

Statement in the plenary on 23 Feb 2021

Women Major Group

Excellencies,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to share with some of the core message to UNEA 5.1 that we have discussed and agreed up in last week's Global Major Groups and Stakeholder Forum.

There is **overwhelming scientific proof that the triple environmental crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution are an existential threat for nature, animals and humankind**. The **pandemic is a wakeup call to speed up global environmental decision-making**, to step up ambition for transformative action and to increase the pace and scale of implementation efforts.

The **current economic system is destructive for all people and the whole planet**. We are calling for a just transition to climate-neutral, pollution-free and equitable societies and economies that thrive within the planet's ecological boundaries. We need to prioritise **the wellbeing of people, animals and nature over infinite economic growth** as measured in GDP and the redistribution of wealth. Stricter regulation of the market and **legally binding frameworks including real penalties are necessary to hold business accountable**.

We call on you to ensure that the **recovery will not bail out those companies who have contributed to biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution** or that involve future pandemic risk. We call on you to apply **strict conditionalities** and to **remove any subsidies** for those stakeholders contributing to the triple environmental crises. We call on you to **build forward better** and to ensure **recovery programmes and investments are guided by the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Invest in positive change!**

Decisions and the implementation thereof must **involve all relevant rights holders**, in particular marginalised and targeted persons, including Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, youth and older people.

We recall the **need for good and equitable governance**. We call on you to **foster partnership with the Major Groups and Stakeholders as well as other rights holders** to contribute to the UNEA process. We **need you to step up your support from words to deeds by also providing resources**. We call on you to **answer with actions the concerns of young people and future generations**.

We are also asking for a **new approach to decision-making at international level fit for purpose to respond to the current crises**. We need to cut red tape for endless protocol and formalities refocusing on the delivery of results, transparency and accountability.

The theme of UNEA 5 is the **international community's opportunity to recognize and cherish the functions and services that ecosystems have; and that nature has intrinsic value and rights.**

We call on you to still strengthen UNEP's Medium Term Strategy, and we invite you to consider our full Joint Statement. It includes, amongst others, for UNEP to **recognise environmental racism, to mainstream the role of Indigenous Peoples as environmental governors, to incorporate animal health and welfare** in its policymaking and programmes; to **reintroduce actions for environmental defenders** in a time when defenders are more than ever threatened, attacked and killed, to provide **leadership in addressing the environmental dimensions of armed conflicts and military activities**, and the harm they cause to people, animals and ecosystems.

We call on you to make sure that the **Stockholm +50 conference** will ensure that principles and rights that have emerged under environmental law are fully and globally recognised, including the international codification of a human right to a healthy environment, the recognition of ecocide as an international crime, the full protection of environmental defenders, and the rights of animals and the rights of Nature. Stockholm+50 is a unique opportunity to agree to a final visionary and action oriented statement.

50 years after the Stockholm Conference and almost 30 years after the Rio Earth Summit, progress is too weak and synergies between environmental agreements remain inadequate. We call on you to re-engage in the urgent discussion to close the gaps in international environmental law. GA Resolution 73/333 requires a political declaration for February 2021. We call for a **political declaration that commits Members States to work on a concrete Action Plan to be achieved by 2025** including objectives, targets, a timeline and indicators, **and, very importantly, means of implementation.**

We need global action to curb plastic pollution now. We call on you to maintain the momentum towards UNEA 5.2 to **adopt a mandate to start negotiations for a legally binding instrument to tackle plastic pollution.** The negotiations need to **include those communities most impacted** by plastic pollution along its life cycle. It must realise the polluter pays principle and focus on the reduction of plastic.

We also need closer linkages and increased synergies between UNEP, the UNEA process and the Convention on Biological Diversity. We are calling for an **ambitious and equitable post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) that must reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 and work towards recovery by 2050.** The post 2020 GFB must ensure **good governance**, be based on a strong **rights-based approach** and the **equitable sharing of benefits and costs.** It must avoid problematic terminology such as 'nature-based solutions' that are used by some business stakeholders to **advance the idea that 'nature' can compensate for the continued burning of fossil fuels.** The post-2020 GBF must full recognise the rights of Indigenous People and Local Communities.

The COVID 19 pandemic has delayed the adoption of a successor to the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management **We request a clear signal from UNEA 5.1 to the**

SAICM Bureau to extend the current approach until a new instrument is adopted. We need the post 2020 SAICM to ensure the highest standards for health and environment for chemicals of concern that are not yet covered by existing multilateral agreements, to phase out highly hazardous pesticides by 2030 and to fully adopt a globally harmonised system of classification, labelling and safe handling of chemicals (GHS).

The 2021 UN Ocean Conference needs to lead to a new ocean governance framework that **recognizes power imbalances and respects human rights and effectively the wide range of threats posed to our oceans.**

Food systems, and particularly **industrial animal agriculture and monoculture farming, are a major contributor to climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and overuse of water, a driver of zoonotic diseases and have drastic negative impacts on smallholder farmers, rural communities and food sovereignty.** We call on UNEP and member states to actively support the **transformation to more resilient and sustainable food systems based on systemic change and addressing the underlying root causes and drivers.** This must include the support of regenerative, **agro-ecological systems;** addressing **food waste** throughout supply chains; adopting **animal welfare and a One Health-One Welfare;** a **contraction and convergence to a healthy low level of animal sourced foods** and predominantly plant based diet; understanding the **risks of industrial fisheries and aquaculture;** and recognizing the value of **community-based initiatives** and food production. The Food Summit must be a starting point for this transformation.

As Major Groups and Stakeholders we offer our expertise and a link between the world's top body of environmental decision-making, UNEA, and local communities, initiatives and people's real concerns. And we will be here to witness if UNEA is the place where you show global leadership in addressing our joint challenges.

Thank you.