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on behalf of NGO Major Group

23/02/2021 – UNEA5.1 -**Adjournment/ closing plenary**

Thank You Chair,

Ms. Anderson,

Distinguished Delegates,

UNEP and other Supporting Staff,

MG Colleagues

Good Evening

As I am one of few NGOs with an active link, I am loaded with messages from my colleagues

Kindly allow me to share them with you, as quick as I can

- We are deeply concerned that Important priorities such as the urgent need for addressing urgent environmental crises and disasters did not receive good attention :
- Environmental urgent matters such as closing the gap in International Law, and extending the current approach of SAICM until the new instrument is adopted, GHS for chemicals safe handling and labeling, ethical and equitable post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, that must reverse biodiversity losses by 2030 and work towards recovery by 2050.
- Environmental urgent and critical crises situations such as crises in water and food security and sovereignty, ocean pollution and degradation, plastic pollution, unsustainable and unethical and dangerous agribusiness food systems, famine especially amongst small scale food producers who are responsible for feeding their families and the world, and habitat irreversible destructions : all impacting the livelihoods and rights of people and nature all over the world especially for indigenous peoples and their sustainable traditions and for targeted and marginalized people such as environmental defenders and people in armed conflicts and occupation.
- The NGO Major Group is deeply concerned about the lack of meaningful engagement of stakeholders in this virtual session of UNEA 5. And we truly hope that the resumed in-person session will provide significantly more opportunities for real engagement and participation.
- Some of our NGO members have been attending CPR meetings, making verbal inputs and providing written submissions. The Chair of the CPR is generous in allowing participation. However, these comments and suggestions have rarely been incorporated. We have seen the same happening to some other major groups (and even some member states).
- There was a Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum which took place over three days, between 9-11 February. This was interactive and participatory, with great expertise and passion and as usual it was difficult to reach a consensus on a common position – given the varied

positions and interests represented in the major groups. However, we did agree on a common position. This was meant to be given in a 5-minute intervention at the OECPR meeting and a bit more here. That is to represent an active three-day meeting and huge preparations, communications and discussions before and after it.

- In this UNEA, only limited active (and even passive) links were given for UNEP accredited organizations, and at short notice, so major groups had insufficient time to develop any new positions for the meeting, that can be delivered by on joint intervention.
- And even the “dialogues” were “listen only” – straying somewhat from the usual definition of “dialogue”?! – We thought we are an important part of the dialogue.
- This shrinking space for civil society is generalized. We have seen it in other processes and meetings under the UN. It has been attributed to the post-COVID situation, and online meetings. But our feeling is that both online meetings and in-person meetings could be better organized to ensure meaningful participation and engagement.
- At present, UNEA and other meetings are bound by protocols and set-piece statements, which are time-consuming and unproductive. PART of our MG joint statement said on this:
“We call for a new approach to decision-making at international level fit for purpose to respond to the current crises. We need to focus international processes to engage all stakeholders in a meaningful analysis, planning actions and taking decisions. We need to cut red tape for endless protocol and formalities refocusing on the delivery of results, transparency and accountability.”
- This is unlikely to be the last pandemic, and we need to make online meetings fit for purpose. And to accommodate the need for meaningful stakeholder participation.
- Indeed, the same is true for in-person meetings.
- It goes without saying that we need more speaking slots, but furthermore, more opportunities to dialogue and discuss.
- We need to think way beyond this to the design of meetings, building genuine debate and discussion, leading to action planning.
- Then and only then will we begin to consider and understand the different needs and perspectives involved in effective decision-making which can lead to joint working for the common good.
- Finally, we urge you to carefully read and consider the full joint statement that took us months to prepare, discuss, review and form a joint position within ourselves and the other MGs that participated in the GMGSF 2021 . Every paragraph took huge dedication and negotiation to be written and finalized. It took hundreds of comments, emails and hours in discussions, drafting and redrafting again and a tremendous patience and wisdom to arrive to a joint position.

We are here in UNEA and, in every country of the member states, to witness and participate offering our expertise and a link between decision makers and local communities and people’s real concerns and also case studies that can prevent irreversible environmental damages.

Thank you for considering that.