

UNEP - UNEA-3

Proposal for a Resolution on Environment and Health by the European Union and its Member States

- PROVISIONAL Note to UNEP -

The EU and its Member States have the honour to announce their intention to propose a draft resolution on the subject of “Environment and Health” for UNEA-3. This note aims at explaining the rationale, background, approach and content of our proposal. We will submit at a later stage the text of the draft proposed resolution. We invite other Parties to co-sponsor it or to contribute to it.

1. Rationale for a resolution on Environment and Health

The EU and its Member States recognize that pollution, health and environment are inextricably linked and that advancing the environmental agenda means addressing the health agenda, as well as the wider sustainable development agenda. WHO data show that 12.6 million deaths globally, representing 23% of all deaths, were attributable to the environment in 2012. In children under five, up to 26% of all deaths could be prevented, if environmental risks were removed. We emphasize the urgent need for coherent and comprehensive action towards reducing the adverse impacts of pollution on health and the environment.

Preventing pollution and cleaning the environment in smart and innovative ways, using a range of approaches, technologies and methods from various fields, can help not only to reduce pollution but also to be a driver of economic productivity and creation of new jobs.

2. Background

We would like to recall UNEP’s work on the health-environment nexus, including the Ministerial discussions on the health and environment nexus, based on UNEP’s dedicated report “*Healthy environment, healthy people*“, which included recommendations and a list of proposed interventions.

Given that no text was agreed and no actions were taken at UNEA-2, other than those included in sector-specific resolutions, we believe that UNEA-3 could be a good opportunity to follow-up on this issue, closely linked to the theme of pollution. The resolution would urge UNEP to continue to work in close cooperation with WHO and other relevant actors, while avoiding duplication. It would provide an appropriate response to all relevant resolutions related to health and the environment adopted by the World Health Assembly, and also other documents such as the regional Declaration of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Ostrava Conference), and make sure that the environmental sector also provides its expertise.

Further work on these matters is ongoing in various *fora* and organisations, and this should also feed in the discussions at UNEA3, including on this resolution.

3. Approach

We think there is need of a cross-cutting approach and preventive approach to health and the environment issues to contribute synergistically to the 2030 Agenda and its goals and targets. We see the nexus of Environment and Health as a strategic topic with links to many pollution sub-topics and some of suggested resolutions, complementing but not duplicating existing resolutions (e.g. air pollution; chemicals and waste; sustainable consumption and production, etc.) and instruments (e.g. relevant MEAs, SAICM, partnerships, etc.).

Furthermore, many initiatives are taken in different business sectors, which should be supported, built upon and mainstreamed to promote a green economy.

4. Content

In addition to subject-specific resolutions (e.g. air, marine and soil pollution), a crosscutting resolution on health and the environment would cover matters in a concise and focused manner and would:

- Stress the importance of cross-cutting and preventive approach to health and well-being issues and the health benefits of addressing environmental issues such as climate change, environmental pollution and degradation;
- Underline that sustainable consumption and production, circular economy, green economy, sustainable finance, and similar approaches provide key cross-cutting and preventive solutions to tackle pollution and thereby improve synergistically health and the environment;
- Recognize that climate change is a major health risk multiplier, including by aggravating environmental challenges;
- Tackle specific issues such as chemicals and waste, the environmental drivers and management options to deal with antimicrobial resistance; sound (noise) pollution; the potential and benefits for health and well-being of protecting and restoring ecosystems; and identify clear actions and steps of implementation;
- Reinforce and provide guidance on UNEP's mandate on the health-environment nexus, with a particular focus on UNEP's added value and environmental expertise, and urge UNEP to work in close cooperation with WHO and other relevant actors, while avoiding unnecessary duplication and creating synergies;
- Reaffirm the precautionary principle when scientific evidence is inconclusive and there is a substantial environmental risk to human and ecosystem health.
