

UNEA Monitor

UNEA Monitor is a daily newsletter powered by Major Groups during the UN Environment Assembly. The newsletter tracks the most important negotiations and events and delivers the daily news through the lens of civil society.

Stories from the Green Tent

The Green Tent is the Civil Society Platform at UNEA-4. The UNEA Monitor is covering some of the green tent events throughout the week of the Assembly.

UN Environment Chief Scientist Dr. Jian Liu Meets with the Major Groups

On Tuesday, March 12, 2019, the Major Groups had the opportunity to meet with the UN Environment Chief Scientist Dr. Jian Liu. The audience asked questions about the following topics:

- progress with the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) resolution;
- inclusion of local and indigenous knowledge in science and knowledge systems;
- the relationship between the UN Environment Science Division and divisions working on social issues; selection of priorities for the Science Division; and
- lessons learnt from the most recent Science-Policy-Business Forum.

Dr. Liu noted that the negotiations on the GEO resolution would be finished that day and underlined the continued relevance of the GEO process. He also emphasized the potential of citizen science in catalyzing collective leadership and mobilizing action on the ground, and spoke to the importance of the social sciences and economics to the work of Science Division. Dr. Liu further stressed the need to bring the science, policy and business communities together and

his vision of transforming the Science-Policy-Business Forum into an incubator catalyzing collective action to advance the use of science as a priority in across policy-making and business.



UN environment chief Scientist Dialogue with MGs.

Mr. Siim Kiisler, President of the 4th UN Environment Assembly and the Minister of the Environment, Estonia, Meets with the Major Groups

In his opening statement, the President of the 4th UN Environment Assembly, Mr. Siim Kiisler, said that he saw Major Groups and Stakeholders as partners to UNEA and that he had tried to increase the role of the civil society, both during the preparation for UNEA-4 and during the Assembly itself. The ensuing dialogue with the audience lasted over an hour and included the following issues.

Stakeholder involvement in the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) process; the challenges related to the implementation of the

UNEA resolutions; the opportunity for reflection created by the impending 50th anniversary of the 1972 Stockholm Conference; the role of human rights at UNEA; the lack of political ambition with regard to chemicals and waste; the opportunities generated by economic incentives; the governance of geoengineering; and the possibility of an international governance reform of agriculture.

In his response, Mr. Kiisler underlined the need for binding instruments as well as concrete targets and deadlines for the implementation of the UNEA resolutions. He also agreed that some kind of a report recognizing the anniversary of the Stockholm Conference would be welcome, and that human rights should be embraced by environmental governance processes. Mr. Kiisler further stressed the importance of inviting business into the dialogue and noted that this year's Science-Policy-Business forum and UNEA included more business representatives than the earlier Assemblies. Finally, Mr. Kiisler spoke about the imperative for sustainable public procurement and the need for bringing together discussions on agricultural growth and the environment.



UNEA 4 president dialogue with MGs.

Operationalizing local action on circular development in sub Saharan Africa

By allowing waste streams to be reduced, reused and recycled, the circular economy is an opportunity to safeguard resources, create jobs and protect ecosystems. This is particularly relevant for African cities which will experience an eight-fold increase of resource consumption by 2050.

ICLEI – Local governments for sustainability brought together cities, civil society organizations including a waste picker association and global players to discuss key priorities for local circular development in sub-Saharan Africa.

Panelists focused on the necessity to pursue zero waste ambitions, calling for consumers and producers to stop relying on materials that can't be reused or recovered at the end of their lifespan. The session also discussed the importance of integrating informal waste pickers into circular strategies and to build on the extensive knowledge they have on materials to design products that are more sustainable.

Cities and regions have a key role to play in ensuring a more circular development that prioritizes regenerative and closed-loop production patterns.



ICLEI Panel.



Lifestyle Changes based on Values and Ethics – The Role of Faith in promoting Sustainable Consumption and Innovative Technology



The event, Faith for Earth was graced by the presence of Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director designate of UNEP. It was an interesting event as various individuals representing various faiths in the world (CYNESA, Brahma Kumaris, the Anglican Church and the Islamic Relief Worldwide) composed the panel. It was a great incite on how individuals should live in harmony with nature. First, our faith leaders are accessible and so the churches, mosques and even temples are and have been here for longer; they are ready to listen to the cries and criticisms of the youth in matters of addressing climatic issues. In addition, it is essential that faith be involved in policy making in environmental issues, and facilitation of behavioral changes as much as it may be difficult to change old habits. The youth are a moment of growth, who should be rooted in the wisdom of the aged. The youth, according to Pope Francis, is the now of God, not the future and thus, should be involved in matters of environmental sustainability across the globe.



Farmers, IP, Women, B&I MGs delivering their statement in the plenary yesterday.

A Brief History of the Engagement

The 4th UN Environment Assembly approved the 6th Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6). GEO-6 is the most extensive GEO ever attempted, both in its scope and in the number of participants. This UNEA will also start the process toward GEO-7, setting the parameters for participation. It is crucial that UNEA-4 directs the UN Environment to ensure that the Major Groups and Stakeholders have defined and expanded roles in GEO-7.

Initially, the role of the Major Groups in GEO was limited. This started to change during the 1st UN Environment Assembly, where civil society representatives worked with the UN Environment Chief Scientist Jaqueline McGlade requesting the Major Groups be permitted to participate in GEO-6. These representatives intervened a number of times in support of the proposed GEO-6 process on behalf of the Major Group Science and Technology as they have also done at the previous three Assemblies.

Dr. McGlade ensured the Major Group participation to a new unusual extent in GEO-6. The intergovernmental multi-stakeholder consultation in Berlin in 2014 to establish GEO-6 included representatives of all Major Groups.

The Major Groups participation continued through the regional assessments process, in the scientific advisory groups and high-level discussions. Although the number of civil

society representatives working on GEO-6 remained limited, the new process was a major step toward realizing the goals of Paragraph 88 of the Rio+20 Declaration.

As the parameters of the next GEO are established, it is crucial to continue and expand the engagement of Major Groups in the process toward GEO-7. The Major Groups can contribute expertise and wisdom toward not only the science behind GEO-7, but also the science policy that emerges from it and the global implementation by civil society that a sustainable future requires.

Peter Denton, Ph.D.
United Church of Canada
Former Regional Rep. for North America

Editorial Team:

Mohamed Abdelraouf, Gulf Research Center, Co-chair of the MGFC at UN Environment - **Ahmed Fathy**, **Ganna Proskura**, Youth Love Egypt Foundation - **Mike O'maera**, **Marryann Mwende**, PACJA - **Kevin Barrett**, UN-GRASP.