

Draft criteria for selecting theme for UNEA-4 – comments –

General Comments:

- ⇒ JUSSCANNZ members generally agree that the overarching theme for UNEA-3 was successful and that having an overarching theme can have benefits, such as especially providing a focus for the high-level segment and attracting high-level participation and public awareness; While some see a benefit that a theme may help to focus and reduce the number of resolutions, other think that UNEA has a broad mandate and that this mandate should not be artificially limited by a theme.
- ⇒ At the same time, some felt also that there is no real need for a theme. Rather than focusing on a theme, the Assembly could be devoted to implementation, including an examination of what's holding back implementation of previously adopted resolutions. There would be time for meaningful stakeholder consultations and for taking stock of UNEP's strengths and how the Assemblies can be most effective.
- ⇒ Some JUSSCANNZ members highlight that the theme should be identified for the HLS and not for the whole UNEA. The UNEA has a broad mandate, including adopting the PoW and the Budget and providing overarching policy guidance and direction to UNEP for its future work;
- ⇒ While some JUSSCANNZ members find the criteria reasonable – while still having some specific questions on some of the proposed criteria – others clearly would prioritize differently;
- ⇒ Several JUSSCANNZ members think that alignment with UNEP's core mandate and capacity, and being of acute environmental relevance should be at the starting point for selecting a theme;
- ⇒ One JUSSCANNZ member identified "The State of the Environment" (linking to GEO-6) and "Innovation for the Environment" (could also be supported by GEO-6 and is action-oriented) as possible themes.
- ⇒ Generally, we do not believe that it is worth to formally agree on these criteria: this would possibly require a lot of time and focus on detailed wording. It is sufficient to take note of these criteria and of the views expressed by bureau members and then to start to discuss and agree on a theme. Having agreed formally on criteria will probably not make it easier to agree on a theme.

Draft criteria for selecting the theme of the Fourth Session of the UN Environment Assembly to be held in Nairobi on 15-19 March, 2019

The theme should, as far as possible, meet the following criteria:

1. Provide a targeted yet sufficiently interdisciplinary environmental policy focus that engages the economic and social spheres and has a significant scope for progress at global, regional and local levels.

⇒ This should probably, if at all relevant, not be the first criterion. Starting point has to be the alignment with UNEP's core mandate and capacity and thus the environment, the most relevant and most urgent environmental needs, not the possibility engage the economic spheres etc.

2. Address issues of acute importance that builds on momentum of ongoing global initiatives and processes to help amplify the results.

⇒ Addressing issues of acute importance for the environment would be a critical criterion;
⇒ the possibility to build on momentum of ongoing initiatives and processes may be a secondary criterion – at the same time, duplication with these other initiatives and processes need to be avoided – one JUSSCANNZ member stresses that it should be avoided to focus on issues to which entire treaties are already devoted.

3. Result in an actionable and solution-oriented outcome that is meaningful and inspiring to the world, to foster effective political will, mobilize cooperation and provide momentum to drive change on the ground.

⇒ What means “meaningful” (what does that mean? Meaningful for whom)?

4. Inspire citizens and generate partnerships between governments, the private sector, media and civil society to facilitate effective implementation of the outcome.
5. Ensure consistency between the themes of earlier Sessions of the Environment Assembly, to promote synergy and avoid duplication of work.

⇒ Several JUSSCANNZ members would welcome clarification on this criterion.
⇒ One JUSSCANNZ member stresses that it is more important that themes be definitive, inspiring and address issues of acute importance that are not otherwise addressed in formal fora – issues to which entire treaties are already devoted should be avoided.

6. Support the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, and resonate with the annual themes of the High Level Political Forum.

⇒ Several JUSSCANNZ members agree this would be an important criterion.

7. Ensure alignment with UN Environment's core mandate and capacity, while at the same time being relevant to the broader UN family.

⇒ Several JUSSCANNZ members see alignment with UNEP's core mandate and capacity key and as the top criterion. They are also not convinced that relevance for the broader UN family is important.

8. Promote the visibility and profile of the UN Environment Assembly.
9. Be easily understandable and communicable to all.