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**United Nations Environment Assembly of the  
United Nations Environment Programme  
Fifth session**

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Item 5 of the provisional agenda

**International environmental policy and governance issues**

**Compilation of Statements and Recommendations by Major Groups  
and Stakeholders from Africa, West Asia, Europe and Latin  
America and the Caribbean for Consideration by the United Nations  
Environment Assembly at its Fifth Session**

**Note by the Secretariat**

**Introduction**

1. The annex to this report presents the outcomes of the regional consultative meetings of Major Groups and Stakeholders in Africa, West Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean as well as Europe that were held during 2020 in preparation for the fifth United Nations Environment Assembly. The statements, key messages and recommendations are reproduced as received, without formal editing. The African group submitted their statement in English and French, the Latin American and Caribbean region submitted their statement in Spanish and English and the West Asian region has a statement in English and Arabic. The Asia Pacific region will hold its Regional Consultations in 2021 in preparation of the fifth Assembly in 2022.
2. In preparation for the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5), the United Nations Environment Programme's Regional Offices and elected Regional Facilitators from major groups hosted a series of virtual meetings and consultations on the theme of the fifth Environment Assembly UNEA-5 "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals", the Medium Term Strategy and the Programme of Work as well their regional priorities.
3. Most of the statements and recommendations were also presented to the regional ministerial fora for their consideration by the major groups and stakeholders.

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\* In accordance with the decisions taken at the meeting of the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly held on 8 October 2020 and at the joint meeting of the Bureaux of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives held on 1 December 2020, the fifth session of the Assembly is expected to adjourn on 23 February 2021 and resume as an in-person meeting in February 2022.

## Annex

### I. Africa

English

#### **African major groups and stakeholder's contribution and key messages to the 8th special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) and the fifth UN Environment Assembly (UNEA)**

*We, comprising of Major Groups and Stakeholders from the African region, gathered virtually to discuss how Africa can enhance environmental action for effective post-COVID recovery and our contribution to the Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment, agree on the following key messages to AMCEN:*

*Noting with concern that the IPBES' 2019 IPBES Global Assessment on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services finding that Human actions threaten more species with global extinction now than ever before and that by 2100, climate change could also result in the loss of more than half of African bird and mammal species, a 20-30% decline in the productivity of Africa's lakes and significant loss of African plant species and that Africa's extreme vulnerability to the impacts of climate change will have severe consequences for economically marginalized populations in Africa.*

*Noting further with concern the threat that climate change poses to the future existence of humanity, including the negative impact it has on the achievement of sustainable development goals, and the fact that Africa continues to suffer most despite its minimal contribution to global emissions. Climate change is increasingly evident in the increase in frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as heat waves, heavy rain, drought, wildfires and coastal flooding events. All of which result in negative impacts to human health, livelihoods, human rights and animal health.*

*Deeply conscious of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Africa and the need to urgently address threats to the environment particularly wildlife and ecosystems and the opportunity it presents to call for urgent action to tackle multifaceted environmental problems in Africa, which are growingly exacerbated by several interactive forces.*

*Alarmed that the postponement of several global sustainable development and environmental focused events is translating in a lack of support for urgently needed action.*

We, African Major Groups and Stakeholders

#### 1. **Biodiversity**

- 1.1. **Call for** a well-articulated Declaration from AMCEN that highlights the urgency of action at the highest levels to prevent, halt & reverse the degradation and loss of ecosystems and species; promote conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and ensure fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of biodiversity and associated traditional knowledge in order to contribute to an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework and to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and place Africa on a path towards realizing the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity.
- 1.2. **Call for** accelerated action aimed at realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development and promoting investment in sustainable management, conservation and restoration of ecosystems in order to provide services that help people adapt to climate change as part of action to enhance the implementation of the Pan-African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration for Increased Resilience which part of Africa's commitment to implementing the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) without jeopardizing benefits for indigenous peoples and local communities.
- 1.3. **Call for** action that promotes participatory, human rights-based, accountable and gender-sensitive and inclusive frameworks for action and demonstrate a commitment to scale up the implementation of the African Strategy on Combating Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa through consultations and involvement of civil society, major group and stakeholder in assessment and monitoring of Africa's effort to address biodiversity including efforts to address illegal wildlife and biodiversity trade as a move to promote accountability and ensure strong,

implementable, measurable and universally applicable measures to ensure compliance and address environmental crimes.

- 1.4. **Call for** action that addresses the lack of enforcement, the problem of implementation & compliance of environmental law through by the development of comprehensive legal frameworks for nature action at regional and national levels, which builds synergies and coherence across provisions of Multilateral Environmental Agreements, human rights instruments & the Sustainable Development Goals and revolutionize the enforcement of laws related to biodiversity - its interlinkages with climate change, pandemic prevention, poverty and other development issues and objectives.

We, African Major Groups and Stakeholders

## 2. Climate Change

- 2.1. **Urge** African leaders to set the pace, in the context of sustainable development, by driving African climate action towards pursuing and achieving a world on a pathway of resilience, transition to low carbon and carbon neutral economies focused on articulating, kick-starting and pursuing concrete measurable efforts to limit warming to 1.5 degree Celsius.
- 2.2. **Stress the urgency** of strengthening multilevel regional and national environmental governance in Africa for Climate Action.
- 2.3. **Recommend to** invest in education, enhanced institutional capacity building, development of integrated policy instruments, free movement of technological innovation and transfer and mobilization of finance aligned with the long-term finance goals of the Paris Agreement without jeopardizing human rights and development commitments.

We, African Major Groups and Stakeholders

## 3. Plastic Pollution

- 3.1. **Commend** African Ministers' commitment to supporting global action to address plastic pollution including reinforcing existing agreements and the option of a new global agreement on plastic pollution that takes a comprehensive approach to addressing the full life cycle of plastics as stated in the Durban Declaration in the 7th Session of AMCEN.
- 3.2. **Recognise** the convergence of support, including that from the Africa Group representatives, for a new global legally binding agreement on plastic pollution as the preferred response option at the fourth session of the UN Ad-Hoc Expert Group on Marine litter and Microplastics.
- 3.3. **Call for** a Declaration from AMCEN to reinforce African Countries' commitment to work towards a new global response on plastic pollution that takes a comprehensive approach to address the full lifecycle of plastics, from production and design to waste prevention and management, while ensuring coherence and coordination of activities undertaken by existing regional and international instruments. Such a response needs to address technology transfer, research on alternatives to plastic, and adequate financing to enable African countries to implement the agreement. We underscore the need for a global agreement to address, inter alia, technology transfer, research on alternatives to plastic, and adequate financing to enable African countries to implement the agreement. We call for the establishment of an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to start negotiations on an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution.

We, African Major Groups and Stakeholders

## 4. African Green Stimulus Programme

- 4.1. **Strongly invite** AMCEN to commit to support an inclusive African Green Stimulus to achieve the SDGs targets by 2030 through revitalizing economies and livelihoods and mainstreaming environmental concerns into all policies and tools promoting economic recovery.
- 4.2. **Underline** that there should be a demonstrable plan exploring and utilizing green economy pathways, increasing resource efficiency, environmentally sound business models and sustainable finance, and by reducing greenhouse gas emissions while adapting to climate change in line with the Paris Agreement.
- 4.3. **Underscore** that we all have to work towards enhancing the resilience of our economies and societies to future crises, and contributing to poverty eradication, putting people on a trajectory towards a healthy and harmonious relationship with nature, including when it comes to animal health.

We, African Major Groups and Stakeholders

## 5. Enhancing Implementation of AMCEN Decisions

- 5.1. **Recognise** the role that AMCEN has played in providing a platform for the African governments and stakeholders to deliberate, form common position and find solutions to address environment-related challenges at the continental level.
- 5.2. **Indicate**, based on the preliminary findings of a study conducted within the African Major Groups and Stakeholders,
  - (i) *Our concern* on the inadequate translation of such solutions, in terms of decisions, from the AMCEN level to the respective Member States with limited implementation at the national and sub-national levels.
  - (ii) *Our conviction* that AMCEN should develop and operationalise a robust, clear and transparent monitoring, evaluation and learning mechanism that will regularly track progress, assess the results of implementation of the agreed decisions at the regional and national levels, and document best practices.
  - (iii) *Our Encouragement to* Member States to commit to environment discourse, strengthen their resource mobilisation strategies at the national level and fulfil their annual compulsory contribution of USD 10,000 to the AMCEN's general trust fund,
  - (iv) *Our Invitation to* Member States to strictly curb illicit financial flows from African natural capital that still hamper implementation of environment-related and sustainable development initiatives through a loss of natural and financial resources of up to USD 195 billion annually.

We, African Major Groups and Stakeholders

## 6. The Path Forward

- 6.1. **Call on** the leaders of Africa to commit to and support ambitious, accelerated and transformative action that delivers nature-based solutions to climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution for effective and sustainable post-COVID recovery.
- 6.2. **Further call** upon our African governments to foster a strategic partnership with African Major Groups and Stakeholders to further enhance implementation of AMCEN decisions at both regional and national levels. The African governments can leverage on African Major Groups and Stakeholders' technical expertise, networks with key stakeholders, linkages to communities and mobilisation of financial and human resources. To benefit from these, both AMCEN and Member States should enhance the African Major Groups and Stakeholders participation at the AMCEN

processes and provide a conducive environment to contribute at the national level from planning, implementation to monitoring and evaluation.

*French/ Français*

## **Contribution des grands groupes et parties prenantes africains et messages clés à la 8e session spéciale de la conférence ministérielle africaine sur l'environnement**

*Nous, qui sommes composés de grands groupes et de parties prenantes de la région africaine, nous sommes réunis virtuellement pour discuter de la manière dont l'Afrique peut renforcer l'action environnementale en vue d'une récupération post-COVID efficace et de notre contribution à la Conférence ministérielle africaine sur l'environnement, nous convenons des messages clés suivants à l'intention de la CMAE:*

*Notant avec inquiétude* que l'évaluation mondiale de la biodiversité et des services écosystémiques de l'IPBES de 2019 conclut que les actions humaines menacent aujourd'hui plus que jamais d'extinction mondiale et que d'ici 2100, les changements climatiques pourraient également entraîner la disparition de plus de la moitié des espèces d'oiseaux et de mammifères africains, une baisse de 20 à 30 % de la productivité des lacs africains et une perte importante d'espèces végétales africaines, et que l'extrême vulnérabilité de l'Afrique aux effets du changement climatique aura de graves conséquences pour les populations africaines économiquement marginalisées.

*Notant en outre avec inquiétude* la menace que le changement climatique fait peser sur l'existence future de l'humanité, notamment l'impact négatif qu'il a sur la réalisation des objectifs de développement durable, et le fait que l'Afrique continue de souffrir le plus malgré sa contribution minimale aux émissions mondiales. Le changement climatique est de plus en plus évident dans l'augmentation de la fréquence et de l'intensité des phénomènes météorologiques extrêmes tels que les vagues de chaleur, les fortes pluies, la sécheresse, les incendies de forêt et les inondations côtières. Tous ces phénomènes ont des effets négatifs sur la santé humaine, les moyens de subsistance, les droits de l'homme et la santé animale.

*Profondément conscients* des effets de la pandémie COVID-19 sur l'Afrique et de la nécessité de s'attaquer d'urgence aux menaces qui pèsent sur l'environnement, en particulier sur la faune et les écosystèmes, et de l'occasion qu'elle offre d'appeler à une action urgente pour s'attaquer aux problèmes environnementaux multiformes en Afrique, qui sont de plus en plus exacerbés par plusieurs forces interactives.

*Alarmés* par le fait que le report de plusieurs événements mondiaux axés sur le développement durable et l'environnement se traduit par un manque de soutien pour les actions urgentes.

Nous, grands groupes et parties prenantes africains

### **1. Biodiversité**

- 1.1. **Appelons** à une déclaration bien articulée de la CMAE qui souligne l'urgence d'une action au plus haut niveau pour prévenir, arrêter et inverser la dégradation et la perte des écosystèmes et des espèces ; promouvoir la conservation et l'utilisation durable de la biodiversité, et assurer un partage juste et équitable des avantages découlant de l'utilisation de la biodiversité et des connaissances traditionnelles associées afin de contribuer à un cadre mondial ambitieux pour la biodiversité après 2020 et à l'Agenda 2030 pour le développement durable et de placer l'Afrique sur la voie de la réalisation de la Vision 2050 pour la biodiversité.
- 1.2. **Appelons** à une action accélérée visant à concrétiser la décennie d'action et de réalisation pour le développement durable et à promouvoir l'investissement dans la gestion durable, la conservation et la restauration des écosystèmes afin de fournir des services qui aident les populations à s'adapter au changement climatique dans le cadre de l'action visant à renforcer la mise en œuvre du programme d'action panafricain sur la restauration des écosystèmes pour une résilience accrue qui fait partie de l'engagement de l'Afrique à mettre en œuvre la décennie des Nations unies sur la restauration des écosystèmes (2021-2030) sans compromettre les avantages pour les peuples autochtones et les communautés locales.

- 1.3. **Appelons** à une action qui favorise des cadres d'action participatifs, fondés sur les droits de l'homme, responsables et tenant compte de l'égalité des sexes, et qui démontre un engagement à intensifier la mise en œuvre de la Stratégie africaine de lutte contre l'exploitation illégale et le commerce illégal de la faune et de la flore sauvages en Afrique par des consultations et la participation de la société civile, des grands groupes et des parties prenantes à l'évaluation et au suivi des efforts de l'Afrique en matière de biodiversité, y compris les efforts visant à lutter contre le commerce illégal de la faune et de la flore sauvages, afin de promouvoir la responsabilité et de garantir des mesures fortes, applicables, mesurables et universellement applicables pour assurer le respect des règles et lutter contre les crimes environnementaux.
- 1.4. **Appelons** à l'action pour remédier au manque d'application, au problème de la mise en œuvre et du respect du droit de l'environnement par l'élaboration de cadres juridiques complets pour les actions en faveur de la nature aux niveaux régional et national, qui créent des synergies et une cohérence entre les dispositions des accords environnementaux multilatéraux, les instruments relatifs aux droits de l'homme et les objectifs de développement durable et qui révolutionnent l'application des lois relatives à la biodiversité - ses liens avec le changement climatique, la prévention des pandémies, la pauvreté et d'autres questions et objectifs de développement.

Nous, grands groupes et parties prenantes africains

## 2. Changements climatiques

- 2.1. **Exhortons** les dirigeants africains à donner le rythme, dans le contexte du développement durable, en orientant l'action africaine en matière de climat vers la poursuite et la réalisation d'un monde sur la voie de la résilience, de la transition vers des économies à faible émission de carbone et neutres en carbone, axées sur l'articulation, le démarrage et la poursuite d'efforts concrets et mesurables pour limiter le réchauffement à 1,5 degré Celsius.
- 2.2. **Soulignons** l'urgence de renforcer la gouvernance environnementale multi-niveaux, régionale et nationale en Afrique pour l'action sur le climat.
- 2.3. **Recommandons** d'investir dans l'éducation, le renforcement des capacités institutionnelles, le développement d'instruments politiques intégrés, la libre circulation de l'innovation technologique et le transfert et la mobilisation de financements alignés sur les objectifs financiers à long terme de l'accord de Paris sans compromettre les engagements en matière de droits de l'homme et de développement.

Nous, grands groupes et parties prenantes africains

## 3. Pollution plastique

- 3.1. **Saluons** l'engagement des ministres africains à soutenir l'action mondiale pour lutter contre la pollution plastique, notamment en renforçant les accords existants et l'option d'un nouvel accord mondial sur la pollution plastique qui adopte une approche globale pour aborder le cycle de vie complet des plastiques, comme indiqué dans la déclaration de Durban lors de la 7e session de la CMAE.
- 3.2. **Reconnaissons** la convergence du soutien, y compris celui des représentants du groupe Afrique, en faveur d'un nouvel accord mondial juridiquement contraignant sur la pollution plastique, comme option de réponse privilégiée lors de la quatrième session du groupe d'experts ad hoc des Nations unies sur les déchets marins et les microplastiques.
- 3.3. **Appelons** à une déclaration de la CMAE pour renforcer l'engagement des pays africains à travailler à une nouvelle réponse mondiale sur la pollution plastique qui adopte une approche globale pour aborder le cycle de vie complet des plastiques, de la production et la conception à la prévention et la gestion des déchets, tout en assurant la cohérence et la coordination des activités entreprises par les

instruments régionaux et internationaux existants. Une telle réponse doit porter sur le transfert de technologies, la recherche de solutions de rechange au plastique et un financement adéquat pour permettre aux pays africains de mettre en œuvre l'accord. Nous soulignons la nécessité d'un accord mondial portant, entre autres, sur le transfert de technologies, la recherche de solutions de remplacement du plastique et un financement adéquat pour permettre aux pays africains de mettre en œuvre l'accord. Nous demandons la création d'un comité de négociation intergouvernemental pour entamer les négociations sur un instrument international juridiquement contraignant sur la pollution par les plastiques.

Nous, grands groupes et parties prenantes africains

#### 4. Programme de relance vert africain

- 4.1. **Invitons fermement** la CMAE à s'engager à soutenir un plan de relance vert africain inclusif pour atteindre les objectifs des ODDs d'ici 2030 en revitalisant les économies et les moyens de subsistance et en intégrant les préoccupations environnementales dans toutes les politiques et tous les outils de promotion de la reprise économique.
- 4.2. **Soulignons** qu'il devrait y avoir un plan démontrable explorant et utilisant les voies de l'économie verte, augmentant l'efficacité des ressources, les modèles d'affaires écologiquement rationnels et le financement durable, et en réduisant les émissions de gaz à effet de serre tout en s'adaptant au changement climatique conformément à l'Accord de Paris.
- 4.3. **Soulignons** que nous devons tous nous efforcer d'améliorer la résilience de nos économies et de nos sociétés face aux crises futures, et contribuer à l'éradication de la pauvreté, en mettant les gens sur la voie d'une relation saine et harmonieuse avec la nature, y compris en ce qui concerne la santé animale.

Nous, grands groupes et parties prenantes africains

#### 5. Améliorer la mise en œuvre des décisions de la CMAE

- 5.1. **Reconnaissons** le rôle que la CMAE a joué en fournissant une plate-forme aux gouvernements africains et aux parties prenantes pour délibérer, élaborer une position commune et trouver des solutions pour relever les défis liés à l'environnement au niveau continental.
- 5.2. **Indiquons**, sur la base des résultats préliminaires d'une étude menée au sein des grands groupes et parties prenantes africains,
  - (i) Notre préoccupation quant à la traduction inadéquate de ces solutions, en termes de décisions, du niveau de la CMAE vers les États membres respectifs avec une mise en œuvre limitée aux niveaux national et infranational.
  - (ii) Notre conviction que la CMAE devrait élaborer et rendre opérationnel un mécanisme de suivi, d'évaluation et d'apprentissage solide, clair et transparent qui permettra de suivre régulièrement les progrès, d'évaluer les résultats de la mise en œuvre des décisions convenues aux niveaux régional et national, et de documenter les meilleures pratiques.
  - (iii) Notre encouragement aux États membres à s'engager dans le discours sur l'environnement, à renforcer leurs stratégies de mobilisation des ressources au niveau national et à s'acquitter de leur contribution annuelle obligatoire de 10 000 USD au fonds général d'affectation spéciale du CMAE,
  - (iv) Notre invitation aux États membres à freiner strictement les flux financiers illicites provenant du capital naturel africain qui entravent encore la mise en œuvre des initiatives liées à l'environnement et au développement durable par une perte de ressources naturelles et financières pouvant atteindre 195 milliards de dollars par an.

## 6. La voie à suivre

- 6.1. **Nous appelons** les dirigeants africains à s'engager et à soutenir une action ambitieuse, accélérée et transformatrice qui apporte des solutions fondées sur la nature aux changements climatiques, à la perte de biodiversité et à la pollution pour une reprise efficace et durable après la catastrophe.
  
- 6.2. **Nous demandons** en outre à nos gouvernements africains de favoriser un partenariat stratégique avec les grands groupes et les parties prenantes africains afin de renforcer encore la mise en œuvre des décisions de la CMAE aux niveaux régional et national. Les gouvernements africains peuvent s'appuyer sur l'expertise technique des grands groupes et parties prenantes africains, les réseaux avec les principales parties prenantes, les liens avec les communautés et la mobilisation des ressources financières et humaines. Pour en tirer parti, la CMAE et les États membres devraient renforcer la participation des grands groupes et des parties prenantes africains aux processus de la CMAE et créer un environnement propice à la contribution au niveau national, de la planification à la mise en œuvre, en passant par le suivi et l'évaluation.



## II. Latin America and the Caribbean

### Messages from major groups from Latin America and the Caribbean

#### *English*

If where there is a need a right is born, let us remember that in our region the needs have never been greater: poverty and social exclusion; biodiversity loss; increase of emissions; ecocide and socio environmental conflicts; indiscriminate application of pesticides; thousands of sources of fires; tons of waste flowing into the sea; privatization of public spaces; exploitation of protected natural areas and the territories of Indigenous People; increasing vulnerability to extreme events; appropriation of nature and wild extractive operations; institutional weakness and corruption. Where are the guarantees of the right to a healthy environment? These needs, dear delegates, are severely neglected and we do not see even a slight change of course that will separate us from the patterns that brought us here.

We could list the countless ways in which investments in nature contribute to the eradication of poverty, job creation, economic prosperity, human and ecosystem health, sustainable food systems, the fight against climate change and the environmental governance... but you already know them. The reports of the IPCC, GEO, IPBES, *Laudato si'*, the Speech of the Secretary General of the United Nations at Columbia University: "The State of the Planet" and the drafts of the decisions of UNEA-5 are clear in this regard. There is no lack of knowledge, there is a lack of commitments and actions.

In political spaces, commitments should not arise from private will, which comes and goes, but from collective responsibility, which is assumed with policies and sustained with facts. We know these responsibilities are differentiated, which is why we accompany them side by side in demanding that the most powerful nations bear the main costs of environmental protection. But they are also common. Where are the common but differentiated responsibilities of our governments with their People, of corporations with consumers and workers, of adults with children and the youth reflected in facts? The weakest are always the main losers, and you, Ministers of the Environment, are among the powerful.

We do not come to ask that you make great commitments to environmental justice and the protection of Life on Earth, but we do ask that those who assume these commitments, fulfill them. The implementation gap between the decisions adopted by the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean and the United Nations Environment Assembly is dreadful. However, they come together year after year to evaluate what has been done and conclude that it is very little, to analyze the challenges and recognize that there are many, and re-commit to adopting measures that end up being a dead letter the moment the lights in the meeting room are turned off and each delegate returns home. Over time, it is worth wondering if they are not supporting a structure that has lost meaning and we, as the Civil Society, must ask ourselves if we stopped being witnesses and have become accomplices.

We speak of the principle of non-regression as if it were not systematically violated in the facts every time we change the subject and transfer funds from one place to another. Because funds do not grow to the extent that problems do and without funding there are no solutions. UNEA-5 will focus on "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals", but how are we doing with the Innovative Solutions of UNEA-4? What happened to UNEA-3's Pollution-Free Planet? How was the science-policy interface of UNEA-2 strengthened? And we could go on for hours exposing the huge gap between what is said and the facts.

The XVI Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, which took place in Santo Domingo in 2008, approved Decision 13 on "Strengthening the participation of the Major Groups of Agenda 21". It was agreed there to "*Promote the strengthening of the UNEP Regional Forums for Civil Society, encouraging the availability of resources for their implementation, as well as broadening and diversifying the base of representatives of the nine major groups (...)*" and "*Supporting the implementation of national and sub-regional consultation processes prior to the Regional Forums, favoring the participation of representatives of all the major groups*". From then until now, the Regional Consultation Meetings have been shorter, smaller, and less representative. Today we could ask for the same, but we are content to request that the support for participation be at least like what we had 12 years ago. Paradoxically, going backward would be a significant improvement compared to what we have today. That is how much we have regressed.

In many countries in the region, we have a broad regulatory framework on environmental matters, however, these laws become a repealed role as there are no institutions to guarantee their effectiveness and application. That is why we call on the importance of the Environmental Rule of Law. It requires not only rules, but also institutions that apply those

rules so that they are not a dead letter. It is necessary that the laws also adapt to new events and that they begin to practice governance and environmental justice, where ecocides and crimes against the community of Life do not go unpunished.

We are entering the United Nations' Decade for Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030. We will do, as we always do, everything we can so that this effort does not fall on two Agencies and 194 countries, but that it may be a task embraced by the 9 major groups and the unorganized global community.

But we also ask ourselves, what was left of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)? Where was the leading role that UNEP once had in environmental education and youth participation lost? What happened to the TUNZA Strategy adopted by the Board of Directors in 2003 and reaffirmed in 2009? And the GEO Youth that was the pride of Latin America and the Caribbean? Ozzy Ozone? Youth XChange? The children's painting contests? The children and youth' conferences? Nothing remains, nothing but outdated publications, old photos, broken links, and memories of what we were once a part of. Decades pass and problems persist. We therefore ask that the United Nations Decade for the Restoration of Ecosystems 2021-2030 does not mean leaving debts unpaid. Without education there is no restoration.

This year has shown, like no other, the vulnerability of the human species. COVID-19 has been, without a doubt, the worst blow that most of us can remember. Agenda 21 warned that "The cost of inaction could exceed the financial cost of the implementation" and that inaction would limit the options of future generations (A21.33.4). Well, we are paying for it, in bills and in human lives. The options are not the same as 28 years ago and that is why today we must think about the Green Recovery to COVID-19.

We will be alongside our governments helping each community to stand up and helping humanity to heal wounds, but are we today, even one step closer to preventing this from happening again? The answer is no, because this, which should have been an inescapable wake-up call about the consequences of our destructive link to the planet, ended up limiting itself to containing damage without an analysis of the causes and a rethinking of our way of inhabiting the Earth.

We want to talk about Environmental Governance and cooperation. Let's talk about how UNEP will work together with the World Health Organization (WHO) so that not a single citizen is left unaware that COVID-19 could have been prevented and that preventing new pandemics comes hand in hand with environmental protection.

Or better yet, let's stop talking and push the action. If not now when?

### *Spanish/ Español*

Si donde hay una necesidad nace un derecho, permítannos recordar que en nuestra región las necesidades nunca han sido más grandes: pobreza y exclusión social; pérdida de biodiversidad; incremento de las emisiones; ecocidio y conflictos socioambientales; aplicación indiscriminada de agrotóxicos; miles de focos de incendios; toneladas de residuos fluyendo al mar; privatización de espacios públicos; explotación de áreas naturales protegidas y territorios de Pueblos Indígenas; vulnerabilidad creciente frente a eventos extremos; apropiación de la naturaleza y extractivismo salvaje; debilidad institucional y corrupción. ¿Dónde están las garantías del derecho a un ambiente sano? Estas necesidades, estimadas delegadas y delegados, están severamente desatendidas y no vemos siquiera un ligero cambio de rumbo que nos aparte de los patrones que nos trajeron hasta aquí.

Podríamos enumerar las incontables formas en las cuales las inversiones en naturaleza contribuyen a la erradicación de la pobreza, la generación de empleo, la prosperidad económica, la salud humana y de los ecosistemas, los sistemas alimentarios sostenibles, la lucha contra el cambio climático y la gobernanza ambiental... pero ya las conocen. Los informes del IPCC, el GEO, IPBES, Laudato si, el Discurso del Secretario General de Naciones Unidas en la Universidad de Columbia: "El Estado del Planeta" y los borradores mismos de las decisiones de la ANUMA-5 son claros al respecto. No faltan conocimientos, faltan compromisos y acciones.

En los espacios políticos los compromisos no deberían emanar de la voluntad particular, que va y viene, sino de la responsabilidad colectiva, que se asume con políticas y se sostiene con hechos. Esas responsabilidades sabemos que son diferenciadas, por lo cual los acompañamos codo a codo en el reclamo de que sean las Naciones más poderosas las que corran con los costos principales de la protección ambiental. Pero también son comunes. ¿Dónde están plasmadas con hechos las responsabilidades comunes pero diferenciadas de nuestros gobiernos con sus Pueblos, de las corporaciones con los consumidores y trabajadores, de los adultos con los niños y jóvenes? Siempre los más débiles son los principales perdedores y ustedes, Ministras y Ministros de Ambiente, están entre los poderosos.

No venimos a pedir que asuman grandes compromisos con la justicia ambiental y la protección de la Vida en la Tierra, pero sí que los que asuman, los cumplan. La brecha de implementación entre las decisiones adoptadas por el Foro de Ministros de Medio Ambiente de América Latina y el Caribe y la Asamblea de las Naciones Unidas para el Medio Ambiente, es pavorosa. Sin embargo, se juntan año tras año a evaluar lo que se ha hecho y concluir que es poco, analizar los desafíos y reconocer que son muchos, y volver a comprometerse a adoptar medidas que terminan siendo letra muerta en el momento mismo en que se apagan las luces del salón y cada delegado regresa a casa. Con el correr del tiempo cabe preguntarse si no están sosteniendo una estructura que ha perdido sentido y nosotros, como sociedad civil, debemos preguntarnos si dejamos de ser testigos y nos hemos transformado en cómplices.

Hablamos del principio de no regresión como si no fuera violado sistemáticamente en los hechos cada vez que cambiamos de tema y pasamos los fondos de un casillero a otro. Porque los fondos no crecen en la medida en que lo hacen los problemas y sin financiamiento no hay soluciones. La ANUMA-5 se enfocará en “Fortalecer la acción por la naturaleza para lograr los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible”, pero ¿cómo vamos con las Soluciones Innovadoras de la ANUMA-4? ¿Qué pasó con el Planeta libre de contaminación de la ANUMA-3? ¿Cómo fue fortalecida la interfaz ciencia - política de la ANUMA-2? Y así podríamos seguir por horas poniendo en evidencia la enorme brecha entre los dichos y los hechos.

La XVI Reunión del Foro de Ministros de Medio Ambiente de América Latina y el Caribe, que tuvo lugar en Santo Domingo, en 2008, aprobó la Decisión 13 sobre “Fortalecimiento de la participación de los Grupos Principales de la Agenda 21”. Allí se acordó “Promover el fortalecimiento de los Foros Regionales del PNUMA para la Sociedad Civil, alentando la disponibilidad de recursos para su realización, así como ampliar y diversificar la base de representantes de los nueve grupos principales (...)” y “Apoyar la realización de procesos de consultas nacionales y subregionales previas a los Foros Regionales, favoreciendo que en ellas participen representantes de todos los grupos principales”. Desde ese entonces hasta hoy las Reuniones Regionales de Consulta han sido cada vez más breves, más pequeñas y menos representativas. Podríamos hoy pedir lo mismo, pero nos conformamos con solicitar que el apoyo a la participación sea al menos similar a la que tuvimos 12 años atrás. Paradójicamente, volver atrás sería una mejora significativa respecto de lo que hoy tenemos. Tanto así hemos retrocedido.

En muchos países de la región, tenemos un marco normativo en materia ambiental amplio, sin embargo, esas leyes se convierten en papel derogado al no existir instituciones que garanticen su eficacia y aplicación. Por eso hacemos un llamado a la importancia del Estado de Derecho Ambiental. Se requiere no solo de normas, sino además de instituciones que apliquen esas normas para que no sean letra muerta. Es necesario que las leyes se adapten también a los nuevos acontecimientos y que se comience a practicar la gobernanza y justicia ambiental, donde los ecodios y crimes en contra la comunidad de Vida no sigan impunes.

Ahora bien, estamos entrando en la Década de las Naciones Unidas para la Restauración de los Ecosistemas 2021-2030. Pondremos, como siempre lo hacemos, todo de nuestra parte para que este esfuerzo no recaiga en dos agencias y 194 países, sino que sea una tarea abrazada por los 9 grupos principales y la comunidad global no organizada.

Pero también nos preguntamos, ¿qué quedó del Decenio de las Naciones Unidas de la Educación para el Desarrollo Sostenible (2005-2014)? ¿Dónde se perdió el protagonismo que algún día tuvo el PNUMA en materia de educación ambiental y participación juvenil? ¿Qué pasó con la Estrategia Tunza adoptada por el Consejo de Administración en 2003 y reafirmada en 2009? ¿Y el GEO Juvenil que fue orgullo de América Latina y el Caribe? ¿Ozzy Ozone? ¿YouthXChange? ¿Los concursos de pintura infantil? ¿Las conferencias de niños y jóvenes? Nada queda, más que publicaciones desactualizadas, fotos viejas, enlaces rotos y recuerdos en los que alguna vez fuimos parte. Las décadas pasan y los problemas persisten. Pedimos entonces que la Década de las Naciones Unidas para la Restauración de los Ecosistemas 2021-2030 no signifique dejar deudas sin saldar. Sin educación no hay restauración.

Este año ha demostrado como ningún otro la vulnerabilidad de la especie humana. El COVID-19 ha representado sin lugar a dudas el más duro golpe del que la mayoría de nosotros tiene memoria. La Agenda 21 advertía que “El costo de la inacción podría superar el costo financiero de la ejecución” y que la inacción limitaría las opciones de las generaciones futuras (A21.33.4). Pues bien, lo estamos pagando, en billetes y en vidas humanas. Las opciones no son las mismas que hace 28 años y por eso hoy debemos pensar en la Recuperación Verde al COVID-19.

Estaremos junto a nuestros gobiernos ayudando a que cada comunidad se ponga de pie y que la humanidad sane heridas, pero ¿estamos hoy aunque sea un paso más cerca de evitar que esto vuelva a suceder? La respuesta es no, porque este que debería haber sido un ineludible llamado de atención sobre las consecuencias de nuestro vínculo destructivo hacia el planeta, terminó limitándose a la contención de daño sin un análisis de las causas y un replanteo de nuestra forma de habitar la Tierra.

Queremos hablar de Gobernanza Ambiental y cooperación. Hablemos de cómo el PNUMA trabajará junto a la Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS) para que no quede un solo ciudadano sin saber que el COVID-19 podría haberse evitado y que prevenir nuevas pandemias viene de la mano de la protección ambiental.

O mejor aún, dejemos de hablar y reforcemos la acción. Si no es ahora, ¿cuándo?

DRAFT

### III. West Asia

Statement of the United Nations Environment Programme West Asia Major Groups and Stakeholders presented at the 5th United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5.1) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Arabic

بيان المجموعات الرئيسية وأصحاب المصلحة من غرب آسيا التابع لبرنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة في الدورة الخامسة لجمعية الأمم المتحدة للبيئة (UNEA-5.1) لبرنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة (UNEP).

المقدمة:

تشارك المنطقة العربية في غرب آسيا في لغة وثقافة وعقيدة مشتركة ، وتنقسم إلى ثلاث مجموعات متجاورة تقع في قارتين ، نصفي الكرة الأرضية ، وحدودها على خمسة محيطات وبحار. تغطي تضاريس المنطقة حوالي 14 مليون كيلومتر مربع ، تشكل 9٪ من إجمالي مساحة الأرض على الأرض، ويبلغ عدد سكانها أكثر من 350 مليون نسمة ، 56٪ منها في المناطق الحضرية.

إن الاهتمام بمنطقة غرب آسيا ذات أهمية دولية للجميع وهو "دليل صارخ على تأثير الأنشطة البشرية على الكوكب ... لفهم التغيرات البيئية التي تحدث على الأرض وفي الماء والهواء بشكل أفضل."

في مواجهة المناخ القاسي ، والموارد الطبيعية المحدودة ، والظروف الاقتصادية والصراعات، فإن التحديات البيئية القائمة ملفته للاهتمام. كما تم وصف التقدم الذي يحرزه كل بلد نحو تحقيق الاستقرار البيئي كجزء من أهداف التنمية المستدامة.

نحن سعداء بنتائج والتزام وتطلعات قمة إعلان قادة مجموعة العشرين 20G المنعقدة في الفترة من 21 إلى 22 نوفمبر 2020، الرياض المملكة العربية السعودية."

لا يزال طموحنا في المنطقة هو تحقيق توازن اقتصادي واجتماعي وبيئي مستدام يتماشى مع "المستقبل الذي نريده ، الأمم المتحدة التي نحتاجها" نتيجة مبادرة الامم المتحدة 75UN لأكبر محادثات في العالم حول التحديات العالمية الحالية، في وضع استجابةً إلى الفجوة بين المستقبل الذي نريده وإلى أين الوجهة إذا استمرت الاتجاهات الحالية كما عليها.

نحن ممثلي المجموعات الرئيسية وأصحاب المصلحة المعتمدين في منطقة غرب آسيا التابع لبرنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة ، قد اجتمعنا في الاجتماع التشاوري الإقليمي لغرب آسيا في 8 ديسمبر 2020 ، ونشعر بقلق بالغ إزاء التحديات التي تواجه منطقة غرب آسيا اليوم، والتي تشمل:

- الآثار البيئية الشديدة والظلم الناجم عن الصراع والحرب والاحتلال؛ نزوح السكان؛ العقوبات أحادية الجانب وأضرارها بالموارد الطبيعية والتنوع النباتي والحيواني ، مما يؤثر ليس فقط على السكان ولكن أيضًا على تدهور التنوع البيولوجي وتسريع معدلات انقراض الأنواع. ومن الأمثلة على ذلك التداعيات البيئية لانفجار ميناء بيروت والمخاطر الكبيرة من FSO SAFER في البحر الأحمر في اليمن.
- الاستخدام والاستغلال غير المستدامين للموارد الطبيعية والتنوع البيولوجي.
- عدم مشاركة المنظمات غير الحكومية للمجتمع المدني مع السلطات المحلية حول طرق تطبيق السياسات البيئية والبرامج البيئية المنفذة لتثقيف المجتمع حول كيفية حماية البيئة والحفاظ عليها.
- تأثير الزحف العمراني على المناطق الزراعية وكذلك الإهمال والفسل في دعم وتشجيع الزراعة في الدول النامية في المنطقة.
- عدم دعم العمليات الزراعية المستدامة لمساعدة المزارعين والمنتجين على كسب الرزق وتلبية احتياجات المجتمعات المحلية.
- التقليل من شأن السبب البشري لتغير المناخ والمياه والفقير ، مع دعم محدود لتعليم وصحة المجتمعات المحلية.
- تأثير التلوث البحري وزيادة مستويات التلوث البري الناجم عن سوء استخدام الموارد.
- COVID-19 وآثاره في المنطقة بما في ذلك عدم المساواة بين الجنسين ، وارتفاع مستويات البطالة.
- عدم وجود تعاون عبر القطاعين العام / الخاص، تحالف بين الشركاء في المنطقة بغض النظر عن الخلفيات والاتجاهات السياسية والبيئية.
- قلة فرص التمويل والقيود السياسية على فرص التمويل.

الإلهام في ضوء الصعوبات التي منحها مجتمعنا المدني وطبيعة الأولويات الإقليمية التي تواجهها اليوم ، ندعو الدول الأعضاء في الأمم المتحدة والوكالات والمجتمعات المدنية إلى اتخاذ الإجراءات التالية:

- نطلب من الدول الأعضاء في الأمم المتحدة اتخاذ تدابير التخفيف للرد على الآثار البيئية للصراعات في منطقة غرب آسيا.

- نطلب من برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة مساعدة المنظمات غير الحكومية والحكومات في غرب آسيا في وضع خطط متوسطة وطويلة الأجل للتعامل مع المشكلات البيئية في المنطقة.
- نشدد على الحاجة إلى جرد القوانين الدولية ذات الصلة، وتحديد الثغرات الحالية ونقاط الضعف في حماية البيئة أثناء النزاعات المسلحة، وتشكيل توصيات لتعزيز الإطار القانوني وإنفاذه.
- ونحث حكومات دول غرب آسيا على تعزيز جهودهم لتحقيق أعمال حقوق الإنسان والعدالة والسلام والأمن في المنطقة والاستجابة لتحديات الدول التي تعاني من التوتر السياسي والاحتلال والصراع وانعدام الأمن.
- نطلب حكومات دول غرب آسيا إنشاء تحالف تحولي هادف مع المجموعات الرئيسية وأصحاب المصلحة الآخرين في المجتمع المدني لتطوير خطة مبتكرة ومنتجة وتحقيق أهداف 2030 لأهداف التنمية المستدامة.
- ندعو حكومات دول غرب آسيا إلى الاعتراف ودعم عمل المنظمات غير الحكومية والمجتمعات التي تنفذ أنظمة صفر نفايات على المستوى المحلي بالشراكة مع السلطات المحلية، بما في ذلك من خلال مبادرات للحد من توليد النفايات؛ تحسين إعادة التدوير مع التجميع المنفصل، والتسميد، والهضم اللاهوائي.
- ندعو حكومات دول غرب آسيا إلى تخصيص الوصول إلى تمويل برامج المنظمات غير الحكومية لدعم برامج التخفيف والتكيف مع تغير المناخ وكذلك حماية البيئة في البلدان المعرضة للخطر في المنطقة.
- ندعو حكومات دول غرب آسيا إلى المساعدة في توفير خبراء للتحقيق وأخذ عينات من التربة ومياه البحر والهواء وتحليل الأثر البيئي للانفجار وتحديده، وتوفير استراتيجية وموارد تعمل على علاج وتقليل الأضرار.
- ندعو برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة إلى إنشاء برامج إقليمية للحد من المخاطر لدعم تعزيز القدرات والقدرات الوطنية لإدارة المواد الكيميائية؛ والكشف عن منع الإتجار الدولي غير المشروع في المنتجات السامة والخطرة.
- نود تذكير حكومات دول غرب آسيا بأهمية المشاركة بالنشطة الدورية في جميع اجتماعات جمعية الأمم المتحدة للبيئة وكذلك توسيع الشراكة بين الأمم المتحدة والمنظمات غير الحكومية.
- ندعو حكومات غرب آسيا إلى غرس القيم البيئية في مناهج التدريس منذ المراحل المبكرة.

- ندعو حكومات دول غرب آسيا إلى تعزيز واتخاذ الإجراءات اللازمة لحماية واستعادة الطبيعة والحلول القائمة على الطبيعة لتحقيق أهداف التنمية المستدامة بأبعادها الثلاثة التكميلية (الاجتماعية والاقتصادية والبيئية).

في الختام الاعمال المستقلة غير حاسم في مواجهة التحدي معًا؛ بناء انتعاش مرن وطويل الأمد؛ ضمان الانتعاش الشامل الذي يعالج عدم المساواة؛ ضمان مستقبل مستدام.

*English*

**Statement of the United Nations Environment Programme West Asia Major Groups and Stakeholders presented at the 5th United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5.1) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).**

**Introduction:**

The Arab region of West Asia shares a common language, culture and religion, is divided into three contiguous clusters falling in two continents, two hemispheres, and borders on five oceans and seas. Covering around 14 million square kilometres, the region covers 9 percent of the Earth's total land area, with a population of over 350 million, of which 56% is urbanised.

Considering a region with significance “Stark evidence of the impact human activities are having on the planet... to better comprehend the environmental changes taking place on land, in the water, and in the air.”

Confronted by extreme climate, limited natural resources, economic conditions and conflict, the environmental challenges depicted are striking. The progress that each country is making towards achieving environmental sustainability as part of the Sustainable Development Goals, is also described and visually portrayed.

We are pleased to the outcome, commitment and aspirations of the G20 Leaders' Declaration Summit on November 21-22, 2020 Riyadh Saudi Arabia “We are committed to leading the world in shaping a strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive post-COVID-19 era.”

Our ambition in the region remains to achieve a sustainable economic, social and environment balance that is aligned with “The Future We Want, The UN We Need” a result of the UN75 initiative, of the world's largest conversation about current global challenges, in response to the gap between the future we want and where we are headed if current trends continue.

**We, the representatives of UNEP'S West Asia region accredited Major Groups and Stakeholders have met virtually for the West Asia Regional Consultation Meeting on December 8, 2020 are deeply concerned about the challenges that the West Asia region faces today, which include:**

- Extreme environmental impacts and injustice due to conflict, war, and occupation; population displacement; unilateral sanctions and their damage to natural resources, plant, and animal diversity, affecting not only the population but also the biodiversity deterioration and accelerating rates of species extinction. Examples are the environmental repercussions of the Beirut port explosion and the high risk from the FSO SAFER in the Red Sea of Yemen.
- Unsustainable use and exploitation of natural resources and biodiversity.



- Absence of nongovernmental organization of the civil society engagement with local authorities on ways for environmental policies application and environmental programs implemented to educate the community on how to protect and maintain the environment.
- The effect of Urban sprawl on agricultural areas as well as the neglect and failure to support and encourage agriculture in developing countries in the region.
- Lack of support for sustainable agricultural processes to help the livelihood of farmers and producers and to meet the needs of local communities.
- Underestimating the human cause of Climate Change, water, poverty, with limited support for the education and health of local communities.
- The impact of marine pollution and increased levels of terrestrial Pollution from misuse of resources.
- The COVID-19 and its impacts in the region inclusive of gender inequality, high levels of unemployment.
- Lack of cooperation across public/ private sectors alliance between partners in the region regardless of any political and environmental backgrounds and directions.
- Lack of funding opportunities and political restrictions of funding opportunities.

**Inspiration in light of the hardship, endowed by our Civil Society and the nature of regional priorities faced today, we are calling on UN member states, agencies and civil societies on the following action:**

- We request the UN member states to take mitigation measures to respond to the environmental impacts of the conflicts in the West Asia region.
- We ask the UN Environment Programme to assist NGOs and governments in West Asia to put in place mid-term and long-term plans to deal with the region's environmental problems.
- We stress the need to take inventory of relevant international laws, identify current gaps and weaknesses in environmental protection during armed conflicts, and form recommendations to strengthen the legal framework and its enforcement.
- We urge West Asia governments to strengthen their efforts to achieve the fulfillment of human rights, justice, peace, and security in the region and to respond to the challenges of countries who suffer from political tension, occupation, conflict, and insecurity.
- We ask West Asia governments to create a meaningful transformative alliance with the Major Groups and other Stakeholders of the civil society to develop an innovative, productive and deliver on the goals of the 2030 for the Sustainable Development Goals.
- We call West Asia governments on the acknowledge and support the work of NGOs and communities implementing zero waste systems at the local level in partnership with local authorities, including through initiatives to reduce waste generation; improve recycling with separate collection, composting, and anaerobic digestion.
- We call West Asia governments on allocated access to funding NGOs programs to support programs on mitigation and adaptation of Climate Change as well as protecting the environment in vulnerable countries in the region.
- We call West Asia governments on helping to provide experts to investigate, take samples of the soil, sea water and air, analyze and determine the environmental impact of the blast, and provide a strategy and resources working on remediation and minimizing the damages.
- We call the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) to establish risk reduction regional programs to support the strengthening of national capabilities and capacities for management of chemicals; and disclose prevention of illegal international traffic in toxic and dangerous products.
- We remind West Asia governments to take an active participation in all UN Environment Assembly meetings as well extend the UN/ NGOs partnership.
- We call West Asia governments to imbed environmental based values within the teaching curriculums from early stages.
- We call West Asia governments to strengthen and take action to protect and restore nature and the nature-based solutions to achieve the SDGs in its three complementary dimensions (social, economic and environmental).

In conclusion independent actions are indecisive in meeting the challenge together: Building a resilient and long-lasting recovery, ensuring a comprehensive recovery that addresses inequality and ensuring a sustainable future.

## IV. Europe

### UNEA 5 must drive impact #ForNature – now and up to 2022

#### Statement from the virtual Regional Consultation for Major Groups and other Stakeholders in the European Region, held on 16/17 December 2020 regarding priorities for UNEA 5.1 and UNEA 5.2

*To the UNEA 5 Presidency and Bureau: H.E. Mr. Sveinung Rotevatn (Norway), H.E. Ms. Bérange Abba (France), H.E. Ms. Irena Vujović (Serbia), H.E. Ms. Andrea Meza Murillo, H.E. Dr. Mohammed Bin Dainah, H.E. Mr. Reggy Nelson, Ms. Laksmi Dhewanthi, Mr. Ado Lohmus, H.E. Mr. Bassiere Batio Nestor and Hon. Ms. Barbara Creecy*

*To the CPR Chair and Bureau: H.E. Mr. Fernando Estellita Lins de Salvo Coimbra (Brazil); H.E. Ms. Saqlain Syedah (Pakistan); H.E. Mr. Maarten Brouwer (Netherlands); H.E. Mr. Marek Rohr-Garztecki (Poland); and H.E. Mrs. Francisca Ashietey-Odunton (Ghana)*

*To Environment Ministers and the Permanent Representatives to UN Environment*

While the COVID-19 pandemic has put the brakes on our way of living, the triple environmental crises of climate breakdown, rapid biodiversity and ecosystems loss, and pollution and waste, impacting even the remotest corners of the planet, continue to threaten peace, health and wellbeing of current and future generations. The pandemic has laid bare the fragility of both our and the planet's health and the flaws of our social and economic systems, with millions of people having lost their jobs without any social protection. **The pandemic calls for courageous political decisions now to attain an equitable and sustainable future.**

Due to the pandemic, UNEA 5 and the open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives, originally planned for February 2021, had to be split into a short, virtual session in February 2021, and a full-, physical meeting postponed to February 2022. We understand that only organisational elements of UNEA 5 are on the agenda for the virtual session in 2021, including the Medium-Term Strategy and Programme of Work, the UNEP budget and the GEO review process. All discussions of substantial resolutions are currently postponed to the second session in February 2022. But we cannot put on hold the protection of our environment. The 2020 UN Secretary-General's report on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals acknowledges the impacts and implications of the COVID-19 as the worst human and economic crisis of our lifetimes. We need urgent action to fundamentally change our production and consumption patterns and put in place policies, legislation and actions that address the triple crisis. **Therefore, we call on you to make the best possible use of the Decade of Action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals, to speed up global environmental decision-making and increase the pace and scale of implementation efforts considering the negative effects on our and our planet's health are not slowing down.**

We support the President of UNEA 5 with his ambition for **a clear and political message to emerge from the virtual session in February 2021, laying out your governments' strong ambitions and actions for the new "super year for nature" in 2021 and onwards to the full meeting of UNEA 5 in February 2022.** In order to realise the full potential of UNEA 5, we need to keep and build momentum throughout the pandemic along two important processes: a global response to plastic pollution and the strengthening of global environmental law and governance (Res 73/333), while paving the way for UNEA 5 to address emerging environmental challenges that are so far not regulated. We support the President's draft statement in which he also underscores the **crucial importance of making clear progress in other multilateral fora for the environment**, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the negotiations in the Convention on Biological Diversity on a post-2020 global biodiversity framework, negotiations on the Beyond 2020 Framework on Chemicals and Waste in the context of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, as well as the 2021 session of the HLPF and the UN Food Systems Summit.

#### Recognising the true value of nature and focussing on nature-based solutions

We agree with the UN Environment Executive Director's draft report to UNEA 5, in which she stresses that nature underpins our economies, our societies and our very existence, as our life support system providing us with shelter, food and water. **We need to recognise and cherish the true value of the services that intact ecosystems provide us with; and, independent from our human needs, we need to acknowledge that nature is a value of its own.** A growing number of jurisdictions have started to codify nature's own rights to be protected from destruction and pollution. **We need to hold to account those governments and companies that destroy and pollute ecosystems.** It is urgent to address the drivers of destruction, including the steady increase in raw materials' extraction and the use of pesticides

and other chemicals that irreversibly decimate pollinators and insects and pollute soils and water sources. The destruction and pollution of ecosystems can regularly be traced back to specific types of corporations such as those producing ‘forever chemicals’, mining giants, transnational corporations in the agro-industry and oil companies. **We need legally binding measures to make companies liable for environmental harm across their value chains.** We also need **strong protection** for those women and men at the frontline, our **environmental defenders**, who are threatened and killed when calling out harmful business practices. Ongoing research and multilateral UN processes have further underscored the **devastating environmental consequences from wars and conflict that needs addressing** in response and recovery work.

The undersigned Major Groups and other Stakeholders welcome that UNEA 5 focuses on “nature-based solutions to achieve the SDGs” (including to eradicate poverty and create quality, green jobs, to ensure human, animal and ecosystem health, to stop climate change and to achieve sustainable food systems). We call on you to make sure that the UNEA 5 process results in **rethinking our notion of development to one that is in harmony with nature.** We need your **courage to end harmful business practices and to phase out polluting technologies.** We need **Just Transition policies** and measures to support those impacted most, workers and their families and communities, and we need strong policies to tackle the root causes of existing and growing inequalities. We need your vision to stop finances going to short-sighted or unjust or false solutions. We welcome the Human Development Report 2020: “The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene” that clearly states that a “human-centric worldview is blinding humanity to the consequences of our actions”. We need you to support the strong engagement of the public at large to take actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore ecosystems and be at the forefront of planetary stewardship.

### Building forward better

The Covid-19 pandemic has worked as an x-ray, revealing the illness of our current economic and social system based on the unsustainable exploitation of both natural resources and cheap or even unpaid labour and usually work under very bad and risky conditions. It gives us an opportunity not just to build back, but to build forward better – more green and more sustainable economies and societies. Let this be the wake-up call for a paradigm shift to overcome the problems deeply entrenched in our economic and social systems. The **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement and the commitments made under Multilateral Environmental Agreements need to be the compass for the recovery.** They should guide the way to tackle the root causes of poverty, hunger and inequality globally, to establish social and health protection systems that are accessible to all, and to build a carbon-neutral-, nature positive- and inclusive economic model that serves the wellbeing of humans, animals and the planet. We call on you to use the process leading to UNEA 5.1 and on UNEA 5.2 to ensure that the recovery will not bail out polluters but instead will place very strict conditionalities on financial instruments for a transition towards long-term sustainability and to divest now from dirty technologies and industries. Recovery measures should privilege small and medium size enterprises, in particular those with a strong social and environmental mission and rooted in local communities, and innovative, equitable business models. We call on you to recognise and address the link between environmental pollution and degradation and the fatal impact to our health, with disproportionate impacts on vulnerable populations including women and children, young and older people, people with underlying health problems, minorities and low-income groups. We urge you to enable formal and non-formal sustainable development education (SDG4.7) and to develop environmental solution-focused programs that include young people as key stakeholders. And we count on you to stand strong for our human and civil rights and to ensure full transparency in decision-making, in particular around the recovery measures and the protection of civil society space.

### Unfolding the power of strong international environmental governance, UNEP@50 and Stockholm +50

The undersigned civil society organisations and other stakeholders are all strongly supportive of the process following UNGA Resolution 73/333 (formerly known as Global Pact for the Environment). We call on you to **re-engage in the urgent discussion to close the gaps in international law and start its enforcement** as identified, amongst others, in the UN Secretary-General’s report on the subject. Resolution 73/333 requires a political declaration for February 2021, to strengthen the implementation of international environmental law and environmental governance. Delaying negotiations to 2022 would be irresponsible and unnecessary. In 2021, we do need not only a political declaration but also **an Action Plan** on how to achieve the objectives defined in that declaration to avoid Stockholm+50 becoming a meaningless gathering without concrete outcomes or ambitions. 2022 must be the year in which UNEA5.2 will have kicked off the process to establish a Global Action Plan to strengthen and enforce environmental law to be achieved by 2025. This package should include objectives, targets, a timeline and indicators and means of implementation (cfr 2030 Agenda Process).

Both UNEP@50 and Stockholm+50 require closer cooperation with Major Groups and Stakeholders. We can emulate the lessons from the post-2015 development agenda process, which captured the voices and contributions of millions through transparent dialogues and consultations that helped the development of the SDGs. We propose for UNEP@50 (theUNEPweWant) an approach similar to [www.myworld2015.org](http://www.myworld2015.org), [www.worldwewant2030.org](http://www.worldwewant2030.org), and the initiatives taken for the commemoration of the 75th UN anniversary.(including the CSO initiative <http://un2020.org/>).

The future UNEP depends on the support of people. Since the inception of UNEP, a healthy environment has always been referred to as a prerequisite for socio-economic development. Poverty eradication cannot be achieved without sustainable development, and sustainability cannot be achieved without poverty eradication. What kind of UNEP do we need to tackle the delicate relationship between worldwide well-being and the environment? How do we mobilise a global movement to ensure socio-economic prosperity without the irreversible overuse of resources and growing environmental degradation? The commemoration of UNEP@50 and the 50th anniversary of the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment should serve to build and concretise a global framework for stronger environmental governance and strengthen environmental law and guarantee enforcement.

2022 is exactly 10 years since world leaders renewed their political commitment to sustainable development at Rio+20, in particular the strengthening of the institutional framework for sustainable development articulated in **paragraph 88 of the “The Future We Want”**. Ten years on, “The Future We Want” still requires full implementation including transparency and the effective engagement of civil society in UNEP at all levels.

### Beat plastic pollution now

The undersigning stakeholders strongly support the process on Marine Plastic Litter and Microplastics (UNEP/EA.4/Res.6). If current trends of the use and production of plastic continue unabated, the impact on humanity and the planet will be catastrophic. According to studies published in 2020, more than 10 million tonnes of plastics end up in the ocean every year, adding up to the 150 million tonnes that already circulate in our environment. Investment in the plastic industry is on the rise with projections of a [40% increase in plastic production over the next decade](#). We strongly support the ongoing and meaningful discussions on the policies and responses necessary to address this urgent problem.

Delaying a decision to develop a new global treaty on plastic pollution would allow millions more tonnes of plastics into our marine ecosystems by the year 2022. While an in-person UNEA5 and OECPR meeting in 2022 would be the most fruitful and inclusive approach for these political discussions, we strongly advocate intersessional gatherings scheduled for 2021, both virtual and in-person, to maintain momentum towards urgently needed global policy solutions.

We call on you and all UN members to **maintain the momentum towards UNEA 5.2 to adopt a mandate to start negotiations for a legally binding instrument to tackle plastic pollution**. In this endeavour, it is necessary to adopt a Life Cycle Thinking, where the instrument must cover the phase-out and reduction of plastic up-stream and middle-stream, ensure a global clean-up and the remediation of polluted sites, address the health and climate impacts of plastic pollution and ensure the polluter pays principle. It is critical that the focus of the legally binding instrument is put on reduction and prevention, especially the reduction of use of single-use plastics and plastic packaging, and the promotion of reuse systems. Recycling alone [will not be able to solve the plastic crisis](#). It is important to take note of and avoid [false solutions](#) often promoted by certain business stakeholders (e.g. bio-based or biodegradable plastics, chemical recycling). The negotiations need to include those communities most impacted by plastic pollution along its life cycle, including communities affected by pollution generated upstream during extraction and production, from the petrochemical industry, from landfills and incinerators, and those communities depending on ocean resources.

### Medium-Term Strategy, POW and budget

The undersigned stakeholders welcome UNEP’s Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025 and ask to elaborate on the following issues more prominently in the MTS:

- The MTS should provide a stronger message on the environmental factors that allowed COVID-19 to turn into a global pandemic, the pandemic’s enormous impacts on every dimension of the SDGs, and the threat of potential devastation from future pandemics. The Strategy should emphasise the need to rethink our relationship with and handling of nature and animals to prevent future pandemics.
- The Strategy should replace the phrase “building back better” by “building forward better”, which has been used by UNEP recently.
- The MTS should give more attention to food systems and food waste, given that around 30% of all food is wasted while millions of people still go hungry; and because food production, processing, packaging and distribution have major negative impacts on all three pillars of the Strategy.
- The proposal to close the Disasters and Conflicts Subprogramme and to mainstream its work across the new pillars of the MTS bear the risk of diluting the important work that has already been done. UNEP should continue its proactive role at a time when the environmental dimensions of armed conflicts and security have rarely been higher up on the international policy agenda.
- We are concerned by UNEP’s Partnership Strategy, moving towards ever-greater cooperation with business. This strategy endangers a balanced consultation with all stakeholders and could disturb their equal access to

information and participation in UNEPs activities. The Science Policy Forum has been converted into a Science Policy Business Forum. We are concerned by the statement that “UNEP will also revise its Partnership Strategy to ensure a stronger pursuit of its comparative advantage that matches an increased resource ambition vis-à-vis the delivery of its strategic priorities.” This could be interpreted as UNEP being more strongly guided by its need for funding instead of its mission. Partnership with business should not be given priority over other partnerships. Moreover, UNEP will not be credible if it is seen to be co-opted by unsustainable corporations lacking a serious transformation pathway to a zero-pollution, toxic-free future. UNEP should not enter into partnerships with such companies. We call on you and all member states to ensure sufficient funding for UNEP from public sources.

- Another major concern is the removal of references to environmental defenders. Environmental defenders play a crucial role in protecting the environment. Yet more defenders than ever are being jailed and killed, while others are threatened, harassed, criminalised and attacked. Governments must protect defenders and bring those who harm them to justice. The removal of all references to environmental defenders in UNEP’s strategy is totally unacceptable, particularly when UNEP has already adopted an environmental defenders’ policy. UNEP’s highest-level decision-making body has endorsed not once but twice the relevance of this important issue (Governing Council Decision 27/9 on advancing justice, governance and law for environmental sustainability; UNEA Resolution 2/19 on Montevideo Programme IV which identified human rights and the environment as an emerging priority area). UNEP has also stepped up its commitment to protect the human right to a healthy environment in collaboration with UNHCHR. The protection of environmental defenders must be reintroduced.

### Emerging issues

The planet is under threat of new and emerging environmental risks that need to be addressed swiftly and effectively. We, therefore, call on you to ensure that UNEA5 is used as the global process to identify and recognise emerging threats and to address environmental challenges that are so far not regulated through global governance. These issues comprise but are not limited to:

- the sustainable and equitable governance of our natural resources and raw materials, by giving the International Resource Panel (IRP) the mandate to guide this.
- the threats posed to some of the last untouched parts of our planet through deep-sea mining, oil and gas exploitation and transport, and other harmful techniques to exploit our oceans’ resources;
- the need for soil protection to reduce soil depletion and pollution by highly hazardous substances from industrial and agricultural sources that will make food production no longer feasible in the long run. Avoiding soil degradation is crucial to ensure food security. Nature-based solutions, such as composting, should be deployed largely and support the regeneration of soils.
- the need of sustainable land management practices as measures for mitigation and adaptation to climate change.
- the need to restore degraded land, water and biodiversity as a great potential for carbon sequestration and thus contributing to GHG emission reduction, for example healthy whale and fish populations that facilitate the oceans’ role as a carbon sink.

Finally, we call upon all member states to invest in civil society. We exercise our engagement with limited resources, and we need you to step up your support from words to deeds by providing the resources needed for Major Groups and Stakeholders to effectively engage and contribute to stronger global environmental policies to solve the critical environmental challenges of our time.