

## Stockholm+50: A Healthy Planet for the Prosperity of All – Our Responsibility, Our Opportunity Thursday, 2 June 2022

The two-day meeting, “Stockholm+50,” opened on Thursday, 2 June. Commemorating fifty years since the landmark United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, the meeting began with opening speeches and election of officers. Delegates then heard government statements in plenary and held a parallel “Leadership Dialogue” on achieving a healthy planet and prosperity for all.

### Brief History

The United Nations General Assembly, through its resolution 75/280 of 24 May 2021, decided to convene an international meeting in Stockholm to commemorate 50 years since the landmark Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in 1972. A preparatory meeting was held on 28 March 2022 at United Nations Headquarters and inputs were also made by the UN Environment Assembly, including at its first special session for the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). In the run-up to the meeting a series of dialogues were organized to help shape the agenda in Stockholm.

### Plenary

King Carl XVI Gustav of Sweden recalled attending the UN Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm, which created public awareness of environmental issues in 1972. Cautioning that we “do not have fifty more years to turn development around,” he said the next few years will be critical.

Following a musical and theatrical performance showing the risks to the human environment and need for action and collaboration, delegates elected by acclamation President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya and the Prime Minister of Sweden, Magdalena Andersson, as Presidents of Stockholm+50.

Prime Minister Andersson said we are at a crossroads. Listing the many threats to our environment, she said our first step should be to live up to existing commitments. She urged political leadership and accelerated action.

President Kenyatta said Stockholm+50 provided an opportunity to “pause” to take stock of progress since 1972 and reflect on how to make progress in future. Noting the challenges faced by developing countries, he urged partners to honor commitments to climate finance.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres urged everyone to “end our suicidal war against nature” since we know what to do and have the tools. He proposed investing in renewable energy and nature-based solutions, and moving beyond GDP as a measure of wellbeing.

Abdulla Shahid, President of the United Nations General Assembly, recalled that the outcomes of the 1972 Stockholm Conference have provided a template for every environmental treaty and continue to inspire new generations of activists and policymakers.

Colleen Vixen Kelapile, President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), highlighted the challenge of achieving the SDGs in the wake of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Inger Andersen, Secretary-General of Stockholm+50 and Executive Director, UNEP, remembered the words of Olof Palme, Indira Gandhi and Jomo Kenyatta and stated that we have not been able to do everything they invited the world to do when they addressed the 1972 Conference. She called for a paradigm shift where youth, the most vulnerable and indigenous peoples are regarded as more important than the wealthy.

**Plenary Statements:** Heads of State and Government, ministers and other senior officials made presentations throughout the day, both in person and through pre-recorded messages. Key themes to emerge during their speeches included: the challenge of the triple planetary crisis; the need for political will and for countries to honor their existing commitments; the importance of financial and technological assistance for developing countries; the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic; and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Many speakers also highlighted inclusivity, equity, and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Many speakers also highlighted national efforts, while some reflected on regional actions. National initiatives ranged from banning single-use plastic bags to embracing renewable energy. President Alexander Van der Bellen, AUSTRIA, highlighted the European Green Deal for a circular, climate neutral, and resource-efficient future. President Emmanuel Macron, FRANCE, highlighted redirecting financial goals towards climate and biodiversity, noting that trade agreements can no longer be negotiated as they were 30 years ago. Prime Minister Aymen Benabderrahmane of ALGERIA emphasized his country’s championing of renewable energy and the need for the global community to implement the SDGs.

Many speakers urged greater political will. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister of FIJI, said the global community must commit to urgent change and provide financial resources. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali, ETHIOPIA, highlighted how Stockholm in 1972 connected poverty, development and the environment. CANADA said we must find a new paradigm to describe stakeholders, who are also partners and are “indispensable” for implementation. GERMANY said CBD COP15 must create an ambitious framework in 2022, without any further delays. EGYPT said COP27, to be hosted in her country, would be inclusive and focused on implementation.

Countries also called for financial and/or technological assistance. Pakistan, on behalf of the G-77/CHINA, urged developed countries to meet their historic responsibilities and provide new and predictable financial and technological support. She called for a better balance between financing for mitigation and adaptation, specific funding for loss and damage, and mobilizing \$100 billion per year for climate finance for developing countries, with a new, higher financing goal by 2025. Morocco, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, urged more efficient and less complex practices to access finance. President Mokgweetsi Masisi, BOTSWANA, requested that developed countries and international financial institutions support its biodiversity work. President Iván Duque, COLOMBIA, called for Latin America and the Caribbean to be prioritized in climate finance and for a \$100 billion annual climate fund. President Azali Assoumani, COMOROS, urged concrete contributions to the most vulnerable states. TANZANIA requested research assistance on green technology, particularly solar and wind power. The PHILIPPINES called for climate justice, saying climate finance should be unlocked immediately.

Many speakers highlighted the triple planetary crisis. Prime Minister Boris Johnson, UK, said the multiple crises the world is now facing demands that we “double down” on achieving sustainability and tackling climate change, adding that we must “show we have the will” to act. The EU urged using the multilateral system to its maximum extent. NAMIBIA highlighted that inequality and poverty need to be addressed to make the SDGs achievable. SPAIN said the “challenges” of 50 years ago are now “crises” and called for “action, action, action!” ARGENTINA, CUBA, and FINLAND urged that participants address unsustainable consumption and production.

Many speakers highlighted wars and conflicts. The Russian invasion of Ukraine was raised by many, including the EU, GERMANY, FRANCE, SWEDEN, CANADA and BRAZIL. Mohamed al-Menfi, Head of the Presidential Council of LIBYA, called for attention to environmental issues in conflict and in post-conflict countries. PALESTINE criticized Israel’s negative impact on its water security.

On the opportunity for reflection provided by Stockholm+50, KENYA said the world should: reflect on gaps, opportunities and challenges; learn lessons; and listen to the science. Noting the impact of Covid-19 in slowing progress, NORTH MACEDONIA urged accelerated action on the SDGs.

Several speakers, including the NETHERLANDS, DENMARK and INDONESIA, highlighted the role of youth in multilateral processes. NORWAY called for deep decarbonization and transformational change incorporating a faster just transition.

### Leadership Dialogue I

In the afternoon, the first Leadership Dialogue, on the urgent need for actions to achieve a healthy planet and prosperity for all, was introduced by Co-Chairs Steven Guilbeault, Canada, and Gustavo Rafael Manrique Miranda, Ecuador (A/CONF.238/4).

Virginijus Sinkevičius, European Commissioner for Environment, Oceans, and Fisheries, called for sustainable supply and value chains and for international fora on the circular economy. Azza Karam, Secretary General of Religions for Peace, described the unparalleled influence of faith leaders and communities in cultivating human behaviour change. Achim Steiner, Administrator, UNDP, addressed the important linkage between trust and fair multilateral platforms. Vanessa Nakate, Rise Up Movement, Uganda, called for honest acknowledgement that leaders, presented with best available science, have denied and delayed action and risk handing young people a broken world.

She called for: no new investment in coal, oil and gas; scaled up grant funding for the energy transition in the Global South; and agreement on a loss and damage fund by COP27. John Kerry, Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, US, agreed with Nakate, stating that some leaders in the twenty major economies have been indifferent to the maths and physics of climate science. He noted that the war in Ukraine was being used by people who prefer the energy *status quo* when the message of the war is about energy independence and freedom from the threat of petro-dictators. He cautioned that the world risks drifting into a “suicide pact”.

Guilbeault summarized key recommendations raised during interventions from the floor, including on:

- meaningful engagement with civil society partners in implementation and leadership roles;
- human rights, especially for earth defenders;
- a shift from a cost-benefit approach to the environmental crisis towards an expanded framework of ethics and higher principles;
- the link between effectiveness and trust in institutions;
- the difficult choices on coal, oil and gas implicit in the just transition;
- scaling up clean energy subsidies;
- a “Paris moment” for biodiversity; and
- a multilateral system that is fair and committed to urgent implementation of existing obligations.

In the second panel discussion, Antonio Herman Benjamin, Justice of the National High Court of Brazil and President of the Global Judicial Institute on the Environment, spoke about the importance of strengthening the capacity of the environmental rule of law. He noted the absence of judges from the 1972 Stockholm and 1992 Rio conferences, saying their presence at Stockholm+50 sends the message that enforcement and implementation are important, since rules are worthless without them. Sunita Narain, Director General of the Center for Science and Environment, stressed that inclusivity is needed for sustainable growth and justice is fundamental for transformational action. She highlighted the urgency to act if we are not to repeat the mistakes of the past. Dario Mejía Montalvo, Leader, National Indigenous Organization, Colombia, said that, regarding “rights,” Indigenous Peoples are lagging behind, but they are in the front when it comes to “duties.” He stressed that the need to protect ecosystems should not come at the cost of ignoring the governance systems of Indigenous Peoples. He called for humility to understand that “life,” “spirituality” and “energy” are synonyms, and for the coherence of following up words with actions. After interventions from participants, co-chair Manrique summarized observations that:

- multilateralism is a necessity in a world that has no boundaries;
- there is a need to create a just transition, taking the needs of developing countries into account;
- forests and people have a complex relationship, and sometimes cutting a tree is a matter of survival; and
- working towards solutions on plastics is key.

### In the Corridors

Sweden is very fond of the traditional coffee-time ritual known as “Fika,” that essential pause in the day for a catch-up and restorative pause. This image of a “pause” in the cautious and calculated language of negotiation has been close to the hearts of the meeting organisers. There was a widespread sense that the meeting came to life at the Leadership Dialogue when participants rose to the challenge of “speaking without fear” and pausing the conventional language of “calculation,” with observers noting an intergenerational convergence of messages from the seasoned US diplomat and climate envoy, John Kerry, and the Ugandan youth activist, Vanessa Nakate.