.un.org/pga-76-wp-content/uploads/sites-101-2022-02-letter-from-the-pga-stockholm-prep-meeting-pdf/)

**The XV World Forestry Congress:** Under the theme, “Building a Green, Healthy and Resilient Future with Forests,” the Congress will follow up on outcomes of major global events including the respective Rio Convention COPs, the IUCN World Conservation Congress, and the UN Food Systems Summit. **dates:** 2-6 May 2022 **location:** Seoul, Republic of Korea **www:** [wfc2021korea.org/index.html](http://wfc2021korea.org/index.html)

**Resumed Intersessional Meetings of the UN Biodiversity Conference:** These resumed sessions are in preparation of the UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP 15). These include the 24th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, the 3rd meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation as well as the third Meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (WG2020-3). WG2020-3 constitutes the final specialized discussions for establishing a draft text for the Global

Biodiversity Framework. **dates:** 13-29 March 2022 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland. **www:** [cbd.int/meetings/](http://cbd.int/meetings/)

**UNCCD COP 15:** COP 15 was originally expected to take place in the final quarter of 2021. Due to the global pandemic, the Bureau decided to reschedule it to sometime between May and October 2022. By a letter dated 14 June 2021, the Government of Côte d’Ivoire confirmed its willingness to host COP 15 during the second and third weeks of May 2022. **dates:** 9-21 May 2022 **location:** Côte d’Ivoire **www:** [www.unccd.int/](http://www.unccd.int/)

**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/](http://government.se/government-policy/stockholm50/)

**Second UN Ocean Conference:** This meeting will see the coming together of participants under the formal title “2022 UN Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.” **dates:** 27 June - 1 July 2022 **location:** Lisbon, Portugal **www:** [oceanconference.un.org](http://oceanconference.un.org)

**High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) 2022:** The 10th session of the HLPF will take place over eight days in July 2022 to review implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. **dates:** July 2022 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** [sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf](http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf)

**UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP 15):** The 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the CBD, the 10th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, and the 4th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing are scheduled to take place to review the achievement and delivery of the CBD’s Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. It is also expected to take a final decision on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, as well as decisions on related topics, including capacity building and resource mobilization. **dates:** third quarter of 2022 (TBC) **location:** Kunming, China **www:** [cbd.int/meetings/](http://cbd.int/meetings/)

For additional upcoming events, see [sdg.iisd.org/](http://sdg.iisd.org/)

## Glossary

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
EbA	Ecosystem-based adaptation
GEO	Global Environment Outlook
GMGSF	Global Major Groups and Stakeholders
HHP	Highly hazardous pesticide
MG	Major Group
MGS	Major Groups and Stakeholders
MGFC	Major Groups Facilitating Committee
NbS	Nature-based solutions
OECPR	Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP
SAICM	Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SPP	Science-policy panel
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme