

Draft resolution on Sustainable Nitrogen Management

This draft resolution has the ambition to halve nitrogen waste by 2030 by covering all the spheres of the Nitrogen cycle, supported through the establishment of an Inter-convention Nitrogen Coordination Mechanism (INCOM) to address Sustainable Nitrogen Management (SNM). The draft resolution suggests, operational dimensions and elements to define the mandate of the INCOM, to be negotiated at UNEA 5.2.

The draft follows up UNEP/EA.4/Res.14 as a value-added resolution. The present draft takes account of the substantial progress made since March 2019, especially through the Colombo Declaration, and reflects these to enable action on Sustainable Nitrogen Management to be advanced in working towards UNEA-6.

Why a resolution on urgent action on reactive Nitrogen has been prepared?

- Nitrogen is not just another problem, but rather it must be part of the solution for many of our environmental challenges, as it is an essential element for building structures of living organisms and as a critical element for the survival of all living things,
- Unreactive di-nitrogen is extremely abundant in the atmosphere and is converted naturally to reactive forms through various pathways, which cycle through roots of plants into food chains and made available to life, health and environment,
- Agricultural wisdom and traditional best practices of ancient civilizations relevant for sustainable nutrient management, as this has descended over generations,
- Human activities continue to fertilize soils with reactive nitrogen in order to sustain global food and feed production,
- Nitrogen is relevant for all forms of life and this requires national, and multilateral coordination between different Ministries such as Environment, Agriculture, Health, Education and Science as well as agencies and other stakeholders, in addressing Sustainable Nitrogen Management using the Whole of Society approach,

- This draft resolution constitutes a starting point for negotiations, contains necessary elements to be discussed under the negotiations at UNEA 5.2 to establish an Inter-convention Nitrogen Coordination Mechanism and Secretariat to better facilitate communication and coherence across nitrogen policies, consistent with mandate of existing conventions and MEAs.

Outline of the resolution

- The resolution is following a logical sequencing, beginning to set out the context and justification in the preambular part, including on the overarching commitments set in Sustainable Development Goals and recalling specific commitments agreed by the United Nations Environment Assembly.
- These work streams on Sustainable Nitrogen Management are brought in the wider context of nutrient management and related responses, from nitrogen waste management to prevention of nitrogen pollution by adopting a circular economy approach to reactive nitrogen.
- The preambular part also recognizes the importance of ongoing action at regional and international level and is clear that the agreement would not render them futile, but on the contrary, that the agreement should be complementary and mutually reinforcing.
- It concludes with a call for strengthened international action on Sustainable Nitrogen Management in bringing these elements together.
- On the operative paragraphs, the most important elements are setting out the objectives and mandate of the Inter-convention Nitrogen Coordination Mechanism (INCOM), as an intergovernmental mechanism for coordination of Nitrogen policies on the existing platforms and networks as outline in the UNEP/EA.4/Res.14.
- The approach follows the logic of Nitrogen species through its life cycle, while also

including provisions to address knowledge and awareness raising, monitoring and reporting, introducing national action plans to allow for flexibility in light of national circumstances, financial and technical mechanisms as well as scientific, social and economic assessments.

- The way in which the elements are included does not in any way prejudice the what extent or how these elements should be elaborated in the future agreement. This will be for the Inter-convention Nitrogen Coordination Mechanism to define once it is established.

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Draft resolution text

- **Proposing member State:** Sri Lanka
- **Proposed to be co-sponsored by** the Philippines. To invite further potential co-sponsoring member states such as: Maldives, Bangladesh, Nepal, USA, Denmark (to be confirmed)
- **Contact addresses:** Ministry of Environment, Sobadam Piyasa, No. 416/C/1, Robert Gunawardana Mawatha, Battaramulla, Sri Lanka

SUGGESTED ACTIONS BY THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY ON SUSTAINABLE NITROGEN MANAGEMENT

The United Nations Environment Assembly may wish to consider the adoption of the draft resolution as follows:

The United Nations Environment Assembly,

Notes with concern that global economy-wide¹ nitrogen use is currently inefficient with extremely large proportion of anthropogenic reactive nitrogen lost to the environment,

Reaffirming United Nations General Assembly resolution, A/RES/70/1 of 25 September 2015, by which the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and recalling Sustainable Development Goals and all interrelated targets,

Recalling United Nations Environment Assembly resolution UNEP/ EA.4/ Res.14 of 15 March 2019, and reaffirms the importance of the long-term elimination of multiple threats of Nitrogen pollution resulting from anthropogenic reactive nitrogen, with adverse effects on terrestrial, freshwater and marine environments, biodiversity, human health, air quality and greenhouse gas emissions.

¹ M. A. Sutton and others, Our Nutrient World: The Challenge to Produce More Food and Energy with Less Pollution (Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Edinburgh, on behalf of the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management and the International Nitrogen Initiative, 2013).

Acknowledging the efforts of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the International Nitrogen Initiative (INI), in the establishment of the International Nitrogen Management System (INMS) to link science and policies on sustainable Nitrogen management, including contributions from the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management (GPNM), the South Asia Cooperative Environment Program (SACEP) and the ‘GCRF-South Asia Nitrogen Hub (SANH)’ established with support from the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) of United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI),

Noting the outcomes of the Fourth Session of the International Nitrogen Management System, held at UNEP in Nairobi on 29-30 April 2019 as a follow-up to the UNEA-4 resolution (UNEP/EA.4/Res.14).

Calls on the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Program to:

- a) *Support* the ambition to halve Nitrogen waste from all sources by 2030 as agreed in the Colombo Declaration on Sustainable Nitrogen Management of 24, October 2019, offering the potential to save US\$ 100 billion annually,
- b) *Consider* the proposed Roadmap for Action on Sustainable Nitrogen Management 2022 -2024 of the Colombo Declaration, including its activities to establish an Inter-convention Nitrogen Coordination Mechanism (INCOM) to address nitrogen pollution, continuing its work from 2022 with including reporting of its work to the Sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and the Secretariat to better facilitate communication and coherence across Nitrogen policies, consistent with mandates of existing conventions and MEAs,
- c) *Secretariat to support* in close collaboration with relevant UN agencies and other international organizations, development partners, philanthropic agencies, academic and civil society organizations for implementation of the Colombo Declaration, through cooperative mechanisms to mobilize human, financial and technical resources, including capacity building and transfer of know-how and technology for promoting innovation on anthropogenic nitrogen use and recycling, emphasizing the opportunities for the circular economy,

- d) *Coordinate* existing platforms to catalyze a comprehensive Global Assessment on quantitative and qualitative Nitrogen cycling covering scientific aspects, policy, regulation, implementation, Nitrogen budgeting, impacts, solutions, and valuation of natural Nitrogen fixation, while identifying the best available knowledge including descended traditional agricultural wisdom and assess the opportunities offered for Nitrogen management, where appropriate mainstreaming it through policy, implementation and regulatory channels,
- e) *Facilitate*, with relevant United Nations bodies, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and, as appropriate, Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) to sensitize citizens to understand the natural Nitrogen cycle and how anthropogenic activities alter its balance,
- f) *Report* to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its Sixth session on the progress achieved in the implementation of the present resolution.