Draft Resolution for the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure

Submitted to the Secretariat by the Government of Mongolia on 21 December 2021

The United Nations Environment Assembly,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 69/313 of 27 July 2015 on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which recognized that investing in sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including transport, energy, water and sanitation for all, was a prerequisite for achieving many goals, and expressed a commitment by countries to facilitate development of sustainable, accessible and resilient quality infrastructure in developing countries through enhanced financial and technical support,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", acknowledging Sustainable Development Goal 9 on building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and fostering innovation, and noting that the objective of promoting sustainable infrastructure is reflected in the other Goals and targets,

Recalling further General Assembly resolution 71/256 of 23 December 2016 endorsing the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), entitled "New Urban Agenda", and highlighting the commitment in paragraph 45 of that document to develop sustainable and inclusive urban economies, building on resource-efficient and resilient infrastructure and promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns,

Recalling the General Assembly Report of the Secretary-General of 6 August 2018, entitled "Implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027)"[1], which stressed the potential of inclusive and sustainable development through structural transformation for job creation and poverty eradication,

Recalling also its resolution 4/5 on sustainable infrastructure, which encourages Member States to develop and strengthen national and regional systems-level strategic approaches to infrastructure planning, promotes nature-based solutions and encourages the United Nations Environment Programme to support countries in building the technical and institutional capacity to develop sustainable infrastructure as well as to prepare a report on best practices for sustainable infrastructure, drawing on the wide body of existing normative guidance, and identifies gaps in existing knowledge,

Stressing that its resolution 4/5 has important elements not included in the present resolution,

Recalling the General Assembly Report of the Secretary-General of 28 July 2020, entitled "International financial system and development"[2], which acknowledged the liquidity shortages arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and emphasized the need for adapting

[1] A/73/298.
[2] A/75/268.

investment strategies in light of new and emerging challenges and opportunities and for creating the fiscal space for Sustainable Development Goal investments to foster a sustainable recovery,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 75/1 of 21 September 2020, entitled "Declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations", which emphasized that the COVID-19 pandemic offers a historic opportunity for countries to build back better and greener and stressed the need for international cooperation to ensure a more inclusive and sustainable recovery,

Recalling further the updated, comprehensive overview of the UN system response to COVID-19, entitled "United Nations Comprehensive Response to COVID-19: Saving Lives, Protecting Societies, Recovering Better", which stressed the need for green jobs and infrastructure,

Recalling Block 3.1. of the United Nations Environment Programme's Building Back Better strategy, entitled "Greening Fiscal Stimulus and Finance Packages to Accelerate Sustainable Consumption and Production and Achieve the SDGs", which focuses on "supporting governments to rebuild the next generation of social, ecological[3] and productive infrastructure",

Appreciating the focus of the fifth United Nations Environment Assembly on "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals",

Appreciating also the United Nations Environment Programme's wider Medium-Term Strategy and its three thematic sub-programmes on "Climate Action", "Nature Action", "Chemicals and Pollution Action",

Recognizing that infrastructure is inextricably linked to the UN Sustainable Developments Goals (SDGs) by directly or indirectly influencing 92% of the 169 individual SDG targets[4], and is central to many governments' COVID-19 economic recovery plans as a means of creating employment, boosting productivity, addressing inequalities and building resilience to future crises,

Recognizing also that a green economic recovery[5] will only be possible if investments are made in sustainable and resilient infrastructure, guaranteeing 'green and decent' jobs and income; natural and social infrastructure as well as economic infrastructure (integrating digital infrastructure and solutions where appropriate); sustainable consumption and production through circularity; responsible finance and investment for climate stability and ecosystems integrity; and socially inclusive outcomes,

Recalling further General Assembly Resolution 75/202 of 21 December 2020 entitled" Information and communications technologies for sustainable development" that highlights the importance of information and communication technology infrastructure in providing access to basic services,

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[3] Referred to herein as 'natural infrastructure', as defined in the International Good Practice Principles for Sustainable Infrastructure.

[4] Thacker, S., Adshead, D., Morgan, G., Crosskey, S., Bajpai, A., Ceppi, P. et al. (2018). Infrastructure: underpinning sustainable development. Copenhagen, Denmark: UNOPS. https://content.unops.

[5] Referred to herein as 'green recovery'.

Noting that, in 2020, the vast majority of governments' COVID-19 recovery spending was found to be "minimally green"[6],

Recognizing that integrated, systems-level approaches are required to address the planet's cross-cutting vulnerabilities, accounting for the complex interlinkages between different infrastructure systems, sectors, phases, governance structures and aspects of sustainability, preventing huge negative impacts in relation to nature, the climate and pollution, which in turn translate into economic and social losses,

Acknowledging that nature-based solutions, including natural infrastructure (for example for air quality, carbon sequestration, natural cooling, water filtration, flood protection and land stabilization) provide cost-effective and resilient alternatives or complements to built infrastructure in the context of constrained fiscal capacity and should be prioritized to restore and sustain healthy ecosystems and societies as part of a green recovery,

Recognizing that the climate crisis demands that investments are directed into low-carbon and resilient infrastructure to meet economic recovery needs and safeguard future delivery of essential services,

Recognizing also that the COVID-19 pandemic has overwhelmed healthcare systems and highlighted the importance of comprehensive health infrastructure, including for environmentally sound management of medical waste, and that greening of health infrastructure investments is needed to improve communities' resilience to interconnected crises, and to mitigate the harmful impacts of chemicals and waste on the environment and humans alike,

Stressing that addressing the infrastructure investment gap and delivering priority infrastructure requires enormous but targeted investments from the public and private sectors,

Noting that Multilateral Development Banks and other public and private financial institutions can deploy financial instruments for sustainable and resilient infrastructure, co-financing individual projects informed by the International Good Practice Principles for Sustainable Infrastructure[7] (the Principles),

Acknowledging that a set of indicators and a measurement framework will be necessary for monitoring progress on the sustainability of infrastructure at the aggregate level and that such frameworks and mechanisms will require knowledge sharing, technical assistance and capacity support,

1. *Encourages* Member States to align infrastructure planning and investments with the SDGs and the Paris Agreement to advance green recoveries from the COVID-19 crisis.

2. *Encourages* Member States and other stakeholders to:

[6] United Nations Environment Programme. (2021). Are We Building Back Better? Evidence from 2020 and Pathways for Inclusive Green Recovery Spending. https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/are-we-building-back-better-evidence-2020-and-pathways-inclusive-green.

[7] United Nations Environment Programme. (2021). International Good Practice Principles for Sustainable Infrastructure. https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/34853/GPSI.pdf. (referred to herein as 'the Principles')

(a) Fully implement the ten 'International Good Practice Principles for Sustainable Infrastructure' and integrate them into national policy and legal frameworks;
(b) Operationalize the Principles through use and development of available sustainable infrastructure tools[8];
(c) Co-develop knowledge products and participate in exchange mechanisms to share best practices and lessons learned;
(d) Cooperate internationally to establish common frameworks and mechanisms for financing and monitoring sustainable infrastructure;
(e) Consider the role of digital infrastructure in enabling sustainable consumption and production patterns and improving the sustainability and efficiency of other infrastructure systems as part of integrated approaches.

3. *Encourages* Member States to:
(a) Advance integrated, systems-level approaches to sustainable infrastructure planning and delivery;
(b) Engage sub-national institutions to adopt the Principles where relevant, in local recovery-focused infrastructure plans and projects;
(c) Prioritize investment in natural infrastructure, as an asset class for delivering essential services, creating employment and accelerating SDG progress;
(d) Promote investments in sustainable health infrastructure for improved resilience and resource efficiency, with environmentally sound management of medical waste;

4. *Requests* the Executive Director to support Member States by:
(a) Developing knowledge and providing technical assistance and capacity support, within available resources, to plan and deliver sustainable infrastructure investments that will drive a green recovery;
(b) Working with Member States, the UN system (e.g. through the Partnership for Action on Green Economy) and other international partners to establishing a platform or mechanism to support sharing of experiences, peer-to-peer learning, and technical assistance, capacity building, and training on sustainable infrastructure in the long-term;
(c) Leading the development of frameworks and mechanisms for financing and monitoring sustainable infrastructure, in collaboration with public and private financial institutions and other international entities;
(d) Facilitate private sector engagement in planning and developing sustainable and resilient infrastructure by engaging businesses, practitioners, investors, and other private sector stakeholders;
(e) Facilitating regional inter-ministerial committees, comprising Ministers from Member States' environment ministries and finance ministries, or ministries most relevant to infrastructure, to cooperate on the provisions of the present resolution;
(f) Requesting the International Resource Panel to advance efforts for connecting science and policy for sustainable infrastructure, in order to provide expert, policy-relevant advice on the topic;

[8] The 'Sustainable Infrastructure Tool Navigator' represents a database of tools in support of this effort.

(g) Support the implementation of the Principles by translating them for application to specific sub-systems of infrastructure and for the private sector and other stakeholder groups;
(h) Continuing to collect and share best practices, tools, and experiences for improving the sustainability of infrastructure systems, and to submit this information in a report to the Environment Assembly at its sixth session;