



1 June 2018

**Comments on behalf of the European Union and its Member States
On Possible Outcomes of the 4th United Nations Environment Assembly**

- The EU and its Member States thank the President of the United Nations Environment Assembly for requesting Member States and stakeholders to provide written inputs on possible outcomes of the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-4).

On the proposed timeline

- We believe that the proposed timeline for the ministerial declaration provides for too early deadlines. The concept note for UNEA-4 has not been agreed yet, and the report of the Executive Director on the theme “Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production” is not yet available. The two main other reports that will provide input to UNEA-4, IRP report and GEO6, are also not yet available. The review of progress on SDG12 is also still to be made during the July High Level Political Forum (HLPF). The overall roadmap could usefully be delayed also to avoid entering too early into drafting negotiations but also to ensure a sound science-policy interface.

EU+MS preliminary comments on possible outcomes of UNEA-4

- **Scene-setter**

- The way and the extent to which societies consume and produce goods and services have key importance for all 3 dimensions of sustainable development. This includes how they extract, use, manage and protect natural resources. It fundamentally shapes the well-being of humanity, the environment, the economy and social conditions. Decoupling economic growth from resource use and environmental degradation in order to address environmental issues, including climate change, and reduce raw material use is more than an imperative; it is an opportunity for a wise use of the limited planetary resources and ecosystem services. Innovation can help us in finding new and better ways to consume and produce, which will allow us to move towards sustainable development.

- **Key priority areas within the agreed theme where we should concentrate our collective interventions towards the next Environment Assembly**

- UNEA should act upon the conclusions of the HLPF that will provide in July 2018 a detailed review of the progress made on SDG 12.

- UNEA may also want to consider developing a high-level contribution to the 2019 HLPF summit.
- **Sustainable consumption and production** is one of the most cost-efficient and effective ways to combine economic development, the reduction of impacts on the environment and climate, and to advance human well-being. The objective of securing sustainable consumption and production patterns is also transversal in nature, in the context of both greening economic sectors and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 12 must be acknowledged as an enabler for the implementation of a range of other global goals and their targets.
- A **broader systemic transformation** will require concerted action from i) scientific institutions, and in particular the IRP, IPBES and the IPCC to understand where we are and what is needed; ii) businesses, to identify and implement solutions and bring net positive impact; iii) policy makers, to create conducive environments, social and physical infrastructure and regulate markets; iv) civil society, to strengthen advocacy and promote behavioural change; v) and international organisations to broker diverse partnerships for innovative solutions. (ref. One Planet network input to the review of SDG 12).
- **Circular economy and resource efficiency:** We believe that with regard to sustainable consumption and production, it is crucial to further strengthen the role of circular economy and resource efficiency. This is needed to reduce the ecological footprint of our people, to achieve international goals such as the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, land-degradation neutrality, and to substantially minimize waste of resources. UNEA should embrace circular economy and resource efficiency building on the IRP report that will be presented at UNEA-4. Building on resolutions from previous sessions, UNEA-4 should also address topical issues such as plastics and marine plastic litter, chemicals and waste, sustainable product policy, important sectors like the textile sector, antimicrobial resistance, water, forests and biodiversity - for example through the concept of natural capital or imported deforestation, resilience and restoration. The positive impact of the circular economy and resource efficiency on climate change mitigation and adaptation should be also underlined.
- Through the lens of its theme, UNEA-4 should also provide political guidance to **two important post-2020 processes**:
 - the development of the **new global framework for biodiversity under the Convention on Biological Diversity**
 - the **beyond 2020 process on a new framework for the sound management of chemicals and waste** (Johannesburg and SDG target 12.4).
- **Clean Mobility and sustainable buildings:** There should be a focus on the importance of development and uptake of technologies for **clean mobility**, which include not only electric-powered cars for personal transportation but also development and use of other technologies and modes of transport, such as hydrogen-powered cars and transformation of biogas to biomethane, and the promotion of cycling and walking, such as through appropriate infrastructure. **Sustainable buildings** can also be highlighted as a means to reduce energy consumption, use of resources and materials and provide healthier spaces for occupants. These solutions could not only help reduce carbon emissions, but also reduce pollutions in urban environments.

- **Environmentally sound and socially acceptable mining:** Another focus should be on mining activities of minerals and metals, which could add social and economic benefits, if negative environmental and social impacts are effectively addressed and minimized, including during post mining closure. Prerequisite are strong capacities of Governments to develop, manage and regulate their mining industries in the interest of sustainable development and globally accepted codes of conduct for mining and processing industries and linkages to the Minamata Convention on Mercury. Additionally continuous improvement of accountability and transparency in the mining sector is necessary.
- As for “innovative solutions”, UNEA should concentrate its attention not only on technologies but also **on behaviours, lifestyles, incentives and institutions.**
- **Possible elements and key messages that could be used as building blocks for the Ministerial Declaration**
 - The Ministerial Declaration should reaffirm the commitment to making fundamental changes in the way societies consume and produce (agreed language from Agenda 2030, as well as SDG12) as they are key drivers of natural resource use, environmental degradation and climate change. It should highlight the fundamental role of sustainable consumption and production at a strategic level for delivering, through improved resource efficiency and lifestyle changes, on the 2030 Agenda. It should recognize the 10YFP as a key mechanism to accelerate the shift towards SCP. It should demonstrate the positive opportunities SCP brings for innovation and the economy. Circular economy, ecodesign, consumer information and behaviour, sustainable procurements, corporate social responsibility, environmental footprint, sound management of chemicals and waste, sustainable buildings and construction, sustainable tourism are among the topics that could usefully be covered in that respect. The declaration should also base itself on UNEA-3 Ministerial Declaration.
 - The Ministerial Declaration should address biodiversity building on the results of the CBD COP 14 and ramping up political mobilization towards an ambitious outcome at COP 15. Through the lens of the UNEA-4 theme, the declaration should highlight how sustainable consumption and production can prevent and reduce human impacts on biodiversity and notably stress/include commitments related to the need to:
 - eliminate deforestation in relation to agricultural commodity trade and welcome the private sector and public initiatives in that respect, as for example expressed in the ‘New York Declaration On Forests’.
 - strengthen the fight against illegal trade in wildlife.
 - achieve land degradation neutrality through sustainable land management and especially halting land take.
 - The Declaration should recall and build on the UNEA-2 and -3 outcomes regarding pollution, specifically addressing plastic issues (by providing political steer to the process launched by the UNEA-3 Resolution on ‘marine litter and microplastics’), and pesticides (that are a key issue at the intersection of the UNEA-3 pollution agenda and both the biodiversity and the chemical and waste topical post-2020 processes), as well as on previous UNEA work, including UNEA-2 discussions on “Healthy Environment, Healthy People” and previous UNEA resolutions.
 - The Ministerial Declaration should mobilize global action to achieve SDG target 8.4 on decoupling. The circular economy offers a good model (for developed and developing countries alike). Resource efficiency and non toxic / detoxified material cycles contributes to both circular economy and sustainable consumption and production and is integral part of them. The declaration should stress the cross-cutting/overarching nature of SCP/SDG 12 - contributing significantly to several SDGs (3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14 and 15).

- **Possible elements for an Implementation Plan against pollution, building on the outcomes of the Third Session of the Environment Assembly**
 - UNEP’s proposal for the development of an UNEA-3 Implementation plan provides a very good basis. The Implementation Plan should include a clear follow-up mechanism for UNEA-3 voluntary commitments. The mechanism should be light and be designed so that it could serve for future UNEAs and foster ownership and action at the national level, be the collection of voluntary commitments reproduced. It should make a clear link to SDGs, notably to ensure compatibility with the follow-up of the SDG14 conference’s voluntary commitments
- **Strategic partnerships and initiatives at national, regional and international levels with a multiplying effect and impact**
 - **The Global Climate Action Agenda (GCAA)**, initiated under the name Lima Paris Action Agenda, was launched to spur rapid climate action, boost cooperation between governments, local authorities, the business community, investors, and civil society, and to support the adoption and the implementation of the Paris Agreement. The GCAA catalysed unprecedented multi-stakeholder actions and commitments to build resilient and sustainable societies at various levels (local, regional and global). It currently consists of some 80 coalitions, involves more than 7,300 cities and local governments, and 2,100 private sector companies from over 183 countries, and it helps implementing innovative and sustainable actions worldwide. As such, the GCAA bottom-up approach offers a successful example that should inspire implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the development of the UNEA-3 Implementation Plan and UNEA-4. Furthermore, with initiatives dedicated, among other issues, to energy (e.g. “Mission Innovation”, “African renewable energy initiative”), water (e.g. “Business Alliance for Water and Climate”, “Global Clean Water Desalination Alliance”) or soils (“4 per 1000 initiative”), the GCAA initiatives already provide a range of concrete and innovative solutions that are in line with the UNEA-4 theme.
 - **10YFP / One Planet Network:** UNEA-4 should contribute to the implementation of the 2018-2022 strategy “One Plan for One Planet” which has been designed to implement the commitments of the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, the global framework of action to enhance international cooperation to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production globally (see also point 2).
 - **Global pact for the environment.** UNEA-4 should contribute to the process launched by the UNGA resolution “Towards a global pact for the environment”.
 - Other partnerships that we would like to refer are **G7 Resource Efficiency Alliance, G20 Resource Efficiency Dialogue, G20 Energy and Environment Ministerial Meeting**, as well as **Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE)** and the **EU Switch To Green Flagship Initiative**.
- **Identification of strategic innovative solutions for environmental challenges that could have far-reaching positive impacts if implemented globally**
 - **Circular economy:** Building circularity into production processes and supply chains and key economic sectors was identified as a key action required to achieve system-wide, long-term change to curb pollution in the UNEA3 background report. The products-chemicals-waste interface is also essential and directly links with the global commitment to effectively tackle pollution, through prevention and addressing problems at source.

- **Nature-based solutions:** there is growing recognition that solutions that use and deploy the properties of ecosystems and the services provide sustainable, cost-effective, multi-purpose and flexible alternatives for various objectives, including climate change adaptation and mitigation. For instance, agroecology would strongly contribute to bringing about the much needed transition to more sustainable food systems. Fundamentally innovative, agroecology is based on applying ecological concepts and principles to optimize interactions between plants, animals, humans and the environment while taking into consideration the social aspects that need to be addressed for a sustainable and fair food system.
 - **Wider application of environmental and social aspects in a public procurement:** Public sector could play a key role in changing production and consumption patterns if it would systematically include environmental and social impact over the whole supply chain as a major factor into its public procurement processes.
 - **Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS):** Better promotion of this environmental management instrument for use in private sector could improve environmental performance of organizations mainly in areas of energy efficiency and waste reduction.
 - **Environmental Labelling:** While some environmental labels are relatively common in some areas, wider use of environmental labelling and including important environmental information about products can be instrumental in changing consumer patterns.
 - **International Resource Panel:** the IRP has done a lot of work on this, and in particular has published a recent landmark report on resource requirements for future urbanisation. Another interesting report on refurbishment, remanufacturing, repair and direct reuse (RRRDR or value-retention policies) should be released around the coming summer. Work is also ongoing on governance aspects of mineral resources extraction, as well as on links between resource efficiency and climate change (advanced drafts should be ready soon enough to inform UNEA-4 preparations).
 - The EU+MS would like to also refer to the database of the **Green Growth Knowledge Platform (GGKP)** and the work of the **10YFP/One Planet Network**, the **Switch To Green (Med, Africa, Asia)**, the **Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE)**, and the **Platform Acceleration Circular Economy (PACE)**.
 - The EU+MS are open to discuss further.
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