

President's Special Envoy Mr. Ado Lõhmus

UNEP/UNEA Secretariat

UNEA Member States

Honorable Mr. Ado Lõhmus, Governmental Representatives, and the UNEA Secretariat,

I am submitting this input on the Draft Ministerial Declaration for UNEA 4 on behalf of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN). GEN has been an EcoSoc accredited organization and network since 2002. We are a network of several thousand ecovillage communities and organizations, located on all continents and in more than 110 countries.

We believe that many of our ecovillage communities are among the most sustainable of communities on Earth. We have developed and pioneered many best practices and success stories demonstrating how villages as well as smaller and rural communities can transition to more sustainable consumption and production practices while also protecting and restoring the natural environment. A description of how many of our communities are not only doing this but at the same time are also addressing climate change in an integrated multi-sectoral manner can be found at: [www.ecovillage.org/climatesolutions](http://www.ecovillage.org/climatesolutions).

We are thus suggesting a number of ways in which the Draft Ministerial Declaration could be strengthened so as to more effectively address the topics being addressed at UNEA 4. Suggested additions to the various articles are included within the text under each article in **Bold** below.

Given the incredibly important role that the natural environment can and does play in causing and can also help us to mitigate and adapt to global warming and climate change, along with the extent to which humanity has continued to undermine and degrade both ecosystems and the natural resource base, we are suggesting that this focus also be addressed in the preambular opening to the document.

Similarly, under Priority 1, article 9 we are suggesting that scenario-building models ought to be added to address additional ways in which the natural environment has and continues to be impacted and degraded.

Then under Priority 2 we are suggesting a number of specific types of measures that need to be undertaken and thus added to better address sustainable land management, agricultural practices, waste treatment, natural and green building, and renewable energy solutions.

Finally, under Priority 3 we are urging our governments to mention not only the need to engage, but also **to support** civil society, both financially and otherwise, “in improving their local environment by implementing nature based solutions” - **including through community based and led planning and implementation processes.**

We believe this last point to be particularly important as we have repeatedly found there to be enormous competition for the limited amount of funding that is available to support civil society initiatives tailored towards both restoring and protecting the natural environment as well as towards improving the lives of those living in rural areas and smaller communities.

Similarly, significant funding is needed to support both community based and led planning and implementation processes - particularly given the extent to which development funding now tends to focus primarily on single sector approaches while solutions are needed across the board to address multiple challenges and problems in an integrated manner.

Suggestions for additions to the text are again included below.

Thank you for your considerations,

Rob Wheeler

Main Representative to the United Nations

Global Ecovillage Network

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Preamble:

As ministers of the environment of the world, we recognise that poverty eradication, changing unsustainable and promoting responsible patterns of consumption and production **and protecting and restoring the natural environment while also sustaining and managing the natural resource base, in order to support** economic and social development, are the overarching objectives of and essential requirements for sustainable development.

**Main priority 1:**

d) We foster the improvement of scenario-building models to develop environment foresights, including food security, **healthy soil, waste elimination, restore natural water cycles**, marine litter, desertification and extreme weather events.

**Main priority 2:**

c) We implement sustainable land management measures, including afforestation, wetland restoration, **water retention landscaping, restoration of degraded and dry lands**, and mining area rehabilitation and recultivation, to combat desertification, deforestation and biodiversity loss and to improve climate change mitigation.

d) We target the implementation of sustainable **and ecological** agricultural practices

f) We foster the investments in innovative solutions for enabling access to clean **and renewable** energy, **natural and ecologically friendly building**, and green infrastructure and expand the use of sustainable transportation, including electro-mobility.

g) We develop and implement national sound waste prevention and management policies in line with waste hierarchy, with special focus on food, plastics, marine litter, and **biological wastes and water treatment**.

**Main priority 3:**

c) We engage **and provide support** for citizens, **both financial and otherwise**, in improving their local environment by implementing nature based solutions - **including through community based and led planning and implementation processes**.