

Summary of the Fifth Resumed Sessions of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives and the United Nations Environment Assembly and the Commemoration of UNEP@50: 21 February – 4 March 2022

The band has stopped playing and the lights have dimmed. The curtain has come down on “the most successful UNEA session to date.” The resumed fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5.2), which convened under the theme “Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals,” vaulted itself into the history books by adopting a resolution to “End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument.” Another game-changing outcome with far-reaching consequences was the resolution to establish a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution. All in all, 14 resolutions, one decision, and a Ministerial Declaration were adopted, as well as a political declaration commemorating the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). UNEA-5.2 took place in hybrid format in Nairobi, Kenya, and virtually from 28 February - 2 March 2022.

Preceding these meetings, delegates convened in person and virtually for the resumed fifth session of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR-5.2) from 21-26 February 2022, also in Nairobi. They considered the resolutions and decisions, which were then forwarded to UNEA for adoption.

Following UNEA, presidents, high-level officials, and other stakeholders gathered for a special session to commemorate UNEP’s 50th anniversary (UNEP@50) under the theme “Strengthening UNEP for the implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” The two-day special session from 3-4 March 2022 celebrated UNEP’s accomplishments over the past 50 years.

A Brief History of the UN Environment Assembly

UNEA was established in the wake of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in 2012, in response to the grave challenges stemming from environmental degradation, unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, and rising inequality among a global population projected to reach 11 billion by the end of the 21st century.

Origins of UNEA: The UNEP Governing Council (GC) was created as a result of the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, which established UNEP as the central UN node for global environmental cooperation and treaty making through UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution 2997 (XXVII). The UNGA elected 58 members to the GC, based on the principle of equitable geographic representation. The Global Ministerial Environment

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Forum (GMEF) was constituted by the GC, as envisaged in UNGA resolution 53/242 (1998). Whereas the GC had a programme-focused role in reviewing and approving UNEP's activities and budget for each biennium, the GMEF reviewed important and emerging policy issues in the field of the environment.

Some of the highlights from GC/GMEF sessions during the 2000-2012 period include:

- adoption of the Malmö Ministerial Declaration in 2000, which agreed that the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development should review the requirements for a strengthened institutional structure for international environmental governance;
- creation of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management;
- the 2005 Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-Building;
- establishment of the *Ad Hoc* Open-ended Working Group to Review and Assess Measures to Address the Global Issue of Mercury; and
- establishment of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

The twelfth GC Special Session (GCSS-12) from 20-22 February 2012, in Nairobi, Kenya, marked the 40th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP. Rio+20 convened in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from 13-22 June 2012. Its outcome document, "The Future We Want," called on the UNGA to strengthen and upgrade UNEP through several measures, including, *inter alia*:

- introducing universal membership of the UNEP GC;
- ensuring secure, stable, adequate and increased financial resources from the UN regular budget;
- enhancing UNEP's ability to fulfill its coordination mandate within the UN system; and
- ensuring the active participation of all relevant stakeholders.

Following Rio+20, the UNGA adopted resolution 67/213 on strengthening and upgrading UNEP and establishing universal membership of its GC. On 13 March 2013, the UNGA further adopted resolution 67/251, which changed the designation of the UNEP GC to "the UNEA of the UNEP." The GC convened for the last time from 19-22 February 2013, in a universal session that laid the groundwork for the first meeting of UNEA to take place in June the following year.

UNEA thus subsumes the functions of both the GC and the GMEF, and provides high-level leadership on the global stage in a role described by former UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner as "the world's parliament on the environment."

The Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) is the Nairobi-based subsidiary body of UNEA, which meets intersessionally. With the advent of universal membership, the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR) meets in advance of each UNEA session to prepare for the session by negotiating resolutions.

Key Turning Points

UNEA-1: Member States and international agencies hailed the first session of UNEA (UNEA-1), from 23-27 June 2014 in Nairobi, Kenya, as a "coming of age" for global environmental governance. The ministerial outcome document reaffirmed ministers' commitment to full implementation of the Rio+20 outcome as well as the Rio Principles from the 1992 Earth Summit. Delegates called

for continued efforts to strengthen UNEP to support implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, which was then under negotiation.

In a high-level segment, ministers discussed the forthcoming Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including sustainable consumption and production (SCP); and illegal trade in wildlife, focusing on the escalation in poaching and the surge in related environmental crime. UNEA-1 also convened two symposia addressing two key aspects of environmental sustainability: the environmental rule of law and financing a green economy. UNEA-1 adopted 17 resolutions, including resolutions on strengthening UNEP's role in promoting air quality, combating illegal trade in wildlife, and taking action on marine debris and microplastics.

UNEA-2: UNEA-2 (23-27 May 2016) endorsed a draft Global Thematic Report on "Healthy Environment, Healthy People" and adopted 25 resolutions, including one spelling out the roles of UNEP and UNEA in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by providing policy-relevant information through its assessment processes, supporting the work of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). Other resolutions addressed, *inter alia*, food waste, sustainable coral reef management, and protection of the environment in areas affected by armed conflict. Two ministerial roundtables addressed the links between environmental quality and human health and the environment, addressing, *inter alia*, air and water quality, heavy metals, climate change, and marine plastic debris. UNEA-2 also agreed to hold subsequent meetings in odd-numbered years, so as to come into line with the UN budgetary cycle.

UNEA-3: UNEA-3 (4-6 December 2017) met under the theme "Towards a Pollution-free Planet." UNEA-3 adopted 11 resolutions, addressing, *inter alia*, water pollution, soil pollution, lead paint, and management of lead-acid batteries. A resolution on the Sixth Global Environmental Outlook (GEO-6) report emphasized this publication as UNEP's flagship environmental assessment report, and agreed to time its release for UNEA-4. Discussions indicated that GEO-6 would focus more on emerging issues and policy effectiveness than previous publications.

UNEA-3 issued a ministerial statement, which underscored that everyone has the right to live in a healthy environment, and flagged concerns regarding the uncontrolled use of chemicals, the impacts of such pollution on the poor, and the environmental damage caused by armed conflict and terrorism.

UNEA-4: UNEA-4 (11-15 March 2019) convened under the theme "Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production." UNEA-4 coincided with the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum; Science, Policy and Business Forum; Sustainable Innovation Expo; and the Cities Summit. UNEA-4 concluded with the adoption of a Ministerial Declaration, 23 resolutions and three decisions, which addressed shared and emerging global environmental issues. The forum also endorsed the UNEP Programme of Work (PoW) and budget for the 2020-21 biennium, and launched the Sixth Global Environment Outlook report.

UNEA-5.1: UNEA's first online session took place from 22-23 February 2021, adopting a limited set of three procedural decisions: endorsement of the Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2025, and PoW and budget for the biennium 2022-2023; the management of trust funds and earmarked contributions; and agreement to convene

a resumed, in-person fifth session in 2022. The Assembly also launched the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the creation of UNEP by the UN Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1972.

UNEA-5.2 Report

On Monday, 28 February, UNEA 5.2 President Espen Barth Eide (Norway) opened the meeting, reflecting on the half century achievement of environmental protection since the Stockholm Conference, citing UNEP's supporting role in combating ozone depletion, pollution, climate change, and other crises. He reminded Member States that they are not called to relinquish their sovereignty, but to use diplomacy for the common good. He urged delegates to deliver on the noble mission of ending plastic pollution and drawing attention to the importance of circularity, and announced that the meeting's gavel made from recycled plastic was commissioned specially for UNEA-6 from Gjenge Makers, a Nairobi-based recycling startup.

UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen stressed UNEA's responsibility to deliver solutions to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution in times of turmoil, when multilateralism is more important than ever. She applauded the hard work and progress achieved on various resolutions during the resumed session of the fifth meeting of the OECPR the previous week, highlighting the need to address plastic pollution by delivering a historic environmental agreement.

Zainab Hawa Bangura, Director-General, UN Office at Nairobi, called for sustainable and inclusive COVID-19 recovery, setting the world on a path towards prosperity for all. Stressing the opportunity to reflect on the past and envision the future, she underscored that unity of purpose is required to address the triple planetary crisis.

Keriako Tobiko, Cabinet Secretary for the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Kenya, warned that the consequences of our actions in destroying, commoditizing, and privatizing nature have had a profoundly negative effect on our lives. He underscored the principles of stewardship and intergenerational equity, and urged action on the ground for the benefit of communities worldwide.

Senegal, for the AFRICAN GROUP, expressed appreciation for the remarkable work accomplished ahead of UNEA-5.2. He referred to 2022 as "an African year for the environment," recalling that Africa would take up the presidency of UNEA-6. He noted that a successful commemoration of UNEP's 50th anniversary would send a signal to the world on the importance of UNEP for the global environmental agenda.

The EUROPEAN UNION (EU), also for BULGARIA and UKRAINE, expressed disapproval of the Russian Federation's act of aggression towards a neighboring country, calling on the Russian Federation to deescalate, dialogue, unconditionally withdraw, and fully respect Ukraine's sovereignty. On UNEA-5.2, he anticipated successful negotiations on a legally binding instrument (LBI) on plastic pollution, and a new science-policy panel on chemicals, waste and pollution. He asserted that the time is right and that UNEA is the right place to adopt a resolution on nature-based solutions (NBS).

Exercising the right of reply, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION stressed that for the past eight years, "the Kiev regime has sabotaged the Minsk Agreement, shelling the Donbass area, killing civilians,

and destroying infrastructure," and lamented that the EU had not intervened to alleviate people's suffering in Donbass.

Colombia, on behalf of the GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA (G-77/CHINA), highlighted the opportunity presented by UNEA-5.2 to strengthen international environmental action to address the triple planetary crisis, particularly efforts to tackle global plastic pollution.

Oman, for the ASIA-PACIFIC GROUP and the LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES, stressed that urgent action is required to prevent plastic pollution, informed by circular economy principles. He noted that because of the COVID-19 pandemic, some countries in the region require support to enable a transition to more sustainable pathways.

Chile, for the LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN GROUP (GRULAC), reaffirmed their commitment for ambitious outcomes at UNEA, emphasizing that this would be measured by the ability to trigger necessary change, including ensuring adequate means of implementation and supporting those particularly vulnerable to the triple planetary crisis.

MAJOR GROUPS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS presented the outcomes of the 19th Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum held online from 7-10 February 2022, which, among others, welcomed negotiations on a LBI on plastic pollution, and the adoption of a stand-alone resolution on the animal welfare–environment–sustainable development nexus.

The FARMERS' MAJOR GROUP lamented the absence of the word "farmer" in all the resolutions forwarded to UNEA. He highlighted farmers' rejection of the market-based solutions proposed at the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit, which failed to recognize traditional food systems.

The INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' MAJOR GROUP highlighted the need to recognize rights of Indigenous Peoples as part of NBS and called for inclusion of their group in the political declaration of UNEA 5.2.

The WOMEN'S MAJOR GROUP expressed concern over the lack of prioritization of the rights of women, noting the importance of addressing land tenure rights in resolutions on NBS and mineral resource management.

The SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COMMUNITY MAJOR GROUP reported on the Scientists' Declaration on the Need for Governance of Plastics Throughout their Life Cycles from a webinar held on 16 February 2022, which highlights that a robust global treaty for plastics is required to address the impacts of plastics on climate, biodiversity, human health, and the environment.

The WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS MAJOR GROUP highlighted the need to recognize the role and interest of local recyclers in plastics management.

The MAJOR GROUP FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH highlighted the Global Youth Environment Assembly held under the auspices of UNEA-5.2 proved that youth have true power and the ability to catalyze change, and urged the adoption of a landmark resolution on plastics.

The BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY MAJOR GROUP highlighted the resolutions on plastics and the sound management of chemicals, stressing that the business community is committed to being part of the solution.

Election of Officers: The Assembly elected Silvano Tjong-Ahin Minister of Spatial Planning and Environment, Suriname, as Vice-President.

The Assembly elected Andrea Meza Murillo, Minister of the Environment and Energy, Costa Rica, as COW Chair and Selma Haddadi, Permanent Representative to UNEP, Algeria, as COW Rapporteur.

UNEA President Eide noted that the COW would have to conclude its work on Tuesday, 1 March, and report back to the Assembly the next day. He deferred consideration of agenda items on international environmental policy and governance issue, and the agenda and dates of UNEA-6 to the COW. He further deferred consideration of credentials to closing plenary on Wednesday, 2 March.

Adoption of Agenda and Organization of Work: The Assembly adopted the agenda (UNEP/EA.5/1/Rev.2) and organization of work (UNEP/EA.5/1/Rev.2/Add.1).

Credentials: On Wednesday, 2 March, President Eide reported that 122 states had submitted formal credentials, and 41 had not communicated the necessary information regarding their representatives to the Assembly. The Assembly adopted the oral report.

The report of this meeting presents an account of the UNEA-5.2 plenaries and a summary of the resolutions and decisions discussed under the OECPR and as taken up by the UNEA Committee of the Whole (COW). It is organized into the five clusters in which they were originally discussed in the OECPR, which opened discussion on all the resolutions and decisions. The five clusters were: plastic pollution; biodiversity and NbS; chemicals; green recovery and circular economy; and procedural matters.

Report of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

On Monday, 28 February, OECPR Chair Luisa Fragoso (Portugal), reported on the work of the OECPR and its outcomes (UNEP/EA.5/INF/2/Rev.1). She noted that the UNEA-5.2 draft ministerial declaration had been endorsed and would be presented to the Assembly. She highlighted tireless efforts to progress on the draft resolutions, particularly over the weekend, noting that five resolutions had either been approved or merged, explaining that agreement had now been reached on the following: the sound management on chemicals and wastes, and on creation on the creation of an INC for plastics. She added that 13 draft resolutions would be put before COW. Chair Fragoso reported that following informal consultations, the draft political declaration on the Special Session of UNEA to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP had also been approved, subject to confirmation of one preambular paragraph by one delegation.

Committee of the Whole

The Committee of the Whole (COW) convened on Monday and Tuesday, 28 February and 1 March. COW Chair Andrea Meza Murillo (Costa Rica) opened the meeting, and announced that Tuesday was a “hard deadline” for the completion of the Committee’s work. Acting UNEP Deputy Director Sonja Leighton-Kone stressed the need to take the state of the environment seriously and called on the COW to agree on resolutions to enhance global environmental protection. Delegates adopted the agenda (UNEP/COW.5/1).

International environmental policy and governance issues: Under this agenda item, delegates attending both the OECPR and the COW discussed draft resolutions and decisions. They met in cluster and contact group settings from Monday, 21 February, to Tuesday, 1 March 2022.

Cluster 1: This cluster comprising of resolutions on plastic pollution was co-facilitated by Damptey Bediako Asare (Ghana) and Robert Bunbury (Canada) during the OECPR.

International LBI on [marine] plastic pollution: Delegates considered a Co-Facilitators’ draft resolution on an international legally binding instrument on [marine] plastic pollution, which reflected the merging of the two draft resolutions by Peru and Rwanda, and Japan, as recommended by the CPR during the intersessional period.

The group discussed the scope of the proposed instrument, diverging on: whether a future instrument would be legally binding, voluntary or both; whether the instrument would address marine plastic pollution or plastic pollution more generally; and whether it would include marine litter. There was also no convergence on the timeframe for the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC), which would be established to negotiate an LBI on plastic pollution. Delegates debated on whether the INC could feasibly conclude negotiations before UNEA-6. After a lengthy discussion, delegates agreed to request the Executive Director to convene an INC during the second half of 2022 with the ambition of completing its work by the end of 2024.

Delegates considered, *inter alia*, language proposed by the EU, and supported by THAILAND, UK, and CANADA, on the design of plastic products as part of a full lifecycle approach, in order to improve their material and chemical composition towards extending product life. INDIA, BRAZIL, and JAPAN noted the duplication of text already included in the draft.

On the scope of the resolution, the ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES (AOSIS) and the AFRICAN GROUP, supported by the EU, proposed that the INC develop an instrument on “plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.” The group agreed on this proposal and to both binding and voluntary approaches, taking into account the principles of the Rio Declaration, and based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full lifecycle of plastics. After some discussion, delegates agreed to note the specific impacts of plastic pollution on the marine environment in a separate paragraph.

Delegates also agreed to text recognizing the contribution made by workers under informal and cooperative settings to collecting, sorting, and recycling plastics in many countries, proposed by ARGENTINA.

The framework for addressing plastic product pollution including single-use plastic product pollution:

Delegates addressed this resolution submitted by India. On Thursday, 24 February, INDIA agreed to merge this proposal with the Co-Facilitators’ draft. For more on this discussion, please see the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* daily reports from [22](#) and [23](#) February 2022.

During the OECPR closing plenary, Co-Facilitator Bunbury reported that the group would continue its work to complete this resolution before UNEA-5.2. Delegates met through the weekend in informal discussions, finally reaching consensus at 1:00 am on Monday, 28 February. They resolved the most pressing issues on scope related to the INC, renaming the resolution “End plastic

pollution: Towards an internationally legally binding instrument.” On Wednesday, 2 March, during UNEA’s closing plenary, delegates adopted the resolution.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution, “End plastic pollution: Towards an internationally legally binding instrument” (UNEP/EA.5/L.23/Rev.1), UNEA requests the Executive Director to convene an INC, commencing its work during second half of 2022, with the ambition of completing its work by the end of 2024.

UNEA also, *inter alia*, decides that the INC should develop an international LBI on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, which could include both binding and voluntary approaches, based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full lifecycle of plastic, taking into account among other things, the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, as well as national circumstances and capabilities, and provisions to, among others:

- specify the objectives of the instrument;
- promote sustainable production and consumption of plastics, including, among others, product design, and environmentally sound waste management, including through resource efficiency and circular economy approaches;
- promote national and international cooperative measures to reduce plastic pollution in the marine environment, including existing plastic pollution; and
- develop, implement and update national action plans reflecting country-driven approaches to contribute to the objectives of the instrument.

UNEA further requests the Executive Director to convene an *ad hoc* open-ended working group to hold one meeting during the first half of 2022 to prepare for the work of the INC.

Cluster 2: Co-Facilitated by Dragan Županjevac (Serbia) and Sergio Salazar Alzate (Colombia), this group met during the OECPR and discussed resolutions on biodiversity and health, the animal welfare–environment–sustainable development nexus, and NbS for sustainable development.

Biodiversity and health: Delegates considered a draft resolution on biodiversity and health submitted by Eritrea, on behalf of the African Group. On measures to be taken by the Executive Director to assist states, the EU, supported by ARGENTINA and the UK, called for emphasizing the importance of mainstreaming the One Health approach both nationally and globally. BRAZIL supported and proposed “including other holistic approaches” and the “development of vaccines in accordance with access and benefit sharing obligations.” ARGENTINA, supported by the US, proposed deleting reference to response measures and the development of vaccines based on genetic resources.

Regarding language on data availability, health surveillance, and prompt responses, the EU, supported by NEW ZEALAND and the UK, proposed encouraging actions that have positive benefits on the environment, given the links between human, animals and ecosystems. The UK called for instituting actions to strengthen the availability, quality, and timelines of data surveillance “not limited to humans but also animals, livestock and plants.” ARGENTINA, CHINA, and BRAZIL expressed reservations with this paragraph, saying issues of data availability and health surveillance are not within UNEP’s mandate. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION said the issues should be discussed by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Under prevention measures, delegates discussed several options including enhancing provision of ecosystem services related to health (BRAZIL), public health considerations (CANADA and the US), and addressing antimicrobial resistance and reversing biodiversity loss (EU). Addressing public health risks from wildlife trade, EU called for ensuring adequate sanitary controls for consumption of wild meat.

Delegates discussed welcoming the Kunming Declaration of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), eventually deciding to welcome the “holding of the first part of the CBD’s fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CBD COP 15), in Kunming, China, from 11-15 October 2021, under the theme proposed by the host, “Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth.” They further agreed to preambular language looking forward to an ambitious, transformative, balanced, effective, and practical post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

Delegates agreed to language on reducing health risks associated with trade in live wildlife through regulation of their commerce, and ensuring the sustainable and safe consumption of wild meat, including adequate sanitary controls in food markets trading in live wild animals. They also considered a new text proposal, *inter alia*, recognizing the importance of “easy, rapid, and unrestricted” access to genetic resources for scientific and technological advances in the health-related sectors, which several delegates argued were against provisions in the CBD and conservation values. Delegates also discussed whether to refer to “animal,” “plant” and “ecosystem” health, or all three, in relation to the threats caused by the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme climate events. During the closing plenary, Co-Chair Županjevac reported that the group had reached consensus. The COW forwarded the resolution on biodiversity and health to UNEA for adoption.

On Wednesday, 2 March, the Assembly adopted the resolution.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution on biodiversity and health (UNEP/EA.5/L.11), UNEA requests the Executive Director to:

- encourage actions that have positive benefits on the environment;
- institute actions to enhance the availability, quality and timeliness of data for monitoring and surveillance, capacity and capability across One Health sectors;
- foster cooperation in the context of pandemic preparedness, prevention and response and more broadly in the context of health-related research and development; and
- support Member States and members of specialized agencies, upon their request and subject to national circumstances, to assess the environmental dimensions of health and to highlight these matters in the forthcoming global plan of action for One Health.

The resolution also, *inter alia*, calls on Member States to:

- mainstream and coordinate the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity into sectoral policies and programmes to enhance ecosystem resilience, and halt and reverse biodiversity loss;
- foster cooperation to reduce the risk of, and manage spillover events and zoonotic disease outbreaks, break the sequence of transmission, and rapidly and transparently respond to prevent epidemics and pandemics;
- promote the effective participation of developed and developing countries in health-related biotechnological research activities;

- implement and work towards compliance with access and benefit sharing frameworks, where appropriate, to contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity;
- strengthen links between biodiversity conservation, sustainable use and public health in sectoral policies and in accordance with the One Health approach;
- reduce health risks associated with trade in live wildlife captured for the purposes of food, captive breeding, medicines, and the pet trade; and
- provide, as appropriate, voluntary extrabudgetary financial resources to support the implementation of the present resolution.

Nature-based solutions for sustainable development:

Delegates considered a draft resolution on NbS for supporting sustainable development by the EU. They debated the appropriate wording for linking biodiversity loss, climate change, desertification, and land degradation, with opinions mainly split between “interdependencies” or “interlinkages.”

The group deleted language on the potential of NbS to address drivers of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation. They agreed on language identifying options for supporting sustainable investments in NbS and sharing information on multilateral and bilateral sources of finance for developing countries to develop and deploy NbS. Divergence of opinions remained on language around assessing existing and discussing possible new “criteria, standards, and guidelines for the implementation of NbS.”

At the end of the contact group discussions, a regional group suggested that the definition of NbS, contained in the first operative paragraph of the draft resolution, be replaced with language denoting that there is no internationally agreed definition on NbS. Following an evening session in the contact group, all paragraphs were agreed, other than the first operative paragraph containing the definition. Following further deliberations during the late evening on Tuesday 1 March, delegates were able to agree on the definition and Co-Chair Županjevac reported that the group had reached consensus. The COW forwarded the resolution on NbS for supporting sustainable solutions to UNEA for adoption. On Wednesday, 2 March, UNEA adopted the resolution.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution on NbS for supporting sustainable development (UNEP/EA.5/L.9), UNEA requests UNEP to convene intergovernmental consultations to, *inter alia*:

- compile examples of best practices of NbS;
- assess existing and discuss possible new proposals, criteria, standards, and guidelines to address divergences with a view to reaching a common understanding among Member States for the implementation of NbS; and
- identify options for supporting sustainable investments in NbS and share relevant information.

UNEA calls upon Member States and UNEP, in collaboration with others, to follow a country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory, and fully transparent approach, when designing, implementing, and monitoring NbS.

Animal welfare–environment–sustainable development nexus: Delegates considered a draft resolution on the animal welfare–environment–sustainable development nexus submitted by Ghana. This draft was co-sponsored by Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Senegal, and South Sudan. BRAZIL proposed a formulation recognizing the importance of protecting wildlife for achieving the 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development. Regarding a reference to the unsustainable use of domestic and wild animals as a key driver of the triple environmental crisis, ETHIOPIA preferred to keep the reference to animals as general as possible while BRAZIL, the US, ARGENTINA, and the UK called for deletion of this text.

The UK proposed quoting language recognizing the conclusions of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) report on Biodiversity and Pandemics, stating that increased contact between human and wildlife and livestock as the result of human activities is increasing the risk of zoonotic disease emergence and spread. BRAZIL reiterated reservations over ambiguity relating to the species envisaged by the resolution, as well as the relationship between wildlife and food security, preferring to delete language on this. The UK, with the EU, called for referencing the One Health approach, which was opposed by BRAZIL.

Responding to an objection from BRAZIL, but supported by the US, CANADA, SOUTH AFRICA, and the UK, ETHIOPIA clarified that the objective of the resolution is to request the Executive Director to prepare a nexus report on animal welfare, the environment, and sustainable development. BRAZIL, the US, and ARGENTINA expressed reservations with language requesting the Executive Director to encourage UNEP’s contribution to the extended Tripartite Alliance (UN Food and Agriculture (FAO), Organization, World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), and WHO) and bring on UNEP as an equal partner. UNEP provided an update on the status of UNEP joining the Tripartite Alliance, explaining that UNEP is a full member of the One Health High Level Expert Panel, which focuses on zoonotic disease and pandemic prevention. After further discussions, the group finalized the draft resolution.

During closing plenary of the OECPR, Co-Facilitator Županjevac reported that the group had completed discussions on the draft resolution. Delegates forwarded this draft to UNEA for adoption. On Wednesday, 2 March, the Assembly adopted this decision.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution on the animal welfare–environment–sustainable development nexus (UNEP/EA.5/L.10/Rev.1), UNEA, *inter alia*:

- acknowledges that animal welfare can contribute to address environmental challenges, promote the One Health approach, and achieve the SDGs;
- notes that the welfare and health of animals, sustainable development, and the environment are connected to human health and well-being, and acknowledges that there is an increasing need to address these links through the One Health approach, among other holistic approaches;

The resolution requests the Executive Director to produce a report in close collaboration with the Tripartite Alliance and the One Health High Level Expert Panel, which will:

- analyze the nexus between animal welfare, the environment, and sustainable development;
- identify key partners and stakeholders to consult, where relevant, on the preparation of the report; and
- prepare a summary of the findings for the consideration by Member States.

The resolution also requests the Executive Director, to:

- submit the report for peer review by Member States;

- work in partnership with the OIE, FAO, and WHO, through its strengthened relationship with the Tripartite Alliance, including on matters of animal welfare and its nexus with human health and the environment from a One Health approach; and
- report to UNEA-6 on the findings of the report.

Sustainable lake management: Delegates considered a draft resolution on sustainable lake management submitted by Indonesia. They discussed language recalling SDG target 6.5 (water resources management) and reaffirming the importance of the management and protection of lakes at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation. The group further debated reference to, as appropriate, consistency with relevant UN water conventions, bilateral, international, and multilateral agreements.

After a lengthy discussion, they provisionally reached agreement on language: recognizing that transboundary lakes may be subject to relevant bilateral, international, and multilateral agreements, in which case sustainable lake management efforts should be pursued under their respective agreements; and recalling SDG target 6.5 to, by 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation, as appropriate.

During the closing plenary, Co-Facilitator Županjevac reported that the group had not reached consensus, and that Indonesia was consulting with UNEP's legal counsel on the resolution. COW Chair Murillo called on delegations to make progress on this draft, and on this basis, the COW forwarded the resolution on sustainable lake management to UNEA for further consideration. Following informal consultations, delegates agreed on the draft resolution.

UNEA adopted the resolution on Wednesday, 2 March.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution on sustainable lake management (UNEP/EA.5/L.8), UNEA requests Member States and others to undertake and implement:

- protection, conservation, and restoration as well as sustainable use of lakes through integrated management at all levels;
- integration of lakes into national and regional development plans;
- involvement of all stakeholders;
- research and scientific guidance; and
- development of international networking and collaboration, for integrated sustainable and climate resilient lake management.

UNEA further requests UNEP to take action on:

- supporting the advancement of sustainable lake management at all levels in coordination with relevant conventions;
- facilitating collaboration among Member States and other in research, capacity building, and knowledge sharing; and
- advancing the mainstreaming of sustainable lake management in the relevant global agenda and awareness raising at the global level.

Cluster 3: This group met during the OECPR and was co-facilitated by Gudi Alkemade (the Netherlands), and Mapopa Kaunda (Malawi). They considered resolutions related to the science-policy panel to support action on chemicals waste and pollution, sound management of chemicals and waste, and sustainable nitrogen management.

Science-policy panel to support action on chemicals, waste and pollution: Delegates considered a draft resolution on the sound management of chemicals and waste submitted by Switzerland.

SWITZERLAND introduced the draft, explaining that this resolution is motivated by the need to, *inter alia*, engender cooperation with other environmental regimes that have established science-policy interfaces, like the IPCC and IPBES. URUGUAY and COSTA RICA supported the draft, approving its recognition of the human right to a healthy environment.

Delegates addressed the functions of an *ad hoc* open-ended working group established to initiate discussions on the science-policy panel. They considered new text giving the working group the task of establishing procedures to ensure the panel's transparency, with many supporting proposals that the panel should also be neutral. One delegation proposed, supported by many, that the panel's work should be "impartial," rather than "neutral," as referenced in the text.

Delegates engaged in a lengthy debate about whether the panel should be an independent body, with some calling for UNEP to provide support to ensure the panel can focus on its core mandate. Others stressed that the panel should not be a subsidiary body of an international organization or a multilateral environmental agreement.

They addressed the scope of the proposed science-policy panel, a core issue of contention. The group considered suggesting that the science-policy panel be established to support action on pollution and sound management of chemicals and waste.

Reporting back to the COW closing plenary on Tuesday, 1 March, Co-Chair Alkemade announced that the group had finalized their work on the resolution, crafting a delicate balance on the title: the Science-Policy Panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution. The COW forwarded the draft to UNEA. On Wednesday, 2 March, the Assembly adopted the resolution.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution for a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution (UNEP/EA.5/L.14), UNEA, *inter alia*:

- decides that a science-policy panel should be established to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution;
- considers that the panel should be an independent intergovernmental body with a programme of work approved by its member governments to deliver policy relevant scientific evidence without being policy prescriptive;
- decides to convene, subject to the availability of resources, an *ad hoc* open-ended working group that will commence in 2022 with the ambition of completing its work by the end of 2024;
- decides that the *ad hoc* open-ended working group will prepare proposals for the science-policy panel to consider the following issues: the institutional design and governance of the panel; the name and scope of the panel; and the principal functions set out in the resolution, while respecting the mandates of relevant multilateral agreements and other international instruments and intergovernmental bodies, avoiding overlap and duplication of work and promoting coordination and cooperation.

Sound management of chemicals and waste: Delegates considered a draft resolution on the sound management of chemicals and waste submitted by Switzerland, Peru, and Thailand. SWITZERLAND introduced the draft resolution, highlighting the proposal to extend the mandate of the Special Programme on Chemicals and Waste, and called for further discussions on UNEP's

report “Making Peace with Nature.” BRAZIL and the RUSSIAN FEDERATION proposed deleting reference to the report. The US strongly suggested only retaining parts of the text related to the Special Programme.

Delegates agreed to consolidated text proposed by NORWAY and the UK, noting that the Sound Management of Chemicals and Wastes and the International Conference on Chemical Management commits to strengthening and supporting the achievement of the target set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle.

SWITZERLAND proposed welcoming the significant role played by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and encouraged donors to continue and enhance their support. BRAZIL, supported by URUGUAY, and ARGENTINA, opposed by the US, proposed text on improving access modalities for developing countries.

Regarding the terms of reference for the Special Programme to support institutional strengthening for the sound management of chemicals at the national level, CHILE suggested amending the text to include support provided to developing countries that have graduated from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee. The EU and UK expressed reservations, with the UK noting that this language would go against their development cooperation criteria, and the US adding that they are not prepared to renegotiate the terms of reference at this late stage.

The EU, supported by NORWAY and SWITZERLAND, suggested three additional paragraphs regarding: the issue of impacts of pesticides and fertilizers, including highly hazardous pesticides; updating the report on the *State of Science of Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals*; and addressing asbestos contamination.

During informal discussions over the weekend, the group reached consensus. The COW forwarded the resolution to UNEA. On Wednesday, 2 March, the Assembly adopted the resolution.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution on the sound management of chemicals and waste (UNEP/EA.5/L.13), UNEA, *inter alia*:

- expresses great concern with the unsound management of chemicals and waste and its negative impacts on human health and the environment, given that the use of chemicals and the amount of waste generated will grow substantially over the coming years;
- emphasizes that a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is important for the enjoyment of human rights;
- recognizes the need to take further action to reduce or eliminate the risks associated with the chemicals and waste issues discussed in the Assessment Report on Issues of Concern;
- expresses concern that increasing levels of illegal transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and other waste, as reported by developing countries, pose disproportionate negative impacts, and invite the parties of the Basel Convention to consider this issue further;
- welcomes the significant role played by the GEF and invites it, and encourages donors to the GEF trust fund, to continue and enhance their support for the sound management of chemicals and waste; and
- encourages the Executive Board of the Special Programme to review procedures for application for funding, including those

related to operating costs with a view of promoting an effective and efficient application of the eligibility criteria, in light of the needs and challenges by developing countries.

The resolution also requests the Executive Director to, *inter alia*:

- in cooperation with the WHO, update the report on the state of the science of endocrine disrupting chemicals by UNEA-6;
- report to UNEA-6 on the implementation of the resolution and on the programme of work with respect to chemicals and waste; and
- in cooperation with the WHO, present a full range of options to address asbestos contaminants in products and the environment for consideration by UNEA-6.

Sustainable nitrogen management: Delegates considered a draft resolution on sustainable nitrogen management submitted by Sri Lanka. During the first reading, SRI LANKA agreed to calls by several Member States to delete reference to the monetary savings that would result from halving nitrogen waste. However, she insisted on an ambition to halve nitrogen waste by 2030, with ARGENTINA, US, JAPAN, CANADA, and BRAZIL insisting on the term, “significantly reduce.” The US suggested referring to “by 2030 and beyond.”

SRI LANKA also proposed, and the group agreed, to retain language related to the reduction of nitrogen waste, and encouraging “Member States to share information on national action plans available according to national circumstances.”

Regarding a reference to actions by the UNEP Executive Director, the US expressed reservations about supporting the development of national action plans, noting, *inter alia*, financial constraints. In response, SRI LANKA, suggested including “subject to available resources.”

On the issue of whether to “continue to contribute to significantly reduce nitrogen waste,” following discussions between IRAN, the US, and SRI LANKA, delegates agreed to “accelerate actions to significantly reduce nitrogen waste.”

The EU proposed the addition of text to emphasize that food security is dependent upon the sustainable use of nutrients.

In a spirit of compromise, SRI LANKA suggested, and delegates agreed, to delete reference to “post-COVID recovery.”

During the OECPR closing plenary, Co-Facilitator Alkemade reported there was agreement. On Wednesday, 2 March, the Assembly adopted the resolution.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution on sustainable nitrogen management (UNEP/EA.5/L.12/Rev.1), UNEA encourages Member States to accelerate actions to significantly reduce nitrogen waste globally by 2030 and beyond through the improvement of sustainable nitrogen management, and to share information on national action plans.

The resolution requests UNEP to:

- support Member States in the development of national action plans for sustainable nitrogen management, subject to the availability of resources;
- identify possible modalities for options being considered for improved coordination of policies across the global nitrogen cycle at the national, regional, and global levels, including an intergovernmental coordination mechanism for nitrogen policies; and
- present to the CPR at its 159th meeting, an update on the implementation of intergovernmental coordination mechanism,

as well as a roadmap for further implementation in the period leading up to UNEA-6.

The resolution further invites Member States to nominate focal points to join the UNEP's working group on nitrogen, and report to UNEA-6 on progress achieved in implementing UNEA resolution 4/14 on sustainable nitrogen management.

Cluster 4: This group met during the OECPR and was co-facilitated by Firas Khouri (Jordan), and Ana Elena Campos Jiménez, (Costa Rica). They considered resolutions on sustainable and resilient infrastructure, mineral resource governance, green recovery, and circular economy.

Sustainable and resilient infrastructure: Delegates considered a draft resolution on sustainable and resilient infrastructure submitted by Mongolia. BRAZIL, SOUTH AFRICA, and others expressed reservations on language on international cooperation to establish common frameworks and mechanisms for financing and implementing resilient infrastructure. The EU proposed including reference to environmental assessments to support integration of environmental considerations into decision making. SWITZERLAND, supported by EGYPT and MONGOLIA, preferred reference to environmental impact assessments.

On prioritizing investment in natural infrastructure, the US suggested referring to green infrastructure. The EU and UK advocated for NbS, opposed by several Member States who reserved their position pending the conclusion of Cluster 2 deliberations on NbS. Later in their discussion, delegates agreed to a compromise on references to NbS by giving it less prominence in operative text, but ensuring adherence to previously agreed language.

Several delegates proposed alternatives to “climate proof” infrastructure, including: climate resilient infrastructure (EGYPT and SOUTH AFRICA), sustainable infrastructure (ARGENTINA and BRAZIL), and environmentally and socially sustainable infrastructure (UK).

Delegates also agreed to use the term “natural infrastructure,” instead of “green infrastructure.” Many said the phrase “potential ecosystem-wide environmental impacts of infrastructure” was dense and agreed to “all potential environmental impacts of infrastructure projects.”

On aligning infrastructure planning and investment with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, delegates considered including the key areas of concern, namely climate, biodiversity, pollution, and desertification, and agreed to avoid lengthy discussions by not listing multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) in the text. The group completed review of the resolution and forwarded it to the COW for further action. On Wednesday, 2 March, the Assembly adopted the resolution.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution on sustainable and resilient infrastructure (UNEP/EA5/L.15), UNEA encourages Member States and other stakeholders to, *inter alia*:

- consider integrating and operationalizing the ten “International Good Practice Principles for Sustainable Infrastructure” into national policies;
- implement existing tools, such as guidelines and best practices, including those developed under or endorsed by MEAs, and co-develop further knowledge products;
- cooperate internationally to strengthen frameworks, including for financing, for sustainable and inclusive infrastructure; and

- consider the role of digital infrastructure in enabling SCP patterns.

The resolution also encourages Member States to:

- conduct strategic and environmental impact assessments so environmental considerations are integrated into decision making;
- promote investment in natural infrastructure, nature-based solutions, and environmentally, socially and economically sustainable health infrastructure; and
- provide opportunities for the engagement of relevant stakeholders, including local communities, vulnerable people, and Indigenous Peoples.

The resolution requests the Executive Secretary to:

- promote the implementation of existing tools, such as guidelines and best practices that have been developed under or endorsed by MEAs;
- work with Member States and the UN system to support sharing of experiences, peer-to-peer learning, and technical assistance, capacity building, and training on sustainable infrastructure in the long-term;
- facilitate private sector engagement in planning and developing, and mobilizing finance for sustainable and resilient infrastructure;
- invite the International Resource Panel to advance efforts for connecting science and policy for sustainable infrastructure;
- support implementation of the Principles by translating them for application to specific sub-systems of infrastructure and for the private sector and other stakeholder groups; and
- continue collecting and sharing best practices, tools, and experiences for improving the sustainability of infrastructure systems, and to submit this information in a report to UNEA-6.

Mineral resource governance: Delegates considered a draft resolution on mineral resource governance submitted by Switzerland. SOUTH AFRICA, ALGERIA, and CHILE said the alignment of mining practices with sustainable development should be in the context of a just transition. CHINA proposed including reference to “building forward better” rather than “building back better” after the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to put emphasis on a green and circular recovery. The EU and UK supported retaining agreed language, “building back better and greener.”

On reducing impacts from mineral extraction, several delegations suggested edits, including on impacts on water resources (UK), impacts from offsite processing (CHINA and the US), and impacts on human health (ZAMBIA). Views diverged on establishing an Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on mineral resource governance. SOUTH AFRICA, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, and ALGERIA, opposed by the US, the EU, ZAMBIA, and SWITZERLAND, expressed reservations, questioning whether it is within UNEP's mandate to prescribe policy options on minerals.

The EU sought clarification on the context of “just transition,” and proposed language on “accelerating the alignment of mining practices and investments in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, opposed by the US and CHILE. ALGERIA questioned the appropriateness of the wording “urgently” and “accelerate,” and expressed challenges, in the absence of a collective understanding on the envisaged intergovernmental working group, for analyzing the environmental impacts of mining mineral resources.

Delegates also agreed to rename the draft “environmental approach to minerals and metals management.” After informal consultations, delegations reached consensus, and forwarded the draft to the COW. On Wednesday, 2 March, the Assembly adopted the resolution.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution on environmental aspects of minerals and metals management (UNEP/EA.5/L.18), UNEA, *inter alia*:

- underlines the specific environmental challenges related to artisanal and small-scale mining, and their related health risks;
- stresses the need for enhancing action to support the environmentally sustainable management of minerals and metals and recognize the regulatory and administrative capacity challenges faced by countries;
- acknowledges that clean technologies, highly dependent on metals and minerals, are important for combatting climate change and stresses the important contribution that the sustainable management of metals and minerals makes to achieving the 2030 Agenda;
- encourages Member States and invites relevant stakeholders active along the full lifecycle of minerals and metals, to align mining practices and investments with the 2030 Agenda; and
- requests the Executive Director, subject to available resources, to convene transparent, and inclusive, intergovernmental regional consultations to feed into a global meeting with the aim of developing non-prescriptive proposals to enhance the environmental sustainability of metals and minerals along the full lifecycle.

The consultations will:

- take stock of existing activities and actions from the public and private sector and other relevant stakeholders, and identify, *inter alia*, technical tools, best practices, standards, guidelines, environmentally sustainable technologies, use of renewable energy in mining, and responsible business practices;
- identify opportunities for enhanced international cooperation, including with a view to fostering capacity building, technological, technical and scientific cooperation in the mining sector, in particular with developing countries; and
- identify possible ways forward for consideration at UNEA-6, as appropriate.

The Executive Director is also requested to report to UNEA-6 on the progress achieved in the implementation of the resolution, including a summary reporting on the consultations.

Green Recovery: Delegates considered a draft resolution on green recovery submitted by Eritrea on behalf of the African Group. ARGENTINA proposed bracketing reference to “green” in the title. BRAZIL preferred replacing “green” with “sustainable” recovery while the UK suggested “environmentally sustainable” in lieu of “green.”

Turning to operative paragraphs, BRAZIL expressed reservations with the use of the term “natural capital,” maintaining that it is not agreed language. He also proposed adding language on mobilizing adequate resources and the means of implementation for developing countries. The US and the EU opposed this, maintaining that this resolution is applicable to all countries.

Negative impacts from COVID-19 on human health, safety, and wellbeing occupied a major part of the discussions, with some noting the need to include reference to the poorest and most vulnerable as the hardest hit by the pandemic.

Delegates agreed to refer to “sustainable recovery” and not “green recovery” in the text, and to provide its definition in the context of the resolution, as referring to “recovery that is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.” Some suggested referencing UNGA resolution 75/1 entitled “Declaration on the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the UN” that noted the “historic opportunity to build back better and greener.” Delegates proposed deleting potentially contentious paragraphs in the spirit of moving forward and proceeded to delete rather than reopen such paragraphs. Consultations on this resolution continued late into the night on Tuesday 1 March.

During the closing COW plenary, Co-Chair Jiménez reported the group had completed the draft resolution on the environmental dimension of a sustainable resilient and inclusive post-COVID-19 recovery, formerly titled “green recovery.”

On Wednesday, 2 March, UNEA adopted the resolution.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution on the environmental dimension of a sustainable, resilient and inclusive post COVID-19 recovery (UNEP/EA.5/L.16), UNEA, *inter alia*:

- notes with concern that the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed down the progress in achieving the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs;
- reiterates that the COVID-19 pandemic has not changed the urgency of addressing the environmental dimensions of sustainable development but on the contrary has accelerated the need for the world to take urgent action to address the environmental crises and to strengthen the long-term sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery from COVID-19;
- encourages Member States to strengthen measures to achieve a sustainable, resilient, and inclusive global recovery, including, but not limited to, continuing to enhance actions to combat climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, and implementing the 2030 Agenda, taking into account national circumstances;
- calls upon Member States to share knowledge and build capacity, especially in developing countries, in the areas of research and development, technological innovation to help improve information sharing, and technical support for an inclusive, resilient, and sustainable recovery;
- requests the Executive Director to support countries, through the reinvigorated Resident Coordinator System and the reconfigured UN country teams, on information, knowledge and capacity development and technical support, for a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient recovery;
- requests the Executive Director to share best practices, provide peer-to-peer learning and technical assistance to countries, especially developing countries, to support efforts for resource mobilization for strengthening and upscaling country’s efforts on sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery measures; and
- encourages the private sector and multilateral financial institutions to continue to support countries whose economies have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic for a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery.

Circular Economy: Delegates considered a draft resolution on circular economy submitted by Eritrea on behalf of the African Group. ANGOLA introduced the resolution, highlighting the call for rapid solutions, means of implementation, capacity building, and technology transfer to address the full life cycle of waste.

BRAZIL proposed strategies and action plans to promote more sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

The EU called for measures and tools for product design in favor of lifetime extent, repair, reuse and easy recycling, and to guide responsible consumer choices.

The MAJOR GROUP FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH urged lowering the levels of production and consumption, and an open exchange of knowledge practices. The WOMEN'S MAJOR GROUP called for an equitable green recovery through reduced inequalities and catalyzing a just transition to support achieving the SDGs. Discussing preambular text recognizing that a resource efficient and circular economy is one sustainable economic model among others for achieving SCP and contributing to the 2030 Agenda, delegates differed on whether to add a list of MEAs, agreeing to including "and other relevant MEAs."

Several delegates cautioned against overstating the circular economy approach, maintaining that it is part of a bigger picture of SCP. On international exchanges and shared experiences, they agreed to note, in this context, the establishment of regional and global initiatives, and delete reference to the Global Alliance for the Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency.

Debate ensued over language referring to "meeting the basic needs of an ever-increasing population." There was also disagreement over the usage of "just and inclusive" in the context of a "just transition," with some delegates preferring to emphasize "supporting livelihoods." Following lengthy discussions, they agreed not to mention the launching of the Global Strategy on SCP at the UNEP@50 and Stockholm+50 meetings.

COW contact group Co-Chair Firas Khouri reported on Tuesday, 1 March that the group had reached consensus on the draft resolution, and delegates forwarded it to UNEA. On Wednesday, 2 March, the Assembly adopted the resolution.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution on enhancing circular economy as a contribution to achieving sustainable consumption and production (UNEP/EA.5/L.17), UNEA invites Member States to:

- integrate circular economy approaches in relevant national and regional strategies and action plans;
- take measures, in cooperation with the private sector, to enhance the design of products to favor product lifetime extension, repair, re-use, and easier recycling in the context of circular economy;
- cooperate with relevant organizations and networks on sharing and discussing best practices on relevant product information along value chains;
- promote and enhance circular economy approaches as well as business models, innovations and investments to contribute to, *inter alia*, sustainable management, use, and consumption of natural resources and materials; and
- improve the predictability of and enhance access to support, such as sustainable finance, environmentally sound technologies for the uptake of circular economy and other approaches to SCP.

The resolution recognizes the importance of inclusive multilateral and multi-stakeholder dialogues on SCP, resource efficiency, and circular economy to promote sustainable development.

The resolution requests UNEP Executive Secretary to:

- continue collecting information and conducting further analysis on the issue of used vehicles and clean fuels and to reduce related negative environmental and health related impacts;
- facilitate the collaboration among Member States and members of UN Specialized Agencies in research, capacity building, knowledge management, and sharing of best practices for the promotion of innovative pathways for SCP, including circular economy; and
- report to UNEA-6 on the implementation of this resolution.

Cluster 5: This group met during the OECPR and was co-facilitated by Marek Rohr-Garztecki (Poland), and Saqlain Syedah (Pakistan). They considered resolutions related to the future of the GEO and compliance with the principle of equitable geographic distribution in the composition of the UNEP Secretariat.

The future of the Global Environment Outlook: Delegates considered a draft resolution on the future of the GEO, proposed by the Secretariat. During discussions, delegates agreed, among others, to include text recognizing the establishment of a steering committee on the topic. One delegation expressed reservations on text recognizing the role of relevant and legitimate expert-led dialogues to support decision making to achieve transformation to a sustainable future consistent with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. On the GEO process and flagship reports, some requested three parts: one on the GEO's role; a second on contributions of experts worldwide to the reports; and a third on outcomes of consultations expressing strong support for continuation of the GEO process.

On the core function of the future GEO process, a few proposed deleting language on supplementing intergovernmental and expert-led assessments, where needed, with other relevant international assessments. There were differing opinions on whether to keep reference to a synthesis of global assessments as part of the process. Other delegations supported language on basing the outputs of the GEO process on a transparent and inclusive clearance and scoping procedure through an intergovernmental review process.

Delegates agreed that the GEO will require core funding for its process and core functions, noting that extrabudgetary resource mobilization cannot be discussed before establishing the other functions and activities.

On Friday, 25 February, delegates agreed to forward the resolution to UNEA. On Wednesday, 2 March, during UNEA's closing plenary, delegates adopted the resolution.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution on the future of the Global Environment Outlook (UNEP/EA.5/L.20/Rev.1), UNEA reaffirms the GEO objective and aim. It requests UNEP to establish an *ad hoc* intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder advisory group and prepare GEO-7 to be submitted at a future UNEA session no sooner than 2025. UNEA decides that the GEO process should identify intergovernmentally-defined needs and terms to support capacity building, knowledge generation, and policy making. UNEA further requests UNEP, with guidance from the intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder advisory group, to:

- convene an intergovernmental, multi-stakeholder, and expert meeting to create a set of procedures that reflects the objectives and core function of GEO;
- conduct a nomination and selection process for external experts, who will contribute to GEO;
- ensure GEO draws from the best available evidence;

- establish a multidisciplinary expert scientific advisory group responsible for overseeing the scientific integrity of the GEO process;
- develop a flexible multi-year work plan and time bound budget, setting out a programme of activities, such as assessments and support services;
- strengthen the science-policy interface by developing for each assessment a scoping document and a summary for policy-makers and approve the undertaking of intergovernmental and expert led assessments approved by UNEA; and
- continue the GEO fellows programme for youth.

UNEA further requests UNEP to administer the GEO process and periodically consult with the CPR on important elements.

Compliance with the principle of equitable geographic distribution in the composition of the UNEP Secretariat:

Delegates considered a draft resolution on compliance of equitable geographical representation and balance in the secretariat of UNEP, submitted by the Russian Federation.

Delegates agreed to rephrase the title to reflect the importance of “recruiting staff on as wide geographic basis as possible.” They discussed two alternative titles for the draft resolution: “due regard for the importance of recruiting staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible” proposed by the UK and US; and “due regard to the principle of equitable geographical distribution, in accordance with paragraph 3 of Article 101 of the Charter of the UN,” proposed by the EU. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION confirmed they would be willing to negotiate based on the EU option but requested that this discussion be taken up after consensus had been reached on the content.

The EU suggested text welcoming the UNEP report to UNEA 5.2 pertaining to the application of the principle of equitable geographical distribution in its recruitment strategy. CHINA and BRAZIL called for citing that in the report UNEP admits to having challenges in achieving progress due to absence of equitable representation. SWITZERLAND, the EU, and US objected to singling out elements from the report. The UK and US, opposed by BRAZIL, CHINA, and the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, proposed deleting language emphasizing the fundamental importance of compliance with the principle of equitable geographic distribution within UNEP to enhance, *inter alia*, global environmental multilateralism.

Delegates debated text reaffirming that no post should be considered the exclusive preserve of any state or group of states. The UK, EU, and the US questioned whether these conditions really existed. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION, supported by BRAZIL, justified that the text is from agreed language from UN General Assembly resolution 42/220.

The EU proposed text recognizing the capacity of states to promote UN vacancies among their nationals, and to support suitable candidates. CHINA, supported by the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, said the problem has not been the inability of states to support candidates and, with others, proposed building capacity for competitiveness of underrepresented states for these posts.

SWITZERLAND proposed moving a reformulation on ensuring “gender balance” in addition to “geographical distribution” to a preambular paragraph. The EU suggested “as wide a geographical basis as possible while maintaining gender parity.” The RUSSIAN

FEDERATION opposed linking gender with geographical distribution, maintaining that the two issues are distinct, inviting the EU and Switzerland to table a separate resolution on gender.

Delegates considered language on ensuring that a single regional group of states does not occupy more than one third or 20% of all professional posts by 2025. Opposing this, the UK, supported by SWITZERLAND, said appointments should be made on merit. He proposed alternative language on “increasing the representation of unrepresented and underrepresented states and less represented regional groups as set out in Executive Director’s report...” Opposing this, the US, supported by JAPAN and SWITZERLAND, stated that hiring is on a country-by-country basis and has nothing to do with geographical or regional groups and so it was not appropriate for the CPR to set quotas or reinterpret the UN’s hiring principles.

The EU, opposed by MALAWI, BRAZIL, SIERRA LEONE, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, and SOUTH AFRICA, proposed a new paragraph encouraging Member States, in particular those underrepresented among UNEP staff, to promote relevant job openings in the UNEP with matching candidates.

During the OECPR closing plenary, Facilitator Marek Rohr-Garztecki reported that the draft resolution had been bracketed in its entirety. UKRAINE expressed strong opposition to the resolution, noting that discussions showed there was no consensus on the content. He said that the Russian Federation’s invasion of Ukraine poses a direct threat to the health of people and the environment across the world, and questioned the Russian Federation’s participation in OECPR discussions. In response, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION said that UNEP is not the right place to discuss issues of bilateral concern. He said the draft resolution had good consensual potential, highlighting the importance of addressing the issue of geographic representation in order to ensure implementation of the SDGs.

The EU said the draft presented misleading concepts and ideas to undermine UN entities and, supported by the UK, added that the resolution should be dealt with by the Fifth Committee of the UN General Assembly. The US said that the text undermines UNEP’s hiring practices, adding that recruitment complaints should be handled on a country-by-country basis. In response, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION said that the working group had worked in a congenial spirit to build consensus on the draft. He expressed willingness to withdraw sponsorship from the draft so discussions on the important issues raised in the resolution could continue.

On Monday, 28 February, Co-Chair Rohr-Garztecki noted that the former sponsors had withdrawn, and the draft resolution was now a Co-Chairs’ draft. Delegates lifted general reservations and successfully tackled outstanding language issues to reach consensus. On Wednesday, 2 March, the Assembly adopted the resolution.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (UNEP/EA.5/L.19), UNEA requests UNEP to:

- enhance application of the UN Charter in all questions relating to the composition of the Secretariat;
- pay due regard to the importance of recruiting staff from as wide a geographical basis as possible, and recruitment of nationals of unrepresented and underrepresented states;
- implement the four-point plan of the UNEP’s report on human resources, and report its implementation to the CPR;

- continue sharing with the CPR all senior professional job openings within the UNEP Secretariat;
- ensure equal treatment of job applicants for the respective job openings irrespective of the educational systems through which they received their qualifications required for the respective job position; and
- foster transparency and accountability in implementing this resolution and continue the existing practice of reporting to the CPR.

The resolution also encourages Member States to collaborate with the UNEP Secretariat to promote vacancies among their nationals, and requests UNEP to report on the implementation of the resolution at UNEA-6.

Adoption of the Ministerial Declaration

On Wednesday, 2 March, UNEA President Eide presented the draft Ministerial Declaration (UNEP/EA.5/L.24) entitled, “Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the SDGs.” This draft was considered by the OECPR, guided by Co-Facilitators Ado Lõhmus (Estonia) and Saqlain Syedah (Pakistan).

This draft had been discussed informally during the OECPR. After highlighting two edits, regarding reference to the outcomes of the 26th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Glasgow Climate Pact, the upcoming CBD COP15, and calling for an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework, the Assembly adopted the Declaration.

Final Outcome: In the UNEA-5 Ministerial Declaration (UNEP/EA.5/L.24), the Ministers of Environment recognize the need for transformative and systemic changes, and for policies that address several environmental, economic and social challenges simultaneously. The Ministers commit to:

- building on the strength of innovation, science and knowledge, capacity building, and investment in green and sustainable technologies;
- promoting an inclusive and sustainable recovery, and a green and just transition, with the goal of revitalizing our economies and livelihoods and ending poverty;
- undertaking work across sectors and levels of government, and among governments, to halt loss, degradation and fragmentation of ecosystems;
- promoting comprehensive land and water use planning with robust national enforcement as an important tool for sustainable development;
- promoting the conservation and sustainable use and management of natural resources and to advance SCP patterns;
- safeguarding life under water and restoring a clean, healthy, resilient and productive ocean capable of providing food, sustainable livelihoods, and storing carbon;
- pursuing and joining new and innovative partnerships across sectors, and engaging all relevant stakeholders, working with youth, women, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and with the business, finance, education and science sectors;
- relying on the knowledge gained from the recent scientific assessment of IPBES, IPCC, the International Resource Panel, and UNEP, and encouraging enhanced collaboration among scientific panels; and

- undertaking to cooperate across sectors and levels of government, in partnership with other governments and local actors and the private sector, to transition to sustainable food systems.

Stakeholder Engagement

Speaking for MAJOR GROUPS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS, Ayman Cherkaoui, Mohammed VI Foundation for Environmental Protection, expressed appreciation for the work by Member States, although lamenting the fact that the Ministerial Declaration did not make reference to the human right to a clean and healthy environment. He welcomed the resolution for establishing an LBI on plastic pollution, and looked forward to an inclusive and participatory process in its preparatory work and in the INC. He further welcomed the work on chemicals, lamenting the lack of global action on pesticides, which threaten the health of farmers, and the lack of commitment to halve nitrogen waste by 2030. He stressed that even though UNEA has passed ground-breaking resolutions, the real work begins now with implementation and enforcement at the national level. He called on Member States to bridge the gap between words and actions.

Contributions to the Meetings of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

UNEA President Eide proposed, and delegates agreed, to defer consideration of this issue to a future meeting of the CPR.

High-level Segment

On Wednesday, 2 March, the high-level segment convened under the theme “Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the SDGs.” UNEA-5 President Eide opened the meeting, stating “this is a day for the history books,” and commended delegates for providing UNEA the tools to reset the human relationship with nature, with a solid treaty on plastics, and a science-policy panel on chemicals, waste, and pollution, among other successes.

UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed noted the ever-widening divide between the developed and developing world. She remarked that, “our health, economies, and future depend on our ability to make our future sustainable,” commending UNEA delegates for their efforts towards this endeavor.

UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen highlighted “the amazing job done by negotiators,” agreeing on numerous resolutions and catalyzing action to address the triple planetary crisis. She underscored that a global agreement on plastics will shift the needle and create real world impact,” calling for implementation support at the highest political level.

Felix Moloua, Prime Minister, Central African Republic, on behalf of Faustin-Archange Touadéra, President, Central African Republic, focused on actions and initiatives at the national level to support the transition to a sustainable future. He noted that environmental and socio-political challenges compromise the resilience of communities, and stressed that urgent, ambitious, and synergistic actions are needed to address existential threats.

Keriako Tobiko, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Kenya, on behalf of Uhuru Kenyatta, President of Kenya, stressed that the science is crystal-clear on the impacts of anthropogenic pressure on the planet, noting that “we have crossed planetary limits, and threatened the stability of global ecosystems.”

He highlighted the agreed draft resolutions, calling for “wholesome, multifaceted approaches” and strategic actions to address the environmental degradation.

Additional statements can be found at [unep.org/environmentassembly/unea-5.2/statements](https://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/unea-5.2/statements)

Provisional Agenda and Dates of UNEA-6

Regarding the draft decision on the date and venue of UNEA 6, delegates considered the options for future meetings proposed by the Secretariat, which carry consequences for the timing of presidency cycles, with several stressing the need to uphold the principle of equality. Discussions took place under Cluster 5 according to the organization of work for the OECPR and the COW.

Delegates considered the options for future meetings of UNEA-6 and UNEA-7, taking place either in: 2024 and 2025; 2024 and 2026; or 2025 and 2027. Technical difficulties also arose with regards to the PoW and budget, as well as aligning the next UNEA with the schedule for completing, or providing an update report for, GEO-7. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the original schedule of UNEA meetings, which envisaged biannual meetings on odd years.

During the closing plenary, the Secretariat reported that the group had reached consensus on the draft decision. The COW endorsed the decision and on Wednesday, 2 March, the Assembly adopted the decision.

Final Decision: In the final decision on the date and venue for UNEA-6 (UNEP/EA.5/L.21), the Assembly decides that UNEA-6 will take place from 26 February – 1 March 2024 and OECPR-6 from 19-23 February 2024 at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. Regarding the date and venue for UNEA-7, the Assembly urges UNEA-6 to keep in mind the cycle of UNEA meetings and the recommended time between UNEAs (decision 2/22 and UNEA rule of procedure 1) and the need to approve the Medium-Term Strategy and the PoW and budget in 2025.

The Assembly further:

- approves the provisional agenda for UNEA-6;
- requests the Bureau to define a theme;
- strongly encourages Member States to submit draft resolutions for consideration;
- decides to extend the PoW 2022-2023 by two years up to the end of 2025; and
- decides to adjust the logo and visual identity of UNEP, as agreed.

Election of Officers

Delegates elected by acclamation Leyla Benali, Minister of Energy, Transition, and Sustainable Development, Morocco, as UNEA-6 President. They further elected the following UNEA-6 Vice Presidents: Abdou Karim Sall, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, Senegal; Jafar Barmaki, Ambassador, Iran; Malik Amin Aslam, Minister for Environment, Pakistan; Ján Budaj, Minister of Environment, Slovakia; Joaquim Leite, Minister of Environment, Brazil; Carlos Eduardo Correa, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, Colombia; Zac Goldsmith, Minister for Pacific and the Environment, UK; and João Pedro Matos Fernandes, Minister of Environment and Energy Transition, Portugal. Delegates also elected Oleksandr Krasnolutsky, Ukraine, as UNEA-6 rapporteur.

Incoming UNEA President Benali congratulated UNEA-5 President Eide for his leadership and stewardship, noting the meeting set the right expectations for UNEA-6. She stressed the

need to translate the resolutions into concrete action and emphasized that multilateral cooperation and international solidarity, “must become the engines to build the world that we want to leave to our children.”

Adoption of the Report and Closure of UNEA-5.2

Rapporteur Barbara Creecy (South Africa) presented the draft report of UNEA-5.2 (UNEP/EA.5/L.25), noting it will be finalized following the inclusion of the summaries of national statements. Following review by Member States and after the closure of the session, the final report will be published in all official languages. Delegates adopted the report pending revisions.

The EU stressed that UNEA-5.2 is a historic success, recognizing the work of all involved in the negotiations to come up with concrete results to face the triple planetary crisis. She highlighted numerous resolutions, and underscored the invasion of Ukraine, calling for strengthening multilateralism and diplomacy to deal with the challenges. MEXICO congratulated all for a historic result that “signifies our common vision to address the environmental and other crises based on international cooperation and towards justice, sustainable development, and well-being for the people and the planet.”

UKRAINE highlighted UNEA-5.2 as a success and expressed readiness to fight for the environment. He condemned Russia’s invasion of his country, noting that “when these international terrorists leave, we will rebuild our country,” and called on the international community to stand with Ukraine.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION, exercising a right of reply, stressed that, for the past eight years, “war has raged in Eastern Ukraine with 12,000 people killed by Ukrainian soldiers and neo-Nazi units.” He emphasized that through the years, the Russian Federation has sought a peaceful, diplomatic solution, while the international community stood silent, adding that his country is trying to stop a war.

THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO observed “without peace we cannot protect the environment,” and noted the need to bear in mind the specific needs of each country when prioritizing the circular economy.

KENYA reflected on the “tears of joy, celebrations, tears of hope, not only about plastics but on all resolutions that this session has approved.” He added, “our children are celebrating, we have given them hope and told them that we care and that we have the courage and determination to put aside our own parochial brinkmanship.” He commended the UNEA Presidency, the Bureau, the Committee of Permanent Representatives, and paid tribute to all those who worked in the background to make this meeting a success. He concluded that there is no better birthday present to UNEP turning 50, than the successful conclusion of UNEA-5.2.

UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen congratulated delegates, saying, “Today the world and our grandchildren can look proudly upon us, as those that decided to end the scourge of plastics for all!”

In closing remarks, UNEA-5 President Eide declared, “We wrote history today!” He expressed great pride for presiding over such a momentous meeting and expressed a deep honor at being able to use a gavel made of recycled plastic to end the meeting. He gaveled the meeting to a close on Wednesday, 2 March, at 6:28 pm.

Report of the Special Session Commemorating UNEP@50

On Thursday, 3 March, UNEA-6 President Leila Benali (Morocco) opened UNEP@50, and introduced the overall theme, “Strengthening UNEP for the implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” She introduced the meeting’s agenda (UNEP/EA.SS.1/1 and UNEP/EA.SS.1/1/Add.1), which was adopted. She also introduced the organization of work, including two high-level leadership dialogues and a multi-stakeholder dialogue, which was adopted. Delegates then watched a commemorative video on UNEP@50. During the session, delegates were treated to several musical interludes, including performances by the Red Forth choir and the Kenyan band, Sauti Sol.

Credentials: On Friday, 4 March, UNEA-6 President Benali reported 114 Member States had submitted formal credentials, and 39 had not communicate any information regarding their representative to the Assembly. The Assembly adopted the report.

High-level statements: On Thursday, 3 March, UNEA-6 President Benali said that in order to move forward “we need to unpack the past,” and outlined UNEP’s environmental achievements since its creation. She emphasized that the celebration of UNEA@50 is also a celebration of multilateralism and an opportunity to continue the conversation on ways to scale up achievements over the next 50 years. She concluded by saying, “UNEP’s forefathers left us the responsibility to build a better world” and challenged delegates to swing the pendulum to the next level.

Via video message, UN General Assembly President Abdulla Shahid congratulated UNEP on its 50 years at the forefront of environmental action, highlighting the Programme’s achievements. He drew attention to a high-level debate on “A Moment in Nature,” held in July 2022, noting that youth are integral to discussions about the environment and sustainable development.

Via video message, UN Secretary-General António Guterres lauded UNEP for 50 years of raising the alarm on environmental threats. He underscored the importance of addressing new challenges related to chemicals and pollution, including plastic pollution; called for global decarbonization in every sector; and stressed the need for increased financial and technical assistance to enable developing countries to implement MEAs.

Collen Vixen Kelapile, President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), underlined UNEP’s achievements, including on awareness raising, environmental advocacy, and education, and the formulation of MEAs. He stressed that addressing the triple planetary threats of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution aligns with COVID-19 recovery strategies.

UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen reminded participants of the “Stockholm giants” whose words and deeds laid the foundations for environmental multilateralism, which continue to guide the way in tackling the triple planetary crisis. She invited delegates to reflect on the significant achievements since the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment, and to strengthen their resolve in fulfilling the long list of actions needed for sustainable and equitable transformation.

Mokgweetsi Masisi, President of Botswana, welcomed the opportunity to reflect on historic achievements and ponder future challenges and ways forward, calling on countries to strike a balance

for sustainable development. He reaffirmed Botswana’s commitment to multilateralism and appealed to the international community to prioritize incentivizing successes in conservation.

Muhammadu Buhari, President of Nigeria, reiterated that no country or continent can address the triple planetary crisis alone, expressing his assurance that more success would be recorded as countries journey in collective struggle under the guidance of UNEP.

Uhuru Kenyatta, President of Kenya, celebrated UNEP’s extraordinary environmental journey over the last 50 years, commending the Programme for “steering the environmental ship through troubled waters and remaining focused on implementing its mandate.” He congratulated UNEA-5 for its achievements, including the resolution on plastic pollution. Kenyatta also highlighted the UN Office in Nairobi (UNON) as the only UN headquarters in the Global South, and announced planned developments around UNON, including the provision of land for humanitarian and logistical activities. He concluded by announcing a new biannual award, *Amani na Mazingira* (peace and environment), for championing environmental sustainability and peace.

Alexander Van der Bellen, Federal President of Austria, via video, stressed that much has been achieved during UNEP’s trajectory, highlighting the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and its Montreal Protocol. He urged a strong UNEP to act faster than ever to address the triple planetary crisis and achieve the SDGs.

Iván Duque Márquez, President of Colombia, via video, underscored his country’s commitment to contribute to the path towards sustainability, stressing the need for synergies between MEAs and ensuring no one is left behind.

HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco, via video, highlighted past successes, noting that progress cannot conceal current ecosystem degradation. He urged for economic models based on recovery rather than irresponsible exploitation and stressed the need to resort to science to inform political decisions.

Zuzana Čaputová, President of Slovakia, via video, highlighted UNEP’s main mission to be the environmental consciousness of the world, and emphasized UNEA-5’s successes, particularly the resolution on plastics.

Mohammed Mokhber, Vice President, Iran, expressed hope that UNEP would be able to strongly pursue its mandate in the coming years. He drew attention to challenges experienced resulting from “inhumane sanctions,” which, he said, are impeding timely actions for protecting the environment.

Via video message, Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Prime Minister of Namibia, congratulated UNEP for reaching a landmark milestone, pointing to this as an opportune moment for the global environmental community to reflect the past and envisage the future.

Magdalena Andersson, Prime Minister of Sweden, via video message, recalled the 1972 Stockholm Conference as ushering in a new era for the environment and the subsequent establishment of UNEP with the first and only UN headquarters in the Global South. She stressed that there is no excuse for inaction, science has provided all the evidence, and UNEP’s work is more important than ever.

In a video address, Nayok Rattamontri Raththa, Prime Minister of Thailand, called for enhancing the role of UNEP in collaboration with the MEA secretariats and through UNEP regional offices to tackle environmental crises internationally.

Djatougbe Aziaka, Welfare, Togo, for MAJOR GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDERS, issued a statement on the “UNEP We Want,” and called for: strengthening the role of environmental governance and access to justice; transparency in corporate funding; addressing environmental equity and justice; enhancing UNEP support for a clean and healthy environment; and following recommendations on UNEP engagement with Major Groups and Stakeholders.

For additional statements, please see unep.org/events/unep-event/unep-50

Report on the Science-Policy Interface

On Thursday 3, March, UNEP Executive Director Andersen presented the Secretariat note on the progress on enhancing the science-policy interface of UNEP (UNEP/EA.SS.1/2). Highlighting the annex “Reflecting on the Past and Imagining the Future,” she reported a persistent lag between scientific evidence generation and policy action, noting that any successes achieved in MEAs so far are evidence of the power of multilateralism to bolster policy into action. Presenting recommendations, she mentioned the need to: close the time gap between science and policy through real-time information on threats and solutions; put solutions at the forefront of the science-policy interface; engage with all types of information sources including Indigenous and traditional knowledge; and accelerate digitization as an accelerator for communication and engagement. Delegates took note of the report.

Stakeholder Report on “The UNEP We Want”

On Thursday, 3 March, Yugratna Srivastava, Major Group for Children and Youth, said the UNEP We Want report is an epitome of the strength and diversity of views of Major Groups and other Stakeholders on how UNEP can be more effective in delivering upon its mandates in the future. She reminded delegates that “time is ticking; we do not have the next 50 years to solve the environmental crisis.”

Stephen Stec, Scientific and Technological Community Major Group, summarized the report’s message in three key words: diversity, equity, and recognition. Stec explained that the report has been an incredible example of intergenerational cooperation. He called for recognizing the diversity of interests represented by Major Groups and other Stakeholders, who have often been forced to speak in one voice. He urged for a more effective engagement of UNEP with the grassroots and actors at the local level.

Adoption of the Political Outcome of the Session

On Thursday, 3 March, UNEA-6 President Benali introduced the draft Political Declaration of the Special Session of UNEA to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP. Consultations on the draft began intersessionally prior to UNEA-5.2 and were completed during the OECPR. Delegates adopted the declaration.

Final Outcome: In the Political Declaration of the Special Session of UNEA (UNEP/EA.5/L.26), Heads of State and Government, ministers and high-level representatives commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP, and acknowledge with appreciation its contribution in supporting a worldwide effort to overcome the planet’s biggest environmental challenges. They also, *inter alia*:

- recognize that a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is important for the enjoyment of human rights;

- recognize the urgent need and common objective to reinforce and advance conservation, restoration and sustainable use for present and future generations;
- reaffirm that eradicating poverty, changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production and promoting sustainable ones, are the overarching objectives of, and essential requirements for, sustainable development;
- recognize the importance of fostering environmental rule of law and effective international environmental governance through multilateral processes, as well as the crucial importance of effective domestic legal frameworks and governance structures for promoting compliance with obligations under international environmental law;
- call for renewed efforts at all levels to enhance implementation of existing obligations and commitments under international environmental law;
- renew their support for strengthening collaboration and cooperation between multilateral environmental agreements and UNEP, while respecting their independence and respective mandates;
- support the strengthening of UNEP and its regional presence, underlining the importance of universal membership, and stress the importance of advancing equitable geographic distribution and gender parity among the staff of the Secretariat;
- support the key role of UNEP in promoting and strengthening the science-policy interface in order to support intergovernmental debate, negotiations, deliberations, and policy decisions relating to international environmental law and governance;
- recognize the importance of access to information, access to public participation in decision-making processes, and access to justice in environmental matters; and
- call upon Member States and members of specialized agencies to enhance the provision and mobilization of all types and sources of means of implementation, including capacity building, technology and financial support.

Leadership Dialogues

Looking Back: 50 years of UNEP: On Friday, 4 March, Maria Ivanova, University of Massachusetts, Boston, US, moderated the session focused on UNEP’s achievements, contribution to multilateralism, international cooperation, and the science-policy interface. Setting the scene, Achim Steiner, Administrator, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), praised UNEP for “punching above its weight” in terms of providing scientific insights, analyses and GEO reports, rooted in its genesis on the African continent. He added that if UNEP had not been established in Nairobi, the global environmental agenda would not have evolved in the way it has. He lauded UNEA as the “universal voice of the world,” convening and advancing the environment agenda. Reflecting on the future, he noted that adding more legal instruments will result in “diminishing returns,” calling for evolving the model of environmental governance. He concluded by noting that, in a world full of conflict and failures, the environment may be one of the few agendas, at the worst possible time, that can bring everyone together.

Donald Kaniaru, Former Chief of Staff, former Director of the Law Division, Ecosystems Division, reflected on his long association with UNEP. He highlighted successes, including: putting

climate change at the top of the agenda, with the two climate change conferences in 1974 and 1978 culminating in the establishment of the IPCC; the World Environment Reports 1972-1992; and the organization's leadership on environmental law.

Christina Voigt, Professor of Law, University of Oslo, Norway, and Chair, IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law, reflected on UNEP's leadership role in raising awareness on environmental challenges, and providing a space for engagement and for Member States to use their sovereignty to address environmental problems. She highlighted international environmental law through its expression in MEAs and then via domestic implementation, compliance, and enforcement as an important factor to address environmental challenges. She added that for 40 years, UNEP has served as the Secretariat for the Montevideo Programme for Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law, through which it supports national governments to implement the environmental rule of law.

Zakri Abdul-Hamid, Co-Chair, Secretariat, Global Science and Innovation Advisory Council, Malaysia, recalled his early-career negotiating experience, noting that even in those days, despite UNEP recognizing the role of science in providing evidence, such knowledge had often been "muted" in politically-charged negotiations. He observed that biodiversity is less understood than global warming, and so the establishment of IPBES had an immediate impact, and called on policy makers to provide legitimacy to scientists by listening to their views.

Vania Olmos Lau, focal point for the Latin America and Caribbean Region, UNEP Major Group for Children and Youth, highlighted "crises of greed, apathy and selfishness," and opined on the "need to recognize the good and be brave enough to acknowledge the bad," in the context of intergenerational dialogue. She concluded by emphasizing the important role that civil society plays in pushing the agenda.

Looking forward: Achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for people and planet: On Friday, 4 March, Femi Oke, International Journalist and Broadcaster, moderated the dialogue. UNEP Executive Director Andersen remarked that if states put their weight behind UNEP, we can imagine a world where the job is done; we have secured sustainability and humanity that can survive.

Vanessa Nakate, Climate justice activist and founder, Africa-based Rise Up Movement, said she is frequently asked what the role of youth is, and responded by asking, "What is the role of governments?" UNEP, she said, must offer youth activists an opportunity for direct dialogue with leaders to ensure accountability in environmental action. Nakate highlighted the distance between commitments and action by asking participants two questions: whether those who are suffering most from the climate crisis and are the least responsible for it deserve our help; and whether specific commitments will be made on loss and damage at UNFCCC COP 27.

Participating virtually, Izabella Teixeira, Co-Chair of the International Resource Panel, Former Minister of Environment of Brazil, said that in order to move forward we must recognize the planetary crisis. She emphasized the need to address the science-policy interface and intergenerational rights. She called for a

realistic phasing down process during the transition period, stressing the future is not a projection of the past. She added we must cease "buying time" and push for urgency.

Linda Zeilina, Founder and CEO, International Sustainable Finance Centre, responding on how to achieve sustainable economic models, noted the need to: overcome silos in environment, finance, and politics; understand how financial models relate to natural capital; and align financial systems to avoid misallocation of finances. She noted that in some cases the private sector can offer long-term thinking as it is not bound by the electoral cycle, and called for addressing the "business class mentality" where interactions may be limited and staged, including by the stratification of privilege and socio-economic background.

Bruno Oberle, Director General, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), stressed the public and private spaces are different, noting the regulating role of public space in "setting the rules that identify the future-wished behavior." He pointed to influencing decision making as the key to a sustainable future.

Bhupender Yadav, Union Cabinet Minister of Labour and Employment, Environment, Forest and Climate Change, India, highlighted the need for clean energy transition, resource efficiency, pollution reduction, and protection of forests and other critical ecosystems, pointing to latest science, digital solutions, and innovative financial instruments.

Carole Dieschbourg, Minister of the Environment, Climate and Sustainable Development, Luxembourg, emphasized that social and environmental priorities go hand in hand within the SDGs; highlighted the Luxembourg Sustainable Finance Initiative, and called for building inclusive partnerships for a sustainable future.

Steffi Lemke, Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection, Germany, noted that the "Making Peace with Nature" UNEP report shows the cost of inaction far outweighs that of urgent action, calling for a paradigm shift that puts a stop to "externalizing the value of nature and ignoring the costs of its destruction." She further highlighted the Partnership for Action on Green Economy and UNEP's critical role that needs to be supported.

Collins Nzovu, Minister of Green Economy and Environment, Zambia, focused on governance issues, stressing the need for all Member States to ensure the environmental agenda remains a top priority, providing the necessary resources and political support for a strong UNEP. He highlighted accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness as key parameters for UNEP to successfully promote green growth and circular economy as foundations of sustainable development.

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park, Minister for the Pacific and the International Environment, UK, stressed that "nature is the thread that must run across everything." He highlighted commitments to end and reverse deforestation during UNFCCC COP 26 held in Glasgow, noting they must turn into action, and underscored the need to align our economies and ways of life with the natural world.

Simon Stiell, Minister for Climate Resilience, the Environment, Forestry, Fisheries, Disaster Management, Information, Grenada, underlined that the world must work together over the next eight

years to address the pressing issues of our time. He called for a new compact for nature which is just, equitable, inclusive, and trust-based, underlining the need to be hopeful.

Borislav Sandov, Deputy Prime Minister for Climate Policies and Minister of Environment and Water, Bulgaria, lamented the planetary boundary breached when “an aggressor” targets nuclear sites. He called on youth to get political, and to convince all civil servants to act to save nature.

Kaupo Heinma, Vice Minister Representative of Environment, Estonia, underscored that UNEP has a duty to serve as champion of the Earth, and stressed that laws without actions cannot save the Earth.

Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, CEO and Chairperson, GEF, said that protecting nature is in the long-term interests of each country, with or without external support, underlining the need for policy coherence at the national and regional levels to prevent investing in activities that destroy nature.

Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue

Strengthening UNEP for the implementation of the environmental dimension of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

Development: On Friday, 4 March, Joe Ageyo, Kenyan television journalist, moderated the dialogue. Maria Ivanova, University of Massachusetts, Boston, discussed lessons from her book, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty*. Referring to UNEP as the UN “Everything” Programme, she said that since its origins it was intended to be a small and flexible agency that can deal with everything, adding that, “the environment is indeed everything.”

Lucy Muchoki, Pan-African Agribusiness and Agro-Industry Consortium, urged scaling up initiatives such as the SWITCH Africa Green programme developed by UNEP and the private sector that has supported small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to carry out more environmentally sound business practices. Leida Rijnhout, Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future, urged strengthening ministries of environment globally. She cautioned against the rhetoric that environmental policies can undermine industry, noting that since the industrial revolution, industry has been to the detriment of the environment.

Rachel Mash, Anglican Church in South Africa, said that engagement with faith-based organizations should be promoted as they have a great reach and acceptability, and ability to provide a moral compass. Illustrating the level of reach possible, she compared Pope Francis's 18.8 million Twitter followers with UNEP's 1.1 million followers.

Youth representative Fabio Arturo López Alfaro, International Science Council, focused on the “UNEP We Want” report, the first comprehensive assessment about the future vision for UNEP and UNEA, prepared collectively by a Major Groups and Stakeholders. He highlighted Rio Principle 10 (stakeholder engagement), pointing to UNEP's relevant successes and shortcomings.

The EU, with NORWAY and SRI LANKA, emphasized the need to “reach out much more to other UN agencies,” noting that UNEP cannot do everything on its own, and called for using other agencies as multipliers to initiate change with limited resources. FINLAND underscored UNEP's role as a facilitator and convener between different MEAs as well as in joint efforts with the private sector and

Major Groups and Stakeholders. She called for further strengthening an inclusive approach to environmental protection, in line with the human rights framework.

ESTONIA highlighted the political declaration of UNEP@50, and focused on the need for means of implementation to assist Member States, especially developing ones, to achieve joint environmental goals. NORWAY highlighted the systematic engagement with Major Groups and Stakeholders in the environmental realm as one of its main strengths, calling for further building on this relationship.

SRI LANKA underscored the need for robust monitoring and accountability schemes along with political leadership for a sustainable future.

MALDIVES noted the excellent relationship between his country and UNEP, pointing to UNEP's role in assisting the country to phase down hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), as well as address chemicals and waste.

INDONESIA underlined the need for transformational change throughout the UN, stating that UNEP needs to be strengthened as the lead environment body in the world.

MAJOR GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDERS requested Member States to begin discussions on strengthening UNEP at the General Assembly.

Closing Plenary

UNEA-6 President Benali presented the session's report and her summary (UNEP/EA.SS.1/L.2), noting that the report will be finalized following the inclusion of the summaries of national statements. Following review by Member States and after the closure of the session, the final report will be published in all official languages. Delegates adopted the report pending revisions.

In closing statements, MAJOR GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDERS underscored the successful adoption of many resolutions, particularly the one on plastic pollution, stressing that the resulting standing ovation was a testimony to its significance, but also a clear indication of “our desire to literally change the world.” He highlighted the right to a clean, safe, and healthy environment as a fundamental human right, and urged overcoming challenges for peace, and social and environmental justice.

The EU, also on behalf of AUSTRALIA, CANADA, COLOMBIA, COSTA RICA, ICELAND, JAPAN, MONTENEGRO, NEW ZEALAND, NORWAY, PERU, SWITZERLAND, UK, US, UKRAINE, URUGUAY, and SERBIA, expressed its satisfaction for the outcome of UNEA@50 and the adoption of the political declaration. She condemned attacks by the Russian Federation on nuclear plants in Zaporizhzhia and Chernobyl, stressing that safety and security risks could result in long-term severe consequences for humanity and the environment.

Exercising the right of reply and urging not to politicize the debate, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION responded that, in terms of nuclear security, the threat comes from neo-Nazi groups attacking the nuclear plants, noting that the nuclear stations are safe due to the responsible actions of the Russian military.

KENYA emphasized that “the environment is everything,” congratulating all for the hard work that gave them “a critical space in the annals of history.” He urged carrying the Nairobi spirit into the crucial forthcoming multilateral environmental negotiations.

UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen noted that the “future begins today,” and highlighted the important resolutions adopted by UNEA. She stressed that the environment is always a casualty of war, suffering long after the war ends. She noted the mistakes of the past must not be the mistakes of the future, calling on delegates to work towards one day living in peace with nature.

Thanking delegates for “bringing nature back into the room,” UNEA-6 President Benali gavelled the meeting to a close at 6:00 pm.

A Brief Analysis of UNEA-5.2 and UNEP@50

The recent depressing news cycle has been gloomy, grey, and relentless. We are still living under the menacing threat of a global pandemic. There is a war in Ukraine, along with an increasing threat of nuclear accidents. A freshly released report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) vigorously restates the looming impacts of human-induced climate change. And yet, even in the darkness of times, the shining light of multilateralism offers a beacon of hope. On Wednesday, 2 March 2022, clouds gave way and the air stilled. A warm glow radiated skywards from a jubilant United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) closing plenary, transmitting a joyous beam far beyond Nairobi.

UNEA 5.2 will go down in history as a highly successful meeting, culminating in the adoption of 14 resolutions, including one that addresses the plague of plastic pollution and another on establishing a science-policy body for chemicals and waste management, similar to the IPCC and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). The logistical and technical challenges of convening the first major intergovernmental meeting since the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow in November 2021, against the backdrop of COVID-19, cannot be overstated. This landmark UNEA meeting coincided with the celebration of the United Nations Environment Programme’s (UNEP) half centenary and the resulting celebratory session allowed for reflection on the past and envisioning the future. This analysis with discuss the outcomes of UNEA 5.2 in the context of UNEP’s past, present and future.

“Friends, today we are standing on the shoulders of the Stockholm giants.”

~ Inger Andersen, UNEP Executive Director

UNEP was established as a result of the seminal 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. Fifty years ago, the environment was a fringe issue. The concept of “sustainable development,” wasn’t even nascent. Catch-all tags like “eco-friendly,” “greenwashing,” and “biodegradable,” were not in the common lexicon. The prospect of our oceans, choking under the suffocating weight of discarded, ten-minute plastic was still a distant, unimagined, dystopian future.

Over the years, UNEP has responded to a plethora of emerging environmental challenges, including climate change, ozone depletion, loss of species and ecosystems, and hazardous chemicals. During the meeting, many delegates highlighted UNEP’s vision, which has always been guided by science and “by the certainty that a healthy environment benefits everyone, everywhere.” They further commended UNEP for successfully delivering on its mandate, which is centered on: assessing environmental conditions and trends;

developing international and national agreements; and strengthening institutions for environmental management.

UNEA-5.2 and its two-day UNEP@50 commemorative Special Session provided a platform to reflect on and bask in UNEP’s glory. It’s been a good run. Climate change is now at the top of everyone’s agenda. The first two climate conferences in 1974 and 1978, which culminated in the establishment of the IPCC, were convened by UNEP. The IPCC went on to be awarded a Nobel Peace Prize in 2007. UNEP serves as the Secretariat to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, which is often described as the most successful multilateral environmental agreement (MEA) ever negotiated and was on the minds of many delegates commemorating UNEP’s successes. Another recent triumph under UNEP’s belt is phasing out leaded fuel, which led to the global end of leaded fuel use in vehicles in 2021.

Supporting governments in the implementation of their international commitments has been at the heart of UNEP’s work. UNEP has championed the recognition and implementation of environmental and human rights, and today over 100 countries have enshrined the right to a safe and healthy environment in their constitutions. As one delegate noted, “After all, the success of international agreements can only be measured by their domestic implementation.” Further reinforcing this function, UNEP, through the Secretariat of the Montevideo Programme for Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law, strengthens the related national capacities, promoting the implementation of environmental rule of law. At the same time, UNEP provides the relevant training and requisite institutional strengthening.

Happy Birthday: UNEP@50

The resolution on plastic pollution was the UNEA showstopper. It was the most widely anticipated outcome of the meeting. An international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, “the most important instrument since the Paris Agreement” in the words Executive Director Inger Andersen, is going to be the newest MEA on the block when negotiations conclude. UNEA 5.2 lived up to its promise and delivered a new Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee with the mandate to complete a draft legally binding agreement by 2024. The final agreement is expected to address the full lifecycle of plastics as well as the design of reusable and recyclable products and materials, signifying a shift from linear to circular economic models. In the words of UNEA-5 President Espen Barth Eide, “Plastic pollution has grown into an epidemic. With today’s resolution we are officially on track for a cure.”

Some delegates remarked that the successful outcome on plastic pollution stole some of the thunder from another big win. Agreeing to set up a new a science-policy panel on chemicals and waste is also a major achievement. The envisaged panel looks to fill the gap between science and policy and potentially allow UNEP to facilitate interlinkages between the IPCC, IPBES, and this new panel. The new panel on chemicals and waste will complement existing efforts on the science-policy interface for climate change and biodiversity, allowing, as one delegate noted “informed scientific input in all three parameters of the triple planetary crisis.” Although the details of the panel’s governance, scope, and mandate will have to be ironed out during negotiations in an *Ad Hoc* Open-ended Working Group, many participants hailed the resolution as a landmark decision.

UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (2022-2025) is focused on tackling the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. The confluence of all these challenges compromises the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and erodes COVID-19 recovery. Thus, agreement to establish this new panel is more timely than ever. The current era of distrust and misinformation around science underlines the need for reputable, solid knowledge products and information dissemination.

These and the other resolutions were adopted under unusual and challenging circumstances. While many delegations appreciated the opportunity to finally meet in person, others had no choice but to participate virtually. The hybrid format initially received criticism, but in the end most participants agreed that it went relatively smoothly. Despite intermittent technical hitches, delegates were able to participate effectively from all corners of the globe. Some delegates noted that the one-year postponement might even have helped build the momentum towards the successful outcome of UNEA-5.

Questions were raised on the structure of the meeting, with the formal negotiations truncated to accommodate a two-day high-level special session. Some delegates wondered whether allocating time differently might have alleviated some of the pressure on negotiators, who worked until the early morning hours trying to reach consensus on the draft resolutions. Others called for a cap on the number of resolutions to avoid overwhelming, and stretching the capacity of, small delegations. Still, everybody agreed at the end of the meeting that the successful outcome indicates that delegates were able to deal with these challenges during the two-week deliberations.

50 More Birthdays and Beyond

"UNEP has collected the science, built a narrative, and enabled Member States to address the most pressing environment issues of our time," noted one long-time observer. Reflecting on the past 50 years led most participants to the realization that despite UNEP's successful endeavors, the environmental challenges the world faces are greater than ever. It is a well-established fact that the next ten years are going to be pivotal for life on this planet: urgent action is required to address existential threats well-established by scientific evidence. Interventions during the high-level segment underscored serious challenges threatening progress "due to the intensive use of finite resources and increasing inequalities." The clarion call was for a transition "to economic models based on recovery rather than irresponsible exploitation." The big question remains: Is UNEP fit for purpose going forward?

The need to strengthen both messaging and advocacy was at the center of the discussions. Can UNEP build an embracing environmental narrative that will drive public imagination, influence decision makers, and catalyze policy making? Delegates further highlighted UNEP's role as a convener and enabler, stressing the need to link the dots between MEAs, not only to improve efficiency, but to holistically address interlinked challenges. As one participant highlighted: "UNEP has to tread a fine line between balancing policies and measures that, for example, may be good for climate change mitigation on the one hand, but harmful for biodiversity on the other. Discussions on the resolution on nature-based solutions, although successful at the end, revealed that negotiations often take place in a highly politicized context where long hours of difficult

negotiations and provisional agreements may be wiped out in an instance, simply by a word choice. In the words of one participant, "The world still has a long way to go to develop common priorities and UNEP can be the catalyst in that respect."

UNEP's medium-term strategy offers a way forward. It points to a shift away from merely addressing environmental consequences, to using the environment as an enabler to achieve the SDGs. The mandate for the plastic resolution is centered on promoting the circular economy and on sustainable consumption and production. UNEP is uniquely positioned to deliver, given its broad environmental mandate, and ultimately connect the dots across a range of cross-cutting issues and a highly complex policy environment.

"We have joined the Stockholm Giants"

UNEA-5.2 was lauded as "the most successful UNEA ever." The Nairobi spirit prevailed. The two weeks demonstrated the magic and power of multilateralism and what can be achieved when people work together for the common good, focusing more on what unites rather than divides us. UNEP has borne witness to a passage of time that has seen the environment move from the periphery to center stage. UNEP's role in this shift has been unique, revealing and highlighting the existential threats that environmental degradation posed for the last half century. The successes of UNEA-5 and the commitment shown during the meeting is evidence that UNEP is on the right path on a very rocky road ahead. As a delegate noted at the end of the meeting, having cemented itself as the global hub for the environment, "UNEP's role and responsibilities in an uncertain future are more important than ever."

Upcoming Meetings

Resumed Intersessional Meetings of the UN Biodiversity Conference: These resumed sessions are in preparation for 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 post-2020 global biodiversity framework. **dates:** 14-29 March 2022 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **www:** cbd.int/meetings

Minamata Convention COP 4: This meeting is the second segment of COP 4, following a virtual segment in November 2021. Matters for consideration and/or action by the COP include, *inter alia*, proposals for amendments to Annexes A and B, financial resources and mechanism, capacity building, technical assistance and technology transfer, and gender. **dates:** 21-25 March 2022 **location:** Bali, Indonesia **www:** mercuryconvention.org/en/meetings/cop4

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:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** stockholm50.global/processes/preparatory-meeting

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

UNCCD COP 15: Originally scheduled for the final quarter of 2021, UNCCD COP 15 has now been rescheduled for May. Negotiations will focus on work of the fifth session of the Committee on Science and Technology, the twentieth session of the Committee for Review of the Implementation of the Convention, and other major issues included in the programme of work. **dates:** 9-20 May 2022 **location:** Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire **www:** unccd.int/cop15

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:** stockholm50.global

Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions COPs: This meeting includes the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention, the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention, and the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention, under the theme “Global Agreements for a Healthy Planet: Sound management of chemicals and waste.” **dates:** 6-17 June 2022

location: Geneva, Switzerland **www:** brsmeas.org/20212022COPs/Overview/tabid/8395/language/en-US/Default.aspx

Second UN Ocean Conference: This meeting will bring 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

IPBES 9: The ninth session of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services will consider, *inter alia*, the thematic assessment of the sustainable use of wild species, methodological assessment regarding the diverse conceptualization of multiple values of nature and its benefits, including biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, engagement with the IPCC. **dates:** 3-9 July 2022 **location:** Bonn, Germany **www:** ipbes.net/events/ipbes-9

High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) 2022: The 2022 meeting of the HLPF, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, will convene under the theme, “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” **dates:** 5-7 and 11-15 July 2022 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf

UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP 15): This meeting includes 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. The meetings 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

Sharm el Sheikh Climate Change Conference: The 27th session of the COP, the 17th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 17), and the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 4) will convene. **dates:** 7-18 November 2022 **location:** Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt **www:** unfccc.int

UNEA-6: The meeting of the UN Environment Assembly sees the coming together of Member States of the UN, civil society, business and other stakeholders to set priorities for global environmental policies and develop international law. **dates:** 26 February - 1 March 2024 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** unep.org/environmentassembly

For additional upcoming events, see sdg.iisd.org

Glossary

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of the Parties
COW	Committee of the Whole
CPR	Committee of Permanent Representatives
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEO	Global Environment Outlook
HLPF	High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
INC	Intergovernmental negotiating committee
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LBI	Legally binding instrument
MEAs	Multilateral environmental agreements
NbS	Nature-based solutions
OECPR	Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives
PoW	Programme of Work
SCP	Sustainable consumption and production
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
WHO	World Health Organization