

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for giving me the floor. The Major Groups of Indigenous Peoples, Science and Technology and NGOs very much welcome the resolution proposed by Uruguay on the midterm review of the Montevideo IV Programme.

The Montevideo IV Programme for the development and periodic review of environmental law has laid the foundation for a rights-based approach to justice, governance and law for environmental sustainability. Under Montevideo IV, UNEP's pioneering work on environmental rule of law has strengthened democratic governance, the substantive content of the right to a healthy environment, as well as the legal tools that allow citizens to effectively participate in the social contract. We note that UNEP's work on the Montevideo IV Program has also contributed to the work of other UN spaces, such as the UN Human Rights Council, which has recognized that the realization of human rights depends on a healthy environment.

After five years of implementation of the Programme, it is clear that the world is undergoing significant changes which pose new challenges and present new opportunities for the development of environmental law. For one, 2015 witnessed the successful conclusion of important summits and the adoption of historical agreements that structurally transform the backdrop against which the next five years of Montevideo IV Programme will be implemented. Taking stock of changing landscapes and identifying priority areas for action is thus critical to ensure that the law does not lag behind reality and that UNEP continues to address the key issues of our time.

We wish to congratulate UNEP for organizing an open and inclusive process for the midterm review of Montevideo IV, including the participation of experts and other stakeholders. This process included a meeting held in the capital city of Montevideo, Uruguay, last September, which identified emerging issues and considered priority areas. This meeting of government officials, experts and stakeholders formulated important recommendations to secure stronger outcomes during the second half of the decade covered by the Montevideo IV Programme.

To conclude, Madame Chair, we believe the adoption by UNEA of the resolution proposed by Uruguay sends a strong signal regarding the critical role of environmental law to the strengthening of the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

Thank you very much.