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**United Nations  
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**United Nations Environment Assembly of the  
United Nations Environment Programme  
Fifth session**

Nairobi (hybrid), 22–26 February 2021  
and 28 February–2 March 2022\*

## **Draft resolution on sustainable nitrogen management**

*The United Nations Environment Assembly,*

*Noting with concern* that excessive levels of nutrients, in particular reactive nitrogen and phosphorus, have significant impacts on species composition in terrestrial, freshwater and coastal ecosystems, with cascading effects on biodiversity, soil, water and air quality, ecosystem function and human well-being,

*Noting with concern also* that global-economy-wide nitrogen use is currently inefficient, resulting in a large proportion of anthropogenic reactive nitrogen being lost to the environment,

*Noting* the benefits that reducing nitrogen waste would bring to atmospheric, terrestrial, freshwater and marine environments and to human health, ecosystem services and efforts to combat pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss, ensuring food security while offering the potential to save billions of United States dollars annually,<sup>1</sup>

*Recognizing* the need for coherent action to address the multiple global challenges posed by the natural coupling of carbon and nitrogen cycles, and reaffirming the need for enhanced international cooperation for sustainable nitrogen management,

*Recalling* General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, by which the General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and recalling the Sustainable Development Goals and all interrelated targets,

*Recognizing* the fundamental priority of safeguarding food security and ending hunger, and the fact that global crop and livestock production and food security depend on using nutrients sustainably and decreasing nutrient waste, including nitrogen and phosphorus,

*Recognizing also* the action already taken by countries and under intergovernmental agreements related to water quality, air quality, climate and biodiversity, and recognizing actions by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management, the Global Wastewater Initiative, the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities, the Convention

\* In accordance with the decisions taken by the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its meeting held on 8 October 2020 and by the bureaux of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives at their joint meeting held on 1 December 2020, the fifth session of the Environment Assembly was adjourned on 23 February 2021 and is expected to resume as an in-person meeting in February 2022.

<sup>1</sup> According to the UNEP publication *Frontiers 2018/19: Emerging Issues of Environmental Concern* (chap. 4, “The Nitrogen Fix”), the annual savings are estimated to be US\$100 billion.

on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution and the GEF-UNEP project towards the establishment of an international nitrogen management system to link science and policy relating to sustainable nitrogen management,

*Recalling* Environment Assembly resolution 4/14 on sustainable nitrogen management, and reaffirming the importance of the long-term reduction of the multiple pollution threats resulting from anthropogenic reactive nitrogen, with adverse effects on the terrestrial, freshwater and marine environments, and air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, while acknowledging the benefits of nitrogen use for food and energy,

*Taking note* of the outcomes of the fourth meeting of the partners in the GEF-UNEP project towards the establishment of an international nitrogen management system with members of the United Nations Environment Programme Committee of Permanent Representatives, held in Nairobi on 29 and 30 April 2019 as a follow-up to the adoption of Environment Assembly resolution 4/14,

*Taking note also* of the work of the United Nations Environment Programme Working Group on Nitrogen and its task team to implement Environment Assembly resolution 4/14,

*Taking note further* of the ongoing process established in 2017 under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme to produce the international nitrogen assessment, delivered through the GEF-UNEP project towards the establishment of an international nitrogen management system with support from the Global Environment Facility and other stakeholders, prior to the sixth session of the Environment Assembly,

*Taking note* of the launch of the United Nations Global Campaign on Sustainable Nitrogen Management in October 2019 and the adoption by its signatories of the Colombo Declaration on Sustainable Nitrogen Management on United Nations Day, 24 October 2019,

1. *Encourages* Member States to accelerate actions to significantly reduce nitrogen waste globally by 2030 and beyond through the improvement of sustainable nitrogen management;
  2. *Also encourages* Member States to share information on national action plans, as available, according to national circumstances;
  3. *Requests* the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to:
    - (a) *Support* Member States, at their request, in the development of national action plans for sustainable nitrogen management, subject to the availability of resources;
    - (b) *Identify* possible modalities for the options being considered for improved coordination of policies across the global nitrogen cycle at the national, regional and global levels, including, among other options, for an intergovernmental coordination mechanism for nitrogen policies, as specified in subparagraph (a) of Environment Assembly resolution 4/14;
    - (c) *Present* to the Committee of Permanent Representatives, at its 159th meeting, to be held in 2022, a briefing on the implementation of Environment Assembly resolution 4/14, including on the status of the assessment requested in subparagraph (c) of the resolution, as well as a roadmap for further implementation of the resolution in the period leading up to the sixth session of the Environment Assembly;
    - (d) *Invite* Member States to nominate focal points to join the United Nations Environment Programme Working Group on Nitrogen;
    - (e) *Report* to the Environment Assembly, at its sixth session, on the progress achieved in the implementation of the present resolution together with Environment Assembly resolution 4/14.
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