

Views on Arrangements for UNEA in the light of COVID 19 situation

Submission from Children and Youth Major Group

11th January 2022

The constituents of the [Children and Youth Major Group](#) have taken note of the [background note](#) dated 6th January 2022 produced by the Secretariat for the upcoming meetings of member states, including the committee of permanent representatives and meetings among the Bureau members, addressing the arrangements for the resumed fifth session of the UNEA (UNEA 5.2), the Special Session of UNEA to commemorate the 50th anniversary of UNEP (UNEA Special Special Session / UNEP@50), and its preparatory meetings including the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR) given the COVID19 situation;

In light of these developments, the Children and Youth Major Group would like to address certain important matters as follows:

Importance of evidence and advice from healthcare professionals:

We continue to call upon all member states and the UNEP secretariat to take into account scientific evidence and advice from healthcare professionals and authorities in determining an appropriate timing for the UNEA 5.2, UNEP@50 and its preparatory meetings including the OECPR. While noting the importance that all factors play in arrangements for UNEA, we highlight that substantive preparation for these sessions must be viewed distinctly from COVID 19 arrangements.

Accreditation and right-based (in-person) participation:

Children and Youth Major Group advocates for ease of accreditation arrangements for all accredited stakeholders, including ensuring that contact groups and informals are open to members of the civil society to observe while respecting appropriate COVID19 protocols. We have appreciated the arrangement of 2 delegates in-person per accredited NGO (on average) as stipulated in the [notification note during December 2021](#) for the UNEA sessions scheduled in February 2022, and would call upon all member states and UNEP secretariat to use this as a baseline for further strengthening participation of civil society in the upcoming meetings in light of COVID19. We highlight that in-person participation of member states and observers must be maintained in a fair and equitable manner that reflects the need of several observer representatives to be able to engage in the negotiation venue.

Spaces for Side Events, Exhibits, Green Tent and meeting rooms:

We highlight the importance to continue making available spaces for side-events, exhibits, arrangements for the green tent (including during OECPR) and availability for meeting rooms, especially for morning and evening coordination at whichever timing the sessions take place.

Should UNEA be postponed to a later date in 2022, such as in April 2022, the Secretariat should consider re-opening the side event portal for UNEA 5.2, and opening the side event portal for UNEP@50 to ensure that fair chance and opportunity can be provided to different member states and stakeholders, including those that are newly accredited, or are available to organise side event with the agreed timing for UNEA sessions.

On mandated and meaningful youth engagement:

We continue to advocate for mandated and meaningful engagement of children and youth engagement in the processes of UNEA. Young people, especially those from the countries of LMICs and SIDS, continue to be at the frontline of environmental problems and looking up to UNEA for political leadership and action it must deliver. We request to ensure that minors (those under the age of 18) accompanied with chaperones can continue to take part in UNEA sessions.

Furthermore, building on our previous requests, we will be delighted to brief the CPR during one of the meetings of January to provide an update and roadmap on youth activities, including the global Youth Environment Assembly, underway for UNEA 5.2 and broader environmental governance discourse in the UN.

Support the refund / rebooking of accommodation arrangements:

Several delegates and participants, including youth organisations, that are seeking to participate in the activities in Nairobi have already purchased hotel accommodations and possibly air tickets. Should UNEA be postponed to a later today in 2022 (such as during April 2022), we call upon the UNEP Secretariat to issue support letters or other documents that could support the refund process for these expenses.

Leaving No One Behind:

We continue to advocate for ensuring participation and engagement of those most impacted by the environmental processes and whose voices continue to be excluded from the decision-making processes. We highlight the universal nature of major groups and regional constituencies, and the need to continue strengthening their engagement. Per a [publication by ITU](#), over 37 per cent of the world population has never accessed the internet; we therefore continue to highlight the importance of having inclusive virtual access and communication strategy. Constituents from minority groups, especially women and children, from Indigenous, LGBTIQ+ community, environmental defenders, migrants and internally displaced people, those suffering work and descent based discrimination, and further sectors of society **must not be left behind**.

We are committed to working with all member states and UNEP secretariat in ensuring meaningful children and youth engagement in the process of UNEA, and delivering it truly as the “largest decision-making body on environment”.

Please note that this submission may be updated as further and emerging information becomes available, based on internal consultations within the youth constituency. This or subsequent versions will be submitted for the upcoming meetings of the sub-committee, including that on the 13th January 2022.

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