

EU and its MS general comments on the draft Ministerial Declaration for the resumed session of the fifth session of United Nations Environment Assembly

**Open-ended informal consultation meeting convened by the
UNEA Presidency with support of the Secretariat**

Online, 15 December 2021

- The EU and its MS thank the UNEA-5 President for providing an updated draft Ministerial Declaration for the resumed session of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. We support the inclusive consultation process proposed by the President as set out in the note on the 6th of December (updated on the 13th of December).
- The EU and its MS welcome this draft Ministerial Declaration. Considering the changes proposed, including on the structure of the document, the new draft declaration which is an improvement on many points from the zero draft, released in October 2021.
- The EU and its MS take note of the last additions introduced in the December 13's version. Therefore, the following comments are preliminary positions and the EU and its MS will get back with comments to the new draft.

Referring to the former preambular section:

- The EU and its MS welcome that the new draft Declaration sets out the pressures on nature and environment and the urgent need to address them, as well as the reference to the One Health approach (as recently defined by the OHHLEP and endorsed by the Tripartite Plus). We still believe that a clearer emphasis to the role of healthy biodiversity and the importance of ecological restoration for ensuring healthy and resilience ecosystems and avoiding the transmission of infectious diseases would be relevant in this context. As we expect that one of the main outcomes of UNEA will be the launch of an INC towards a legally binding global agreement on Plastics, we would like to suggest making explicit reference to plastics pollution in paragraph 5.
- While we welcome that the declaration makes reference to the important outcomes of relevant MEAs, including the UNFCCC COP26 held in Glasgow, we would also further encourage the inclusion of an operative paragraph dedicated to climate action. Indeed, The EU and its MS like to see that the Declaration recalls more explicitly the renewed commitments made in Glasgow to pursue efforts to limit global warming to 1.5°C by the end of the century, encourage Parties to revisit and strengthen their NDCs in line with this objective and urges Parties to communicate long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies and to update these strategies as appropriate, in line with the best available science.

Referring to the former operative section:

- The EU and its MS welcome the action-orientated nature of the operative section, though we see room to enhance ambition in that regard. For instance, in particular:
 - The reference about the green and just recovery could highlight the current UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and underline the fact that the implementation of all MEAs is needed in order to achieve the SDGs in a timely manner;

- In paragraph 13, the reference to biodiversity should be more ambitious and explicit in mentioning the aim to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 notably through enhancing the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity, both within and beyond protected areas, and in encouraging member states to increase the surface and the efficiency of protected areas. Forests should also be mentioned along with “sustainable land, sea and water” as this is a particular ecosystem. We propose to include in this paragraph ‘illicit trafficking in timber’, in addition to deforestation, as it can be an environmental crime itself. The EU and its MS consider that the current formulation is lowering the current level of ambition.
- The protection and effective sustainable management of all water resources should be highlighted, along with a reference to climate change adaptation measures and integrated resource management taking into account future generations. This integrated resource management should be fostered for the protection and restoration of freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems. The EU and its MS would see merits in mentioning sustainable fishing practices and add a reference to the role of the upcoming second United Nations Ocean Conference in Lisbon in achieving SDG14.
- The EU and its MS believe it is important to recognize that unsound chemicals and waste management is a key driver of biodiversity loss and climate change. We should call for the adoption of an ambitious framework for the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 at the 5th ICCM of the SAICM and for a stronger engagement in the ongoing negotiations.
- Regarding the Nature based Solutions, we suggest introducing explicitly the soil as an essential resource and the need to protect and restore degraded land according to Agenda 2030 target 15.3.
- Concerning the transition to sustainable food systems, we believe that references to the need to halt and reverse land use conversion, as well as deforestation and forest degradation associated with certain commodities, should also be added. The EU and its MS suggest including the halt of ‘deforestation and land degradation’ in addition to biodiversity loss and freshwater use.
- Actions for nature should rely on a robust scientific knowledge, promote transparency, awareness raising and responsibility mechanism and also a robust effective implementation mechanism. Therefore EU and its MS suggest to refer to ‘applying appropriate **and transparent** valuation of nature and assessment methods of nature-related risks and **opportunities** in policymaking’;
- Furthermore we welcome that the Declaration include our commitment to continuously enhance the development and implementation of our policy frameworks, laws, and cooperation at the global, regional, national, subnational, and local levels for the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity and the protection of the environment.
- The EU and its MS support the call in paragraph 23 for the adoption of an ambitious and transformative post-2020 global biodiversity framework at the CBD COP 15. The Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) could be mentioned as improving biodiversity mainstreaming across all sectors, as well as other reinforced implementation mechanisms will be crucial for the achievement of the goals and targets to be set in such GBF.

- The EU and its MS welcome the paragraph supporting the upcoming international meeting Stockholm+50. We would welcome additional language to highlight that Stockholm+50 could contribute to accelerating the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the MEAs with actions to address the triple planetary crisis and to foster a green and sustainable recovery. Lastly we are supportive to regard the ministerial declaration as input to Stockholm+50.
- Lastly, as informed earlier (cf CPR subcommittee meeting on 14 December), taking into account the limitations of the hybrid format of UNEA-5.2, the EU will set aside its resolution proposal on “Accelerated adaptation measures to secure water quality and strengthened climate resilience in aquatic ecosystems”. We are conscious, however, that certain essential elements of that resolution should not be delayed till UNEA-6. This concerns for instance references to the upcoming UN Ocean Conference and the UN Water Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, which will occur respectively in 2022 and 2023. The
- Declaration could also recognize the severe impacts that climate change will have on aquatic ecosystems that will require accelerated climate adaptation measures.
- Overall, the EU and its MS recognize that the new Draft Ministerial Declaration forms a balanced document. The EU and MS will provide detailed comments by the Open-ended informal consultations in Nairobi in January 2022.