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

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

Nairobi (hybrid), 22 and 23 February 2021  
and 28 February–2 March 2022

**Proceedings of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its  
resumed fifth session**

**I. Opening of the session (agenda item 1)**

1. The resumed fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme was held at the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Nairobi from 28 February to 2 March 2022, with the opportunity for online participation.
2. The session was opened at 10.10 a.m. on Monday, 28 February 2022, by Mr. Espen Barth Eide, President of the Environment Assembly. Opening statements were delivered by Mr. Barth Eide; Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP; Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi; and Mr. Keriako Tobiko, Cabinet Secretary for the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Kenya.
3. In his opening remarks, Mr. Barth Eide drew attention to the progress achieved in the field of the environment since the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment and the subsequent creation of UNEP, stressing that it was thanks to science, international cooperation and action by Member States that problems such as ozone depletion had been successfully addressed, and that climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution were at the top of the agenda for Governments, the private sector and civil society alike. The crises of biodiversity loss, increased pollution and climate change were incontestable, and it was clear that all were driven by human activity. There was a growing sense of urgency, especially among young people, about the need to act for nature to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had demonstrated the power of cooperation in finding solutions to common problems, notably through the swift development of vaccines, but the unequal distribution of those vaccines had also revealed the fundamental inequality of the world's citizens. It was therefore essential that Member States strive to recover from the pandemic in ways that were more just, more renewable and more circular. More than ever, Member States needed to demonstrate that multilateral diplomacy could deliver and each needed to use their sovereign power to further the common good.
4. One of the critical issues on the agenda at the current resumed fifth session was the mission to end plastic pollution, which had reached epidemic proportions. Plastic pollution could now be found everywhere, including in human bodies, and it required the adoption of a legally binding treaty. Recalling visits he had made with the UNEP Executive Director to two recycling facilities in Kenya that made new products out of plastic waste, he said that they had shown that plastic could be a product that was used and reused repeatedly, but this required that societies move to a circular

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economy for plastic in which all plastics were designed to be recycled and special attention was paid to the use of hazardous additives in those plastics.

5. In her statement, Ms. Andersen, noting that the resumed fifth session was being held at a time of great turmoil that made multilateralism for peace and a healthy environment more important than ever, said that an enormous responsibility rested on the shoulders of Member States to deliver solutions to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste, including plastic pollution. The triple crisis was compromising the planet's capacity to sustain humanity and the ability of countries to achieve sustainable development. Thanks to the tireless work of the Bureau and members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, including the Open-ended Committee, several draft resolutions and draft decisions had been prepared for consideration by the Environment Assembly at the current session to tackle the triple crisis in the years to come. The key to success, however, was not the number of resolutions adopted, but the focus, quality and vision of each of those resolutions, and their ability to have a real-world impact in the following months and years.

6. While all the draft resolutions before the Environment Assembly had value, those seeking to tackle the problem of plastic pollution had garnered particular support. In the space of a single lifetime, humanity had created a massive plastic problem by building an entirely new economy based on convenience and single-use plastics. Early plastic industry players had run advertisements teaching people to throw away plastic containers instead of reusing them, and had literally educated people out of practices that were best for the planet and humanity. Decades later, humanity was paying the price of this "new economy" in ocean, soil and water pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, while industry was throwing away a versatile and durable resource, instead of retaining its value. The time had come to reverse that error by launching negotiations on a new international agreement to ensure that plastics kept circulating in the economy, rather than in ocean gyres. Businesses, a broad coalition of countries, civil society and young people were demanding it, and Member States needed to deliver. The decision to launch negotiations on such an agreement would constitute a truly historic outcome of the current session, but only if Member States decided that the agreement would be legally binding; adopt a full life-cycle approach, stretching from extraction to production to waste; include strong monitoring mechanisms; provide support for national action; be backed by real financing; provide incentives for all stakeholders; and provide for swift implementation of its provisions.

7. Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, said that countries needed to continue working together to achieve a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, which was still affecting millions of people around the world. The current resumed session was taking place at a crucial moment for the planet, when it was facing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, and also for UNEP, which was celebrating its fiftieth anniversary. The session therefore provided an opportunity to tackle the crisis, reflect on the past and envision the future, and strengthen UNEP in Nairobi as the global hub for the environment. The responsibility to tackle the triple planetary crisis did not fall to UNEP alone, but to each and every United Nations entity and the entire world. In its capacity as the United Nations headquarters in Africa, the United Nations Office at Nairobi would continue to support UNEP in delivering on its mandate, as well as UN-Habitat, the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office, the 18 United Nations entities operating in Kenya, the 24 regional offices, and United Nations operations in more than 150 countries that were working to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Africa and around the world.

8. In his remarks, Mr. Tobiko said that humanity had failed to heed the warnings of leaders such as the late Wangari Maathai that humans destroyed nature at their own peril because nature was unforgiving. The triple planetary crisis that now confronted humanity were the result of the continued destruction of nature by humans, and their existence was not only proven by science but was clearly visible to all. World leaders had paid lip service to the principles of environmental stewardship and intergenerational equity, but had failed to recognize their own leadership roles, thereby compromising the future of children and generations to come. It was therefore time to go beyond the adoption of resolutions and examine whether, and to what extent, previous resolutions had translated to real action on the ground and led to positive outcomes. Resolutions were important, as were actions taken at the national level to deal with the plastic pollution crisis, but they were clearly not enough.

9. With regard to the plastic pollution crisis, he concurred with the Executive Director that one of the key outcomes of the current session should be a resolution on a new global treaty on plastic pollution, which should include all the elements she had outlined and should go beyond the issue of marine litter in order to be impactful. Similarly, the fiftieth anniversary of UNEP would provide an opportunity to reflect on the tremendous work and achievements of UNEP, but also to hold a candid discussion on gaps and on how to make the Programme more fit for purpose and build a UNEP that

the younger generation wanted and deserved. In closing, he said that, as part of the anniversary celebrations, ministers and other representatives had planted 193 trees, one for each Member State of the United Nations, on the grounds of the United Nations Office at Nairobi campus, in an area that was to be known as the “UNEP@50 corner”.

## **II. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (agenda item 2)**

### **A. Adoption of the agenda**

10. The Chair recalled that, at the online meeting of its fifth session, the Environment Assembly had adopted the agenda for the session on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/EA.5/1/Rev.1), which had subsequently been revised to reflect the dates of the in-person meeting of the fifth session. The following agenda was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/EA.5/1/Rev.2):

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Credentials of representatives.
4. Report of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.
5. International environmental policy and governance issues.
6. Programme of work and budget and other administrative and budgetary issues.
7. Stakeholder engagement.
8. Contributions to the meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
9. Commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm from 5 to 16 June 1972.
10. High-level segment.
11. Provisional agenda and dates of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly.
12. Adoption of the resolutions, decisions and outcome document of the session.
13. Election of officers.
14. Other matters.
15. Adoption of the report of the session.
16. Closure of the session.

### **B. Organization of work**

11. In accordance with rule 60 of its rules of procedure, the Environment Assembly decided to establish a committee of the whole for the consideration of various items of its agenda. The Assembly also decided, in accordance with the recommendations of the Bureau, that the Committee of the Whole would be chaired by Ms. Andrea Meza Murillo (Costa Rica), that Ms. Selma Haddadi (Algeria) would serve as rapporteur and that it would consider item 5, international environmental policy and governance issues, item 9, commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm from 5 to 16 June 1972, and item 11, provisional agenda and dates of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly.

12. The Environment Assembly also decided that the time limit for statements in explanation of vote before action and after action on a proposal be limited to three minutes. Regarding the right of reply, the Assembly decided that such right should be exercised at the end of the consideration of an item, with the number of interventions in the exercise of that right limited to two per item for any delegation at a given meeting, the first such intervention being limited to three minutes and the second to two minutes.

13. The Environment Assembly further decided that both modes of delivery for national statements, in-person statements and pre-recorded video statements, would be treated equally in terms

of the order of statements; that the time limit for national statements would be three minutes for individual statements and five minutes for those speaking on behalf of a group of States; and that a leadership dialogue with the multilateral environmental agreements followed by a multi-stakeholder dialogue on “Building back greener: international environmental protection and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the context of COVID-19” would be held on 1 March, and a leadership dialogue on “Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals” would be held on 2 March. The final structure of the resumed fifth session is available [here](#).

### C. Attendance

14. The following Member States were represented at the resumed fifth session: Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

15. The following non-Member States were represented: Cook Islands, Holy See and State of Palestine.

16. The following United Nations bodies, conventions and related secretariats were represented: Department of Economic and Social Affairs; Department of Political Affairs; Department of Safety and Security; Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; Economic Commission for Europe; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; Executive Office of the Secretary-General; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; International Labour Organization; Office of the High Representatives for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States; Ozone secretariat; secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds; secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats; secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions; secretariat of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention); secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity; secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals; secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat; secretariat of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services; secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury; secretariat of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management; secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa; secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; United Nations Environment Programme; United Nations Human Settlements Programme; United Nations Institute for Training and Research; United Nations Office at Geneva; United Nations Office at Nairobi; United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; United Nations System Staff College; United Nations University; United Nations Volunteers.

17. The following United Nations specialized agencies and related organizations were represented: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; International Atomic Energy Agency; International Civil Aviation Organization; International Fund for Agricultural Development; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; United Nations Industrial Development Organization; International Criminal Court; International Organization for Migration; International Seabed Authority; International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea; Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons; Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization; World Trade Organization.

18. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented: Africa Institute; Commission for Environment Cooperation; East African Community; European Investment Bank; European Union; Global Environment Facility; Green Climate Fund; International Centre for Research in Agroforestry; International Chamber of Commerce; International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea; International Maritime Organization; International Union for Conservation of Nature; Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services; League of Arab States; Nordic Development Fund; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme; South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme; Union for the Mediterranean; World Organization for Animal Health.

19. In addition, a number of non-governmental and civil society organizations were represented as observers.

## **D. General statements**

20. Following the opening of the resumed fifth session, representatives of regional groups of Member States, representatives of Member States and observers made general statements focusing on the theme of the session “Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”.

### **1. General statements by regional and political groups**

#### **(a) African States**

21. The representative of Senegal, speaking on behalf of the African States and also in his capacity as President of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, reaffirmed Africa’s firm commitment to active participation and involvement in the global environmental agenda, noting that the continent would host meetings of the conferences of the parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2022, as well as assuming the presidency of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly, making 2022 an “African year” for the environment. Urgent, meaningful and impactful action was needed to address the major challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, desertification, pollution and waste, and the African States acknowledged the work of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and the leadership of Algeria as the Africa regional representative in paving the way for a successful outcome of the Assembly’s resumed fifth session. The African States welcomed the UNEP medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025 and the programme of work and budget for the period 2022–2023, along with the corresponding allocations for the Environment Fund, but stressed the need for more coordinated and coherent regional delivery of the programme of work, in line with the Group’s previous requests for a strengthened UNEP presence in Africa and the implementation of resolutions submitted by the African States. The special session to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of UNEP would strengthen the Programme’s position as the world’s leading environmental authority.

#### **(b) European Union and its member States**

22. The representative of the European Union spoke on behalf of the European Union and its member States, noting that Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine also aligned themselves with his statement. He welcomed the resumption of the Assembly’s fifth session, but said that it was overshadowed by the act of aggression by the Russian Federation against a neighbouring country, and he reiterated the position of the European Union and its member States on the matter, calling on the Russian Federation to de-escalate the situation, abide by international law and engage constructively in dialogue through the established international mechanisms. He also expressed concern about the war’s harmful impact on the environment, with its ecological consequences likely to have immediate and long-term effects on human lives and health. A year after the first meeting of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly, held online owing to the COVID-19 situation, the pandemic and its consequences were still far from overcome and the state of the planet continued to deteriorate. The resumed fifth session should be a springboard for ambitious, coordinated action to tackle the triple

crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Plastic pollution was high on the agenda, and the Assembly was urged to make a breakthrough and formally launch negotiations on a legally binding global agreement on plastics. The proposed resolution on nature-based solutions also represented a concrete step towards bringing together actions for climate and biodiversity; nature-based solutions had huge potential for climate and biodiversity action when properly implemented, and a multilaterally agreed definition of “nature-based solutions” would be a crucial step in ending their misuse. The European Union and its member States also looked forward to the establishment of a new science-policy panel to address chemicals, waste and pollution, which would fill an important gap and provide the knowledge needed to fully address the pollution agenda and the sound management of chemicals and waste.

**(c) Group of 77 and China**

23. The representative of Colombia, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, Nairobi chapter, cast the fifth session of the Environment Assembly as an opportunity to bridge, build on and catalyse multilateral action on biodiversity, desertification, climate change and pollution, and commended the measures taken to guarantee a transparent, inclusive, participatory and State-driven process that ensured that no-one was left behind. The resumed fifth session was taking place as the world attempted to overcome and recover from a pandemic that had undermined many development gains and highlighted the challenges faced by developing countries. The Group of 77 and China supported the multilateral effort to tackle plastic pollution and welcomed the intent to launch negotiations on an international legally binding instrument on plastic, including in the marine environment, with ambitious goals, equally ambitious means of implementation and wide participation, while fully recognizing the different national circumstances and starting points of Member States and observer States. Members of the Group had put forward resolutions that reflected the need to address the human-animal interlinkages and enhance ecosystem services in order to benefit human health and overcome global health inequalities. The Group also called for financial and technical assistance and technology transfer to enable developing countries to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production, and for reinvigorated North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation in efforts to achieve sustainable development in harmony with nature. Action to protect, conserve and sustainably manage and use ecosystems was encouraged so that developing countries would be better prepared to face the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, desertification and pollution. The Group also acknowledged that the sustainable use of natural resources was an effective way to achieve economic growth in harmony with nature.

**(d) Asia-Pacific States**

24. The representative of Oman made a statement on behalf of the States of the Asia-Pacific region, adding their voices to calls for a global framework to prevent and reduce plastic pollution that was informed by circular economy principles and the waste management hierarchy, and that complemented existing instruments and initiatives. Some of the States had requested that the framework be based on the precautionary approach and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

25. The fourth session of the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific had been held in Suwon, Republic of Korea, from 5 to 7 October 2021. Discussions had centred on issues related to the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly, including nature-based solutions for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Member States of the Asia-Pacific region had contributed to preparations for the session by means of draft resolutions, including on single-use plastic products pollution and marine plastic pollution, sustainable lake management, nitrogen management, and sustainable and resilient infrastructure.

26. The COVID-19 pandemic had hampered the capacity of the region to respond to the triple planetary crisis. Some countries required support to facilitate the transition to greener, more sustainable development pathways in the post-COVID era. Despite those challenges, the region remained committed to submitting enhanced nationally determined contributions for implementing the Paris Agreement and supported the extension of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns until 2030.

27. While 2022 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of UNEP and of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, the international community’s collective environmental action had fallen short and planetary health was in crisis. The Asia-Pacific region renewed its commitment to doing its part to scale up and accelerate global environmental action.

**(e) Latin American and Caribbean States**

28. The representative of Chile, speaking on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States, described the fifth session as significant for the international environmental agenda, with the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of UNEP and reaffirmation of the Environmental Assembly's indispensable role as the intergovernmental decision-making body for the environment. The Latin American and Caribbean States expected the resumed fifth session to have an ambitious outcome, measured not in quantity but in ability to trigger the needed change. The negotiations on plastics were a particular priority, requiring the cooperation of all Member States and willingness to reach consensus on a new international legally binding instrument.

29. The Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean had just marked its fortieth anniversary by holding a special session to strengthen regional cooperation in the face of its environmental challenges. The region was particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, which had the potential to undermine the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The pandemic, while also a source of concern, should be viewed as an opportunity to further integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development into economic and social development planning, foster innovation and create new sustainable jobs. It was important to ensure that developing countries had adequate, sufficient and predictable means of implementation to achieve their environmental obligations. The Group also wished to recall that Member States had common but differentiated responsibilities, but that all were expected to do their utmost to implement the 2030 Agenda. The future role of UNEP in terms of supporting developing countries in complying with their international environmental commitments merited discussion. The major groups also had an important role to play and their input was to be valued.

**2. General statements by representatives**

30. Ministers and other high-level representatives of countries, and representatives of United Nations entities, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and observers, delivered statements addressing the theme of the resumed fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, "Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals". A number of representatives expressed appreciation to all those who had worked hard to prepare for and organize the resumed fifth session, and to the Government and people of Kenya for hosting the session.

31. Many representatives highlighted the timeliness and relevance of the theme of the session, given the pressing need to take affirmative action to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the growing recognition of the role that nature, in all its dimensions, would play in attaining those goals. The significance of nature to the social, economic and environmental aspects of human lives was often forgotten or neglected, and negative anthropogenic influences had greatly diminished the services and resources that nature provided, to the detriment of humanity and the planet. The resumed fifth session had been convened at a key moment for the Earth, when decisive, nature-based actions of real substance were required to overcome the challenges imposed by the triple planetary crisis of biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution, and to recover from the global shock of the COVID-19 pandemic. The resolutions adopted by the Environment Assembly at the present session, and, importantly, their implementation, formed a vital component of those actions. Several representatives expressed regret at the current conflict involving the Russian Federation and Ukraine, and expressed support for and solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

32. Several representatives congratulated UNEP on reaching the milestone of its fiftieth anniversary as the leading global environmental authority, and expressed their continued support for and commitment to the work of the Programme. One representative said that only consolidated action at the regional and international levels could bring about positive results, and the role of UNEP in encouraging environmental partnerships had been outstanding. It was important to learn the lessons of those 50 years and approach environmental problems with a new spirit of urgency and cooperation. UNEP would play a crucial part in that regard in rendering active assistance to countries as they shifted from the present wasteful economic system to a circular economy based on the efficient and environmentally aware use of resources. Strengthening environmental awareness and developing a sustainable mindset were vital to achieving those aims. On the positive side, humankind had the knowledge, technology and capacity to make the transition to a nature-positive future that would benefit health, economies and the planet.

33. Many speakers alluded to the daunting and unprecedented challenges faced in achieving global environmental objectives. The negative impacts of climate change and global warming, including sea-level rise and desertification, were being experienced by many countries, as were such undesirable

phenomena as biodiversity loss, land degradation and deforestation. Several representatives drew attention to specific habitats and locations that were particularly under threat, including wetlands, forests, lakes, coastal zones, mountain regions and small island developing States. Vulnerable populations had been subject to increasing poverty and poor quality of life. Mounting consequences were being experienced by humanity, including insecurity and conflict, forced migration, ill health from the effects of pollution and poor waste management, and unhealthy food production. Despite such impacts, the failure of human governmental structures to coordinate a response had exacerbated the situation. Lack of regional convergence in addressing challenges had allowed short-term gains to override long-term considerations of sustainability and conservation.

34. In recent years, the wide-ranging impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic had compounded the environmental challenges facing humanity. Economic, environmental and social vulnerability had worsened, and the pandemic had exposed the fragility of the links between humanity and nature and the perils of consumerism. In addition, the effects had been felt most deeply by the poorest and most vulnerable members of society. Despite those overwhelming challenges, the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic presented a unique opportunity to apply the lessons learned in building back better and fashioning a more sustainable and inclusive future. Old structures and a business-as-usual approach had been revealed as ineffective, and there was a need to pursue a more coordinated and environmentally aware approach that was firmly based on the interconnectedness enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and that recognized the fact that the health of humanity was intrinsically linked with the health of the planet. The effectiveness of a systematic, science-based and integrated approach to disease management had been demonstrated, and offered hope that future outbreaks of zoonotic and other diseases could be better contained.

35. Given the broad context of increasingly complex challenges facing the planet, it was important to focus on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals as a framework that offered the potential to ensure lasting sustainability for the planet and its resources while enhancing the wealth and health of the population. The 2030 Agenda was the basis upon which humanity could tackle environmental challenges and remodel its relationship with nature to build a resilient and inclusive world. There was growing recognition of humanity's collective obligation to live within the limits of the planet and to move to an innovative, inclusive, sustainable and low-carbon global economy. Collective, proactive, strategic and actionable interventions were needed to overcome the planetary crisis and live in harmony with nature.

36. In keeping with the philosophy underpinning the Sustainable Development Goals, a holistic and integrated approach, with the involvement of all stakeholders, was required to achieve authentic, sustainable development outcomes. Diverse human experiences and capabilities should feed into the mix, including scientific evidence, nature-based solutions, traditional ecological knowledge, and the capacities of indigenous communities to rehabilitate ecosystems. Partnerships should embrace inputs from public authorities, the private sector, non-governmental and civil society organizations, intergovernmental organizations, academia, communities and individuals, cognizant of the values and skills that each could contribute in devising creative and innovative solutions. Strong science was an essential prerequisite for addressing pressing environmental challenges, and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services was of crucial importance in that regard. Capacity-building and technology transfer were vital in supporting and assisting low-resource partners, taking into account the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

37. Many representatives gave particular focus to the issue of plastic and microplastic wastes, which had in recent years become a major area of global concern. Marine plastic pollution was abundant and ubiquitous and was threatening the biodiversity of the world's oceans. The impact was keenly felt by coastal communities, particularly small island developing States, whose economies were dependent on tourism and fishing. Microplastics were finding their way into organisms and constituted a burgeoning threat to the health of humans and other species.

38. There was clearly a need for strong measures to deal with the matter. The transboundary nature of plastic value chains required a global response to tackle plastic pollution effectively. One representative said that addressing the crisis required strong international cooperation and robust stakeholder engagement within a highly ambitious approach that encouraged all countries and stakeholders to identify innovative solutions across the full life cycle of plastics. Efficient waste collection and the application of eco-design principles in the production of goods and packaging could significantly reduce the amount of waste generated. Several representatives supported the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee as a mechanism for discussing the development of a legally binding global agreement on marine litter and plastic pollution. One representative said that such a treaty could reduce global plastic waste by curbing the manufacture and use of single-use plastics and fostering a viable circular economy by means of which plastics could be



recycled. The representative of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development drew attention to the recent launch of the first Global Plastics Outlook, which would inform and support policy efforts to combat plastic leakage.

39. Several representatives highlighted the value of regional approaches to combating litter pollution. One representative drew attention to the Regional Marine Litter Action Plan of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission as an inspirational model of regional action. Another representative outlined the work of the Pacific Ocean Litter Project in helping Pacific island countries to tackle single-use plastics that harmed marine and coastal ecosystems, and described an ambitious project to protect the Great Barrier Reef along the east coast of Australia.

40. The protection of biodiversity and ecological systems was viewed by many representatives as an essential component of the process of environmental recovery. Many human activities were resulting in a concerning imbalance with nature, including accelerated deforestation, air and water pollution, illegal wildlife trade, degradation of wetlands, habitat destruction and unsustainable agricultural practices. There was a strong need to support multilateral agreements that were engaged in this area, including the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. The post-2020 global biodiversity framework promised to set effective targets for the protection of the planet's biodiversity and galvanize action towards ecosystem preservation. On the matter of nature-based solutions, which were a major theme of the present session, one representative cautioned that only activities and good practices that genuinely supported ecosystem resilience and benefited biodiversity should be adopted. To support that aim, it was important to develop a generally agreed definition of nature-based solutions. Another representative underscored the value of nature-based solutions that contributed to both ecosystem restoration and climate change mitigation, such as afforestation, revegetation and wetland restoration. Such efforts could be made in the context of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030.

41. The topic of climate change also featured prominently in representatives' statements. Climate change adaptation and mitigation measures recognized the overarching impact of climate change on many aspects of global life, including water resources, agriculture, forestry, energy, transport, infrastructure, biodiversity and human health. In response, human and natural environments should be seen as interconnected systems, requiring joint planning and project development. Cities and settlements presented a particularly complex challenge, requiring innovative solutions in such areas as climate resilience, energy efficiency, integrated green transport systems and waste disposal. Ensuring sustainable agricultural systems that produced healthy food and provided secure income and livelihoods for farmers and their communities, while avoiding landscape transformations that inevitably resulted in biodiversity loss, was another challenge of global proportions. Sustainable food systems required coordinated policy measures as well as individual and community responsibility. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic had shown the value of locally produced food that reduced environmental impacts and created green jobs.

42. Various models for sustainable consumption and production were gaining prominence. A circular or green economy based on a life-cycle approach, efficient use of energy, water and other resources, cleaner production methods and waste recycling could reduce the negative impacts of wasteful resource use without compromising the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In that regard, many representatives described actions being taken at the national level to promote environmentally sensitive development and sustainable consumption and production. Examples included the articulation of long-term economic visions based on the principles of sustainable development; integrated urban transport systems; strategies to improve air quality and reduce pollution; the promotion of plastics-free, low-waste consumer behaviour, and improved management of waste streams; reforestation projects with ambitious tree-planting targets; the promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency; fiscal measures to incentivize environmentally friendly production; green public procurement; the prioritization of clean production and climate-friendly technologies; the development of environmentally friendly public transport systems; the integration of environmental considerations into decision-making, policymaking and legislation; "blue" initiatives for water environments; and increased funding for parks and heritage areas and the rehabilitation of wetlands.

43. Finally, many representatives highlighted the necessity of global cooperation and action to achieve planetary goals and ensure a sustainable future for coming generations. It was essential to continue to work collectively to ensure that nature remained at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. The COVID-19 pandemic had demonstrated how the health of humans, animals and the planet were closely intertwined, and while the impacts of human activities might seem localized, they could have devastating long-term consequences at the global level. In the face of increasingly complex

environmental challenges, sustainable consumption and production could only be achieved through international cooperation, multilateralism and solidarity. Within that scenario, the role of UNEP, and of the United Nations Environment Assembly, was more crucial than ever in guiding all actors towards an environmentally sustainable future.

### **3. Other statements**

44. The representative of Serbia, raising a point of order, said that the statement delivered by the European Union was not, in fact, the statement that Serbia had aligned itself with.

45. The representative of the Russian Federation, exercising his right of reply to the statement by the European Union, said that the Russian Federation was not engaged in a war of aggression against Ukraine. In fact, the Russian Federation was engaged in a special military operation that had been prompted by the refusal of the Government of Ukraine to implement the Minsk agreements and by the military operations against the people and infrastructure of Ukraine's Donbass region undertaken by the Ukrainian regime and its neo-Nazi partners, whose activities had been ignored by those concerned with the environmental impacts of conflict. The Russian Federation had been left with no option but to intervene.

46. Statements were also made by representatives of the following major groups: non-governmental organizations; farmers; indigenous peoples; women; the scientific and technological community; workers and trade unions; children and youth; and business and industry.

### **E. Work of the Committee of the Whole**

47. The Committee of the Whole held four meetings to consider the agenda items assigned to it, concluding its work on the evening of Tuesday, 1 March 2022. At the 7th plenary meeting of the Environment Assembly, the Chair of the Committee reported on the outcome of the work of the Committee. The report on the work of the Committee is set out in annex III to the present proceedings.

## **III. Credentials of representatives (agenda item 3)**

48. At the 7th plenary meeting of the Environment Assembly, on the afternoon of Wednesday, 2 March 2022, in resuming its consideration of the item, the Chair reported that the Bureau had received and examined the credentials of Member States submitted in accordance with rules 16 and 17 of the rules of procedure of the Environment Assembly. As of 1 March 2022, 28 Member States had submitted formal credentials issued by the Head of State or Government or the Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Executive Director of UNEP. A further 124 Member States had submitted information on the appointment of their representatives to the Environment Assembly to the Executive Director by means of a scanned copy in electronic form of formal credentials signed by the Head of State or Government or the Minister for Foreign Affairs, or by means of a scanned copy of a letter or note verbale from the permanent mission concerned or by means of another form of official communication. A total of 41 Member States had not communicated any information regarding their representatives to the Executive Director.

49. With regard to Myanmar, the Committee had decided, in accordance with the decision of the General Assembly of the United Nations on the same matter, to defer any action on the credentials of the representatives pending further guidance from the Credentials Committee of the General Assembly.

50. The Bureau recommended that the Environment Assembly accept the credentials of the Member States.

51. The Environment Assembly took note of the report of the Bureau on credentials.

## **IV. Report of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (agenda item 4)**

52. The Assembly resumed its consideration of the item. Ms. Luísa Fragoso, Permanent Representative of Portugal and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, presented the report of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, including the outcomes of the resumed fifth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives, held from 21 to 25 February 2022 (UNEP/EA.5/INF/2/Rev.1).

53. Since the online meeting of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly, the Committee had held four regular meetings and one extraordinary meeting to elect its Bureau, in addition to many

subcommittee meetings to exercise its review and oversight role and advance preparations for the in-person meeting of the fifth session and the special session to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of UNEP.

54. In October 2021, the Committee had held its eighth annual subcommittee meeting, during which it had agreed that, as a result of the decision adopted at its extraordinary meeting on 23 June 2021, no further action was required in response to paragraph 7 of Environment Assembly decision 5/3, whereby the Committee was invited to consider, in view of systemic problems and in a comprehensive manner, the cycle of the term of office of the Bureau of the Committee in relation to that of the Bureau of the Environment Assembly. The Committee had also endorsed the outcome document of the consensual process for review by the Committee, as mandated by Environment Assembly decision 4/2.

55. At its 156th meeting, the Committee had endorsed the action plan for the implementation of subparagraphs (a)–(h) of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and had agreed that Member States should continue to consider the action plan in the context of the draft decision on the provisional agenda, date and venue of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly.

56. The Committee had endorsed the draft ministerial declaration for the fifth session of the Environment Assembly, without prejudice to the right of Member States to put forward further adjustments and improvements before its adoption.

57. Under item 4 of the agenda of its resumed fifth meeting, the Open-ended Committee had considered and taken note of the remaining official working documents submitted by the Executive Director to the Environment Assembly at its fifth session, in addition to several information documents. Under item 6, it had recommended that the Environment Assembly should defer consideration of its contribution to the high-level political forum on sustainable development and mandate the subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to consider and finalize that contribution. Under item 8, it had considered 17 draft resolutions and one decision submitted by Member States and the secretariat. In that regard, she thanked the secretariat and the United Nations Office at Nairobi for their efforts to organize online, in-person and hybrid meetings. The Open-ended Committee had endorsed three draft resolutions at the closing meeting of its session, and significant further progress had subsequently been made informally under the leadership of the co-facilitators. Agreement had been reached on the text of the draft resolution on the sound management of chemicals and waste, and on the text of the draft resolution on the creation of an intergovernmental negotiating committee towards an international legally binding agreement on plastic pollution.

58. Following informal consultations, the draft political declaration of the special session of the United Nations Environment Assembly to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of UNEP had also been agreed, subject to final confirmation by one delegation regarding a preambular paragraph.

59. In closing, she thanked her fellow members of the Committee for their hard work, commitment and guidance, the secretariat for its support, and the former Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, Mr. Fernando Coimbra, Permanent Representative of Brazil to UNEP, who had led the Committee until June 2021.

60. The Environment Assembly took note of the report of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

61. The Assembly decided to defer the adoption of draft resolutions on the animal welfare–environment–sustainable development nexus; on sustainable nitrogen management; and on the future of the Global Environment Outlook to the closing plenary on 2 March 2022.

62. The Assembly also decided to allocate to the Committee of the Whole the task of finalizing and endorsing the remaining draft decision and resolutions.

## **V. International environmental policy and governance issues (agenda item 5)**

63. Agenda item 5, and the draft resolutions and decision related to it, was considered by the Committee of the Whole. At the 7th plenary meeting of the Environment Assembly, the Chair of the Committee reported on the outcome of the work of the Committee. The Assembly took note of the report of the Committee. The report on the work of the Committee is set out in annex III to the present proceedings.

## **VI. Programme of work and budget and other administrative and budgetary issues (agenda item 6)**

64. The President recalled that the Environment Assembly had considered agenda item 6 at the first plenary session of the online meeting of the fifth session and had adopted by consensus the following decisions, which are set out in annex I to the proceedings of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fifth session (UNEP/EA.5/25), covering the online meeting of the fifth session:

| <i>Decision</i> | <i>Title</i>  |
|-----------------|---|
| 5/1             | Management of trust funds and earmarked contributions   |
| 5/2             | Medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025 and programme of work and budget for the biennium 2022–2023 |

65. There being no other matters under agenda item 6, the Assembly had concluded its consideration of the item.

## **VII. Stakeholder engagement (agenda item 7)**

66. In his statement, Mr. Ayman Cherkaoui, representative of the major groups and stakeholders, said that it was imperative that the significant decisions taken at the current session were implemented on the ground immediately to ensure that no one was left behind, which made it all the more regrettable that so few representatives of indigenous peoples, stewards to the vast majority of nature and biodiversity, had been able to attend the session. It was also disappointing that the ministerial statement adopted by the Environment Assembly at the current session had not recognized the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, which had been recognized in resolution 48/13 of the Human Rights Council. Conversely, the adoption of the resolution on ending plastic pollution was truly an historic event, which had also highlighted the significant role that civil society and science could play. It was crucial that Member States maintain a spirit of cooperation during the future intergovernmental negotiating process in that regard. The resolution on the animal welfare–environment–sustainable development nexus was a further success and would act as a catalyst for intergovernmental action in a long-neglected area. Vital protection for women, farm workers and waste pickers would be provided by the three resolutions relating to chemicals. Nevertheless, it was regrettable that no action had been taken by the Environment Assembly on the pesticides that poisoned many millions of people every day, and that the pledge to halve nitrogen waste by 2030 had not been included in the resolution, as adopted, on sustainable nitrogen management. The lack of support for establishing an intergovernmental working group on the governance of mineral resources represented a missed opportunity at a time when the use of secondary materials should be an absolute priority, but the major groups and stakeholders looked forward to engaging in regional consultations on the matter. The major groups and stakeholders stood ready to assist immediately in the preparations for the sixth session of the Environment Assembly by building a bridge between words and practice to ensure that Governments were held accountable for implementing the groundbreaking resolutions that had been adopted at the current session.

## **VIII. Contributions to the meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (agenda item 8)**

67. The Assembly decided to defer consideration of its contribution to the 2022 high-level political forum on sustainable development to a future meeting of the subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

## **IX. Commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm from 5 to 16 June 1972 (agenda item 9)**

68. At its 7th plenary meeting, the Environment Assembly endorsed the draft resolution entitled “Political declaration of the special session of the United Nations Environment Assembly to

commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme” for consideration and possible adoption by the Environment Assembly at its first special session.

## **X. High-level segment (agenda item 10)**

69. The high-level segment was opened at 10.20 a.m. on 2 March 2022. The segment consisted of a formal opening, at which opening statements were delivered by key high-level speakers, two interactive leadership dialogues and a multi-stakeholder dialogue on the overarching theme of “Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”, and a wrap-up plenary session.

### **A. Opening remarks**

70. Opening statements were delivered by Mr. Espen Barth Eide, President of the United Nations Environment Assembly; Ms. Amina J. Mohamed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations; Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP; Mr. Félix Moloua, Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Central African Republic; and Mr. Keriako Tobiko, Cabinet Secretary for the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of Kenya.

71. In his opening remarks, Mr. Eide said that the current session marked a historic moment and the culmination of many years of hard work. The international community was about to embark on the extremely important process of negotiating a legally binding agreement that addressed the full life cycle of plastics, from source to sea, and promoted the transition to a circular economy. It was also about to take steps to establish a science-policy panel on chemicals, waste and pollution. At a time when too many people were propagating their own so-called “truths” or “alternative facts”, it was more crucial than ever to have repositories of true knowledge supported by scientists from all over the world.

72. Another outcome of the current session was the recognition that the climate and nature crises were interrelated and equally important, and that solving one to the detriment of the other was not a viable option. That understanding had to be built into all policies, and environmental externalities had to be factored into economic systems in order to put a price on nature. The commitment to negotiating a legally binding agreement was a powerful demonstration that multilateralism was alive and could still deliver. As always, however, while it was Governments that signed treaties, the groundwork had been laid thanks to the broad collaboration of civil society, youth movements and the private sector. In that regard, he applauded the contribution of the World Wildlife Fund and the Alliance To End Plastic Waste, among others.

73. It was worth emphasizing that the real work would begin long after the current session, as the value of a treaty lay not in its adoption but in its implementation. He expressed the hope that participants would return to their countries inspired by the spirit of Nairobi and ready to make immediate progress on the important topics that had been discussed. The time had come to act for nature.

74. Ms. Mohamed, in her remarks, affirmed that protecting nature was key to achieving the 2030 Agenda and the goals of the Paris Agreement. To ensure food and water security for all people, the world had to prevent ecosystem collapse. Protecting ecosystems would also help in closing the emissions gap by 2030, as would the phase-out of coal. The latest report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) showed that failure to curb pollution from fossil fuels would condemn the world to a future both universally dangerous and deeply unequal, but also showed that, when properly scaled up, adaptation worked. The commitment at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Glasgow to double adaptation finance had been a welcome first step, but needed to be delivered urgently and scaled up dramatically, requiring developed countries to fulfil their commitment to provide finance to the developing world, least of which was the unmet promise of \$100 billion. The IPCC report also showed that the amount that Earth would ultimately warm was not yet written in stone but there was no time to waste. Human health, economies and the future of humanity depended on making nature a priority. Representatives were urged to make the most of the current session of the Environment Assembly and to go into “emergency mode”. Progress on a legally binding global agreement on plastic pollution would truly make a difference and again show the value of multilateralism. The timing of the session was also noteworthy, with 2022 marking 50 years since the world came together in Stockholm to launch what many now regarded as the modern environmental movement. In closing, Ms. Mohamed recalled the tagline of the 1972 Stockholm Conference, “Only One Earth”, urging delegates to be guided by it in finalizing the current session’s outcomes.

75. In her statement, Ms. Andersen looked back on the achievements and the individuals who had helped to build a platform for action, noting that the current session of the Environment Assembly was an opportunity to soar from that platform thanks to the negotiated draft resolutions, which cut across the triple planetary crisis. One resolution stood out; with the world demanding action on plastic pollution, the negotiators had delivered the first step by agreeing to establish an intergovernmental negotiating committee to forge a global agreement on plastic pollution. Representatives were urged to adopt the resolution so that negotiations could start and an agreement could be reached as soon as possible, but no later than the end of 2024. The agreement would only truly count, however, if it had clear, legally binding provisions, adopted a full life-cycle approach, took into account complex situations in many countries and delivered support for implementation. Governments must explore all options, including goals for new raw polymers and monitoring and reporting mechanisms to support national action; put in place financing mechanisms and means of implementation; provide incentives for all stakeholders; and engage with business. Political support was needed at the highest levels, both to conclude an agreement in record time and to begin implementation. Getting the agreement right would kick-start a circular economy with huge benefits, and could provide a model for a move to circularity in sectors such as energy, transportation and construction, thereby mitigating the triple planetary crisis. UNEP was focused on that crisis and had established three thematic funds, “Climate stability”, “Living in harmony with nature” and “Towards a pollution-free planet”, to allow Member States to back its work in ways that supported countries’ economies and delivered greater impact.

76. In his statement, Mr. Moloua said that the theme chosen for the fifth session was highly relevant and invaluable to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. His Government was pleased to note the convergence of the theme with its own environmental commitments, which were well aligned with regional and international instruments. In that regard, the Central African Republic had acceded to the various treaties and multilateral environmental agreements. Owing to rising temperatures, his country had experienced the drying up of watercourses and soil degradation stemming from bush fires and cross-border transhumance, which had already resulted in food and water shortages and the disappearance of fauna and flora, a situation exacerbated by wars and the proliferation of armed groups and terrorists.

77. Through its updated nationally determined contribution, his country planned to continue to develop its natural and renewable energy resources and promote agroecology. Moreover, it was working with other member States of the Central African Forests Commission and other bilateral and multilateral partners on the management of the Congo Basin forests. The commitment by UNEP to having secure, stable, sufficient and predictable financial resources was a great guarantee for the inclusion of sustainable development actions in its programmes and for the provision of support to the most vulnerable countries. The assistance requested by his country was related to technology transfer and the conservation, management and restoration of biodiversity. He reiterated his Government’s willingness to continue to work closely with UNEP, with which it enjoyed excellent cooperation. Despite the recurrence of military-political crises in the country, the Government remained ambitious with regard to environmental protection, which was why it had requested the total lifting of the embargo that had been imposed on the country. To conclude, on behalf of the people of the Central African Republic, he wished all participants peace, happiness and prosperity.

78. In his statement, Mr. Tobiko recalled the theme of the session and laid out what strengthening action for nature meant in political terms. It meant recognizing the existential nature of the threat facing the world and the bold and decisive actions that were urgently needed to halt the interlinked and cumulative impact of the triple planetary crisis. The Government of Kenya was looking for practical solutions and welcomed the resolutions proposed for adoption, which provided clear direction on strategies for tackling the current environmental crisis. Strengthening action for nature also meant protecting biodiversity and addressing land and ecosystem degradation, which called for bolder action on forest conservation, rehabilitation of degraded areas, reforestation and afforestation. Further, it meant taking more aggressive and coordinated action to reduce pollution, notably plastic waste. While Kenya had taken certain national measures in that regard, reducing pollution and developing viable sustainable substitutes for plastics required collective action, and Kenya supported the proposal for a global agreement to tackle plastic pollution. The nature of the challenge was clear; the only remaining question was whether Governments were willing and able to address it. A stronger mechanism was needed to review whether commitments were being kept and information exchanged in a transparent manner. Without infringing on sovereignty, the adopted measures should ensure that critical commitments were made and Governments fulfilled their obligations. Kenya advocated cooperation within the United Nations Environment Assembly, believing that working together in the Assembly fostered policy coherence and environmental sustainability.

79. The wrap-up plenary session, which took place on the afternoon of 2 March 2022, consisted of a summary of the key messages of the leadership and multi-stakeholder dialogues and the outcomes of the Cities and Regions Summit. Presentations were delivered by Mr. Rolph Payet, Executive Secretary of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, on the leadership dialogue on the multilateral environmental agreements; Ms. Elizabeth Wathuti, youth activist and founder of the Green Generation Initiative, Kenya, on the leadership dialogue on strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals; Mr. Oliver Greenfield from the Green Economy Coalition, on the multi-stakeholder dialogue on the findings of the report “The UNEP We Want”. The summaries of those presentations are set out in annex IV to the present proceedings, without formal editing.

80. In addition, presentations were delivered by Ms. Anna König Jerlmyr, Mayor of Stockholm, on the outcomes of the Cities and Regions Summit held on 23 February 2022, by means of a pre-recorded video message; and Mr. Shantanu Mandal, youth representative of the Brahma Kumaris to the UNEP major group for children and youth, on the Faith for Earth dialogue held in support of the current Environment Assembly session.

## **XI. Provisional agenda and dates of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly (agenda item 11)**

81. Agenda item 11 and the draft decision related to it were considered by the Committee of the Whole. The report on the work of the Committee of the Whole is set out in annex III to the present proceedings.

82. At its 7th plenary meeting, the Environment Assembly adopted decision 5/4 on the provisional agenda, date and venue of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

## **XII. Adoption of the resolutions, decisions and outcome document of the session (agenda item 12)**

83. At its 7th plenary meeting, the Environment Assembly adopted the ministerial declaration entitled “Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals” (UNEP/EA.5/HLS.1), as orally revised.

84. Also at its 7th plenary meeting, the representative of Serbia introduced a draft resolution on sustainable lake management, which had been the subject of informal consultations following the conclusion of the work of the Committee of the Whole.

85. At its 7th plenary meeting, the Environment Assembly adopted by consensus the following resolutions and decision. The individual resolutions are available in documents UNEP/EA/5/Res.1–UNEP/EA.5/Res.14. They are also available on the website of the Environment Assembly (<http://web.unep.org/environmentassembly>), together with decision 5/4.

| <i>Resolution</i> | <i>Title</i>   |
|-------------------|--|
| 5/1               | Animal welfare-environment-sustainable development nexus   |
| 5/2               | Sustainable nitrogen management  |
| 5/3               | Future of the Global Environment Outlook   |
| 5/4               | Sustainable lake management  |
| 5/5               | Nature-based solutions for supporting sustainable development  |
| 5/6               | Biodiversity and health  |
| 5/7               | Sound management of chemicals and waste  |
| 5/8               | Science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution                                     |
| 5/9               | Sustainable and resilient infrastructure   |
| 5/10              | The environmental dimension of a sustainable, resilient and inclusive post-COVID-19 recovery   |
| 5/11              | Enhancing circular economy as a contribution to achieving sustainable consumption and production   |
| 5/12              | Environmental aspects of minerals and metals management  |
| 5/13              | Due regard to the principle of equitable geographical distribution, in accordance with paragraph 3 of Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations |
| 5/14              | End plastic pollution: towards an international legally binding instrument   |
| <i>Decision</i>   | <i>Title</i>   |
| 5/4               | Provisional agenda, date and venue of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly   |

86. Following the adoption of the above-mentioned resolutions, many representatives expressed satisfaction at the outcomes of the resumed fifth session. In particular, they celebrated as a major achievement of the session the adoption of the resolution on plastic pollution, in which the Environment Assembly had decided that an intergovernmental negotiating committee should be convened in 2022 to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, based on a comprehensive approach that addressed the full life cycle of plastic and took into account different national circumstances and capabilities. Many representatives said that the resolution was a true milestone that would help to rid the world of the scourge of plastic pollution, would be remembered for generations to come, and demonstrated what Member States could achieve through multilateralism and a sense of common purpose.

87. The representative of Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) expressed a reservation with regard to the preambular paragraph of resolution 5/1, which listed among relevant instruments the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, to which her country was not a party and whose norms therefore did not apply to her country, unless explicitly recognized by it as international customary law.

88. Several representatives said that resolution 5/1 was an important but first step in helping to rid the world of plastic pollution, and expressed the hope that the same spirit of compromise and common purpose that had prevailed at the current session would prevail in the negotiations of the new treaty on plastic pollution. One representative said that, in order to ensure that the new treaty was ambitious, a diverse group of countries had decided to create a high ambition coalition to end plastic pollution that would be co-chaired by Norway and Rwanda and would work with the intergovernmental negotiating committee to advocate for urgent action to protect human health, biodiversity and the climate in the context of the negotiation of the new plastic pollution treaty.

89. Several representatives drew attention to the importance of the other resolutions as clear signs of the success of the resumed fifth session, expressing their commitment to swiftly implementing those resolutions and calling for the inclusion of all relevant actors and sectors in such implementation efforts.

90. The representative of Senegal conveyed the offer of his Government to host the first preparatory session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee in Dakar. The representative of Switzerland, welcoming that offer, pledged a contribution of 300,000 Swiss francs by his Government to support the negotiating process.

91. The representative of Switzerland also announced that his Government would contribute 700,000 Swiss francs to support the implementation resolution 5/12 on the environmental aspects of minerals and metals management, and an additional 750,000 Swiss francs to support the implementation of resolution 5/8 on a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution.

### **XIII. Election of officers (agenda item 13)**

92. In accordance with rule 19 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly, the Environment Assembly elected, by acclamation, Mr. Silvano Tjong-Ahin (Suriname) as a Vice-President for the fifth session of the Assembly, to replace Mr. Reggy Nelson (Suriname), for the remainder of his term.

93. At its 7th plenary meeting, in accordance with rule 18 of its rules of procedure, the Environment Assembly elected by acclamation the following officers to serve at its sixth session:

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| President:       | Ms. Leila Benali (Morocco)   |
| Vice-Presidents: | Mr. Joaquim Leite (Brazil)   |
|                  | Mr. Carlos Eduardo Correa (Colombia)                                     |
|                  | Mr. Jafar Barmaki (Iran, Islamic Republic of)                            |
|                  | Mr. Malik Amin Aslam (Pakistan)  |
|                  | Mr. João Pedro Matos Fernandes (Portugal)                                |
|                  | Mr. Abdou Karim Sall (Senegal)   |
|                  | Mr. Ján Budaj (Slovakia)   |
|                  | Mr. Zac Goldsmith (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) |
| Rapporteur:      | Mr. Oleksandr Krasnolutskyi (Ukraine)                                    |



94. Ms. Benali thanked Member States and, in particular, the African States, for the trust they had placed in her. She paid tribute to her predecessor and the outgoing Bureau members for their leadership and stewardship in advancing the difficult discussions on the agenda, stressing that, as the most productive session of the Environment Assembly ever, the current session had set high expectations for the sixth session. There was no need for reminders of the grave challenges faced by the planet and by humanity; she pledged that she would spare no effort in leveraging the necessary partnerships and synergies to secure the implementation of the resolutions of the Environment Assembly, including those related to plastic pollution and the new science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution. The implementation of Environment Assembly resolutions, she suggested, should contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, result in palpable benefits for all the citizens of the world and their enjoyment of their right to a healthy environment, and build a future that generations to come would want.

#### **XIV. Other matters (agenda item 14)**

95. The Environment Assembly did not consider any other matters.

#### **XV. Adoption of the report of the session (agenda item 15)**

96. At its 7th plenary meeting, the Environment Assembly adopted the present proceedings on the basis of the draft proceedings that had been circulated, on the understanding that they would be completed and finalized by the Rapporteur, working in conjunction with the secretariat.

#### **XVI. Closure of the session (agenda item 16)**

97. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly was declared closed at 6.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 2 March 2022.

## Annex I

### Outcomes adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its resumed fifth session

| <i>Resolution</i> | <i>Title</i>   |
|-------------------|--|
| 5/1               | Animal welfare-environment-sustainable development nexus   |
| 5/2               | Sustainable nitrogen management  |
| 5/3               | Future of the Global Environment Outlook   |
| 5/4               | Sustainable lake management  |
| 5/5               | Nature-based solutions for supporting sustainable development  |
| 5/6               | Biodiversity and health  |
| 5/7               | Sound management of chemicals and waste  |
| 5/8               | Science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution                                     |
| 5/9               | Sustainable and resilient infrastructure   |
| 5/10              | The environmental dimension of a sustainable, resilient and inclusive post covid-19 recovery   |
| 5/11              | Enhancing circular economy as a contribution to achieving sustainable consumption and production   |
| 5/12              | Environmental aspects of minerals and metals management  |
| 5/13              | Due regard to the principle of equitable geographical distribution, in accordance with paragraph 3 of Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations |
| 5/14              | End plastic pollution: towards an international legally binding instrument   |
| <i>Decision</i>   | <i>Title</i>   |
| 5/4               | Provisional agenda, date and venue of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly   |

## Annex II

### Decision adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly on 2 March 2022

#### Decision 5/4. Provisional agenda, date and venue of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

*The United Nations Environment Assembly,*

*Recalling* General Assembly resolutions 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972, 66/288 of 27 July 2012, 67/213 of 21 December 2012, 67/251 of 13 March 2013, 68/215 of 20 December 2013, 69/223 of 19 December 2014, 71/231 of 21 December 2016, 73/260 of 22 December 2018, 74/222 of 19 December 2019, and 76/208 of 17 December 2021,

*Recalling* also General Assembly resolutions 47/202 A (para. 17) of 22 December 1992, 54/248 of 23 December 1999, 56/242 of 24 December 2001, 57/283 B (paras. 9–11 of section II) of 15 April 2003, 61/236 (para. 9 of section II A) of 22 December 2006, 62/225 (para. 9 of section II A) of 22 December 2007, 63/248 (para. 9 of section II A) of 24 December 2008, 64/230 (para. 9 of section II A) of 22 December 2009, 65/245 (para. 10 of section II A) of 24 December 2010, 67/237 (para. 13 of section II A) of 28 January 2013, 71/262 (para. 27 of section II and para. 102 of section V) of 23 December 2016, 73/270 (para. 29 of section II) of 22 December 2018; 74/252 (para. 29 of section II and para. 117 of section V) of 27 December 2019; 75/244 (para. 31 of section II and para. 121 of section V) of 31 December 2020; and 76/237 (para. 31 of section II and para. 120 of section V) of 24 December 2021,

*Taking into account* Governing Council decisions 27/1 and 27/2 of 22 February 2013, as well as United Nations Environment Assembly resolutions 1/2 of 27 June 2014 and 2/22 of 27 May 2016 and decision 3/2 of 6 December 2017,

*Recognizing* the importance of the implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development entitled “The future we want”, welcoming progress made, including the establishment of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and stressing the importance of continued action,

*Emphasizing* that improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the existing governing bodies of the United Nations Environment Programme plays an important role in delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

*Recalling* decision 5/3 of the United Nations Environment Assembly, in which, inter alia, the Assembly decided to adjourn the fifth session of the Assembly, and to resume the session by convening at its headquarters in Nairobi from 28 February to 2 March 2022 to conclude the consideration of its agenda,

*Recalling* that the decision to hold the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the sixth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives is to be without prejudice to resolution 2/22, in which the Assembly decided to hold its regular sessions and the open-ended meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives in odd numbered years commencing with its third session, in 2017,

1. *Endorses* the outcome of the stocktaking meeting for the process for review by the Committee of Permanent Representatives of the Environment Assembly and its subsidiary bodies, as agreed at the eighth meeting of the annual subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, held in Nairobi from 25 to 29 October 2021.

2. *Decides* to hold the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly at the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme, in Nairobi;

3. *Also decides*, that the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly will be held in Nairobi from 26 February to 1 March 2024;

4. *Urges* the Environment Assembly at its sixth session, when considering the date and venue of its seventh session, to keep in mind its resolution 2/22, on the review of the cycle of the Environment Assembly and rule 1 of its rules of procedure concerning the recommended time between sessions of the Environment Assembly, and the need to approve the medium-term strategy for the period 2026–2029 and the programme of work and budget for the biennium 2026–2027 in 2025;

5. *Decides*, in accordance with paragraph 10 of Governing Council decision 27/2 of 22 February 2013, that the sixth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives will take place from 19 to 23 February 2024, and requests the Committee of Permanent Representatives to discuss, in consultation with the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and decide on, the format and agenda of the meeting;

6. *Takes note* of the decision of the Intergovernmental Review Meeting on the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities held on 15 February 2022, by which the meeting decided to hold no further sessions of the periodic Intergovernmental Review Meeting of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, recognizing that the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme can continue to provide guidance on priorities and actions to address marine pollution from land-based activities;

7. *Approves* the provisional agenda for the sixth session as follows:

1. Opening of the session
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
3. Credentials of representatives
4. Report of the Committee of Permanent Representatives
5. International environmental policy and governance issues
6. Programme of work and budget, and other administrative and budgetary issues
7. Stakeholder engagement
8. Contributions to the meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
9. High-level segment
10. Provisional agenda, date and venue of the seventh session of the Environment Assembly
11. Adoption of the resolutions, decisions and outcome document of the session
12. Election of officers
13. Other matters
14. Adoption of the report
15. Closure of the session

8. *Requests* the Committee of Permanent Representatives, in consultation with the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly, to contribute to the preparation of the annotations to the provisional agenda set out in paragraph 7 above;

9. *Requests* the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly, in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives, to define a theme for the sixth session of the Environment Assembly no later than twelve months in advance of the sixth session;

10. *Strongly encourages* Member States to submit draft resolutions for consideration by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its sixth session, preferably at least ten weeks in advance of the sixth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives, taking into account the theme of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly and the limited time and resources available for the negotiation of the resolutions during the sixth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives and the sixth session of the Environment Assembly, without prejudice to the rules of procedure, in particular rule 44;

11. *Takes note of* the action plan for the implementation of subparagraphs (a)–(h) of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and notes that the Executive Director will mainstream elements of the plan into future UNEP medium-term strategies and programmes of work which shall be closely monitored for impact, and will undertake consultations with the Committee of Permanent Representatives to support the implementation of the plan;

12. *Decides* to adjust the logo and visual identity of the United Nations Environment Programme in accordance with option 1 in the document entitled “Background document for agenda item 6: visual identity of the UN Environment Programme” presented by the secretariat at the meeting of the subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives held on 12 September 2019 and as have been used since that time;

13. *Also decides* to extend the programme of work for the period 2022–2023 by two years, to the end of 2025, with the budget and targets being pro-rated accordingly.

## Annex III

# Report of the Committee of the Whole at the resumed fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

**Rapporteur: Ms. Selma Malika Haddadi (Algeria)**

## Introduction

1. At the 1st plenary meeting of its resumed fifth session, on Monday, 28 February 2022, the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme established a committee of the whole to consider the draft resolutions, a draft decision and a draft political declaration prepared by the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) at its resumed fifth meeting under agenda items 5 and 11 that remained to be finalized for consideration and possible adoption by the Environment Assembly.
2. In accordance with the decision of the Environment Assembly, the Committee of the Whole held four meetings between Monday, 28 February, and Tuesday, 1 March 2022. As decided by the Environment Assembly, the Committee was chaired by Ms. Andrea Meza Murillo (Costa Rica) and Ms. Selma Haddadi (Algeria) served as Rapporteur.

## I. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

3. The Chair of the Committee of the Whole opened the meeting at 2.05 p.m. on Monday, 28 February 2022. The acting Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, Ms. Sonja Leighton-Kone, delivered a statement.
4. The Committee adopted its agenda, on the basis of the draft provisional agenda (UNEP/COW.5/1).

## II. Organization of work

5. The Committee agreed to establish three contact groups with a view to finalizing, by Tuesday, 1 March 2022, the outstanding draft decision, draft political declaration and draft resolutions for consideration and possible adoption by the Environment Assembly at its resumed fifth session.
6. It was agreed that the co-chairs and the work of the contact groups would be as follows:
  - (a) Contact group 1, to be co-chaired by Mr. Sergio Salazar Alzante (Colombia) and Mr. Dragan Zupanjevac (Serbia), would address the draft resolutions on sustainable lake management (UNEP/EA.5/L.8), nature-based solutions for supporting sustainable development (UNEP/EA.5/L.9), biodiversity and health (UNEP/EA.5/L.11), due regard to the principle of equitable geographical distribution, in accordance with paragraph 3 of Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations (UNEP/EA.5/L.19), as well as the draft decision on the provisional agenda, date and venue of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly (UNEP/EA.5/L.21). It was also agreed that during the consideration of the draft resolution on due regard to the principle of equitable geographical distribution, in accordance with paragraph 3 of Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations (UNEP/EA.5/L.19) and the draft decision on the provisional agenda, date and venue of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly (UNEP/EA.5/L.21), the contact group would be chaired by Mr. Marek Rorh-Garztecki (Poland).
  - (b) Contact group 2, to be co-chaired by Ms. Ana Elena Campos Jiménez (Costa Rica) and Mr. Firas Khouri (Jordan), would address the draft resolutions on sustainable and resilient infrastructure (UNEP/EA.5/L.15), green recovery (UNEP/EA.5/L.16) and circular economy (UNEP/EA.5/L.17).
  - (c) Contact group 3, to be co-chaired by Ms. Gudi Alkemade (Netherlands) and Mr. Mapopa Kaunda (Malawi), would address the draft resolutions on the science-policy panel on chemicals, waste and pollution (UNEP/EA.5/L.14) and on mineral resource governance (UNEP/EA.5/L.18).

### **III. International environmental policy and governance**

7. At its 1st plenary meeting, on Monday, 28 February 2022, the Chair recalled that the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives, at its resumed fifth meeting, held on 21, 23 and 25 February 2022, and in informal consultations held on 26 and 27 February, had approved three draft resolutions for consideration and possible adoption by the Environment Assembly, which would therefore not need to be considered by the Committee of the Whole. The three draft resolutions related to the animal welfare–environment–sustainable development nexus (UNEP/EA.5/L.10), sustainable nitrogen management (UNEP/EA.5/L.12) and the future of the Global Environment Outlook (UNEP/EA.5/L.20).

8. At the same meeting, the Committee of the Whole approved the finalized draft resolutions entitled “End plastic pollution: towards an international legally binding instrument” (UNEP/EA.5/L.23) and on the sound management of chemicals and waste (UNEP/EA.5/L.13) for consideration and possible adoption by the Environment Assembly.

9. Following the approval of the draft resolution entitled “End plastic pollution: towards an international legally binding instrument”, statements were made by the representatives of Ghana, Japan, Peru and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

10. At its 2nd plenary meeting, on the evening of Monday, 28 February, the Committee approved the draft political declaration of the special session of the United Nations Environment Assembly to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/EA.5/SS.1/L.1) and the finalized draft resolution on due regard to the principle of equitable geographical distribution, in accordance with paragraph 3 of Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations (UNEP/EA.5/L.19) for consideration and possible adoption by the Environment Assembly.

11. At its 3rd plenary meeting, on the afternoon of Tuesday, 1 March, the Committee approved four finalized draft resolutions on sustainable and resilient infrastructure (UNEP/EA.5/L.15), enhancing circular economy as a contribution to achieving sustainable consumption and production (UNEP/EA.5/L.17), environmental aspects of minerals and metals management (UNEP/EA.5/L.18) and science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution (UNEP/EA.5/L.14), as orally amended, for consideration and possible adoption by the Environment Assembly.

12. At its 4th plenary meeting, on the evening of Tuesday 1 March, the Committee approved four finalized draft resolutions on nature-based solutions for supporting sustainable development (UNEP/EA.5/L.9), biodiversity and health (UNEP/EA.5/L.11) and the environmental dimension of a sustainable, resilient and inclusive post-COVID-19 recovery (UNEP/EA.5/L.16) and, as amended in the light of the proposed finalized draft decision on the provisional agenda, date and venue of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly, the finalized draft resolution on the future of the Global Environment Outlook (UNEP/EA.5/L.20) for consideration and possible adoption by the Environment Assembly.

13. It was agreed that further consideration of one aspect of the finalized draft resolution on sustainable lake management (UNEP/EA.5/L.8) should continue on an informal basis with a view to presenting a consensual text for consideration and possible adoption by the Environment Assembly.

### **IV. Provisional agenda and date of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly**

14. At its 4th plenary meeting, on the evening of Tuesday, 1 March, the Committee approved the finalized draft decision on the provisional agenda, date and venue of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly (UNEP/EA.4/L.21) for consideration and possible adoption by the Environment Assembly.

### **V. Adoption of the report**

15. At its 4th plenary meeting, on the evening of Tuesday, 1 March, the Committee adopted the report of the Rapporteur and entrusted the Rapporteur and the secretariat with its completion.

### **VI. Closure of the meeting**

16. The Chair closed the meeting at midnight on 1 March 2022.

## Annex IV

### Summaries of the multi-stakeholder and leadership dialogues held at the resumed fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly\*

#### A. Leadership dialogue with the multilateral environmental agreements, held on Tuesday, 1 March 2022

##### Introduction

The Leadership Dialogue with the MEAs was the first of a series of dialogues in the UNEA 5.2 session, moderated by Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, CEO and Chairperson of the Global Environment Facility. The Dialogue aimed to highlight concrete ways to strengthen coherent and effective implementation of MEAs at both national and international levels. We heard from MEAs Heads and Member States how governments could utilize UNEP and the MEAs to address the interlinked environmental challenges, including by leveraging scientific evidence to promote cooperation and coherence across the global environmental agenda. This is the first time a dedicated dialogue with the MEAs was organized as part of the official UNEA programme.

##### Key points and call for action

- (a) The global planetary crisis is an interconnected one and should be addressed jointly. We need **integrated solutions** that cut across different instruments and constituencies to deliver on the 2030 Agenda. Despite the ongoing efforts, there is still fragmentation at international and national levels leading to duplication of efforts, gaps, and insufficient implementation of MEAs. The Covid-19 pandemic has added to these challenges. UNEP and MEAs are all addressing the drivers of environmental change, and can bring stronger and more effective, **collaborative effort** to address them.
- (b) **Multilateralism works.** Through multilateralism, we have tackled many transboundary environmental challenges to date, **but we need to work faster.** An excellent example of how the international community has effectively responded to a global challenge is through the creation of the Montreal Protocol and its funding mechanism, the Multilateral Fund, leading to the phasing out of 99% ozone-depleting substances.
- (c) **National policy and implementation:** There is a clear need for more coherent national approaches to implement the MEAs, including development of cooperation mechanisms at the country level. This requires work across different sectors, ministries, and stakeholders, cooperating among national focal points of different MEAs by identifying common drivers and priorities to deliver on a universal goal. Effective institutional structures and concrete tools are needed so that parties can meet their MEA obligations. Engagement of national focal points is crucial to ensure the development and implementation of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). NBSAPs should include relevant commitments under all biodiversity related MEAs to which country is a Party.
- (d) **Examples** were given by countries implementing MEAs in an integrated and coordinated manner. Such best practices should be shared and emulated by others. For example, the establishment of the Rwanda Environment Management Authority, mandated with the coordination and implementation of MEAs in Rwanda. Egypt, on the other hand, continues to accelerate the process and create an enabling environment for the sustainable development agenda through a unified plan for MEAs, the establishment of national committees and liaison groups for biodiversity conventions, while China implements the MEAs in the context of promoting green and carbon-neutral development.
- (e) **The post-2020 global biodiversity framework is a good example of a unifying framework.** It offers an opportunity to work together across MEAs to achieve common goals for example through establishing joint programmes among the biodiversity conventions. We need joint benchmarks and indicators to keep us on track.

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\* The summaries of the dialogues are presented without formal editing.



- (f) Within **the chemicals and wastes cluster**, ongoing efforts of enhanced cooperation and coordination among the conventions give a good example of how to address environmental problems in a life cycle approach. **The life cycle approach** in tackling environmental challenges needs to be up scaled, for example, in addressing plastic pollution.
- (g) **The delay in concluding the beyond 2020 framework on chemicals and waste** affects the achievement of the sustainable management of chemicals and waste. The international community is called upon to urgently finalize the framework.
- (h) **Political will** is key for our success. Together we need to ensure that the value of environment is included in governments and private sector decisions and policies. We need to align public and private investments and have consistency to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.
- (i) **Finance to support coherence**: Right now, the financial resources have not been directed in an optimal way to address global environmental problems coherently. The future projects and joint activities should be increasingly looking at the interlinkages with biodiversity and other clusters, this should be also reflected in the GEF project design.
- (j) **Science-policy**: Now it is time to reach the solutions space and science will take us there. We have to utilize better the existing science and evidence and connect with different solution providers. The work of IPCC and IPBES should be tapped in this regard.
- (k) **UNEP** has a key role in providing an overview of environmental challenges and promoting solutions together with the MEAs. There is a need to promote coherent and integrated implementation of MEAs at the national level. We need to continue working together at all levels. UNEA has the convening power to mobilize action across the environmental constituencies including delivering on the 2030 Agenda and this should be reinforced. The UNEP Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025 and the Programme of Work outlines the importance of tackling the triple planetary crises in a coherent manner by promoting collaborative actions at the national level through projects using integrated approaches.
- (l) To effectively implement the obligations of the MEAs, parties are called upon to meet their **financial commitments**. The GEF is also called upon to support countries with a unified plan on MEAs.
- (m) **The new treaty on plastic pollution** will offer an opportunity for addressing relevant environmental problems for the three planetary crises on biodiversity, climate change, and pollution.

**The Leadership Dialogue showed that MEAs provide a very solid base for action to tackle the environmental crises and that strengthened implementation requires much more attention to integrated solutions.**

## **B. Multi-stakeholder dialogue: “Building back greener: international environmental protection and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the context of COVID-19”, held on Tuesday, 1 March 2022**

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Introduction Segment | <p>Despite the extraordinary health, societal and economic shocks wrought by COVID-19, the global response has not yet sparked a transformative moment to accelerate our transition to green and fair economies.</p> <p>This was the conclusion of the “Build Back Greener” multi-stakeholder dialogue convened by the Green Economy Coalition at UNEA 5.2 in Nairobi, Kenya, on March 1<sup>st</sup> 2022. Crucial to this conclusion is that fact that of the +\$14trn spent by governments in extraordinary measures to support economies during the pandemic, very little has been either nature positive or conducive to a green economy.</p> |
| Scene Setting        | <p>We acknowledged that governments face unprecedented challenges in achieving a nature positive, net zero, zero pollution, fairer and more inclusive society all while struggling with ballooning public debt, an ongoing health crisis, and a destabilising world order. But we do not have time to recover first and then go green: the window to securing 1.5°C is closing rapidly, progress on SDGs is slowing or reversing, and the problem of plastic pollution is intensifying rapidly. Therefore we must redouble our efforts to Build Back Greener now.</p>  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Speaker 1<br>Question                               | <p>The first intervention came from Ms. Gitika Goswami of Development Alternatives, India, one of the authors of the background document <u>Build Back Greener</u>. Ms Goswami brought attention to the nine recommendations of the report:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Embed circular economy into recovery agendas and address the problem of plastics.</li> <li>2. Screen stimulus measures and embed sustainability in budget design and implementation</li> <li>3. Prioritise financing to enable micro, small and medium size enterprises (MSMEs) to pursue sustainability goals.</li> <li>4. Prioritise job-rich, community-led and nature-based solutions.</li> <li>5. Prioritise debt-for-nature-swaps and other innovative sustainable finance solutions.</li> <li>6. Embed the just transition into stimulus and reform programmes.</li> <li>7. Support multi-stakeholder and cross-sector national collaboration platforms.</li> <li>8. Increase multilateral funding subject to inclusive green recovery action plans.</li> <li>9. Hold international finance institutions to account for their role in the Green Recovery.</li> </ol> <p>Ms Goswami argued that in India the highest policy priority to accelerate a green recovery must be enabling access to finance and support for greening for small and micro enterprises.</p>   |
| Speaker 2<br>Question:                              | <p>Mr. Bruno Oberle of IUCN reiterated that nature has largely been invisible from the recovery efforts to date. He argued that the core interest of society is long-term stability, and therefore governments at a minimum, should commit to the principle of “do no harm to nature”. This can be achieved by screening stimulus measures for their environmental impact, embedding nature in budget design, and prioritising the macro-economic opportunity of investing in nature. It was noted that, for every dollar spent on ecological restoration, US\$9 can be expected in return, with the potential to create 395 million new jobs by 2030. But public pressure is required to push policymakers towards these kinds of investments.</p>  |
| Speaker 3<br>Question:                              | <p>The dialogue then moved onto the issue of plastic pollution – an iconic issue of a transformation towards green and fair economies. Mr. Stewart Harris of the America Chemistry Council from the Business Major Group supported a legally binding resolution on plastics, arguing that business can help innovate solutions to ensure plastics stay in the circular economy rather than disposed into the environment. He drew attention to the importance of including informal waste community and pointed out the need to develop ways of tracking progress and working with stakeholders.</p>   |
| Speaker 4<br>Question:                              | <p>Ms Alejandra Parra of Chile’s Break Free from Plastics then took the discussion to a deeper level, reminding us of the broken relationship between people and nature created by an extractive, domineering, patriarchal, and colonial economy. She shared examples of the indigenous communities and cultures damaged by hundreds of years of industrialisation and the great acceleration of the 21st century.</p> <p>Ms Parra argued that we must be realistic about large solutions imposed from top down. Instead, we must prioritize building economies that serve communities and reestablish respectful relationships with each other and with nature. She stated it is not enough to build a greener economy, but we must deconstruct the current extractive global economy. She recommended that the priority for action should be support for small green community businesses, within the broader cultural movement of restoring respectful relations with nature and with each other.</p>   |
| Ministers<br>Contribution<br><br>(Indicate Country) | <p>We heard an inspirational story of Fiji’s green recovery from Mr. Joshua Wycliffe, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Waterways and Environment. As an archipelago of some 350 islands, Fiji is on the front lines of climate change, and its economy was especially hard hit by the restrictions of COVID-19, with hundreds of jobs lost. Impatience and unemployment spurred the Fijian government to act on a green recovery, prioritizing community support and small green businesses, and nature-based solutions were sought that could protect coastlines, biodiversity, and food security all at once. Partnering with communities and the private sector, the new Fijian sea defence project uses natural solutions to keep sea-level rise at bay, at a fraction of the expensive of pouring tonnes of concrete. This work is taking off across the Pacific and Fiji stand ready to support others technically or on policy around the world.</p> <p>Ms. Zakia Khattabi, Minister of Climate, Environment, Sustainable Development and Green Deal, Belgium reminded us to leave no one behind and the importance of Just Transition. The pandemic disrupted all societies, and human and economic welfare, and made clear our vulnerability, especially low-income groups. She urged the delegates to use this opportunity to build systemic resilience that respects planetary boundaries, in a scientific and transboundary approach, that can halt environment loss and achieve the SDGs and the Paris Agreement.</p> |
| Reactions to<br>Ministers<br><br>(Indicate reactor) | <p>Mr. Stephan Contius, Head of the Division for United Nations, Germany, strongly supported the importance of dialogue and transformative multi-stakeholder partnerships and alliances as the key to unlocking transformative change. He stated that the German government supports international partnerships to do this and will direct public funds towards this end. The German COVID-19 response package supported green recovery in 25 countries around the world, with stimulus spending designed to align with the 2030 SDGs agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement. He reiterated this transition can only be achieved with stakeholder expertise - from environment, trade unions, youth, science, and</p>  |

indigenous wisdom - because this moment demands we combine forces more strongly than before. Special mention was made to PAGE, the UN's multiagency Green economy support for countries.

Ms. Alli Pykkö, Youth delegate for nature and biodiversity for The Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi in Finland argued that local must play a crucial role on inclusive green recovery. She reminded us that what matters most to people is community and local businesses and livelihood. Change should start with prioritizing community business to prosper and go green. We need fundamental change in our perspective of nature, away from being a mere resource, and towards an indigenous, spiritual understanding of the value of nature.

Mr. Marco Lambertini, DG of WWF International reminded us of the importance of nature positive, which is as important as net zero. He argued that the economic system needs more nature integrity, and that building back greener should focus on changing the economic drivers that deliver nature loss.

Tiina Vähänen, Deputy Director, FAO stated that COVID-19 has rendered the most vulnerable even more vulnerable. These communities need support to help them recover from the short-term crisis now, but also for the longer-term planetary environmental crisis. Agriculture must become more inclusive, resilient, sustainable, and better integrated with environmental management and restoration, with this now forming a key pillar of FAO's strategic framework.

Ms. Martha Rojas Urrego, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands reminded us of the critical role played by wetlands. We can't have water without wetlands, and we can't have recovery without wetlands. Wetlands are also an essential carbon store. So we must keep in mind Wetlands in our Build back Greener and Bluer, emphasizing the importance of blue recovery.

Ms. Neth Dano, Women Major Group, reminded us that women have both been disproportionately impacted by Covid, and played a outsized role in recovery in their roles in health care and education and informal sectors. (70% of health workers and first responders globally are women, yet they are paid 26% less than men health workers). She encouraged us to tackle three points in Building Back Greener:

1. Ensure social protection for all. This must be universal, but not gender neutral. (On this point it was noted, according to ILO, only half of the world have access to social protection, secondly estimates have been made that Investments in essential social protection policies can generate a GDP multiplier effect of between 0.7 and 1.9).
2. Direct support for women in the informal sector, women-owned and led micro and small businesses, and those who feed us.
3. That Stimulus packages must be about people, not just profit. It must provide support for and promotion of community innovations, recognizing the importance of traditional and indigenous knowledge.

#### Summary

The moderator thanked the panel and concluded by pointing out one significant insight from the dialogue – those governments that had already started on their transition to green economies were better equipped to act on BUILD BACK GREENER. With that insight he commended two assets to assist governments:

The [Build Back Greener report](#), and the [Green Economy Tracker](#) – the most important policies to transform towards greener fairer economies. The Green Economy Coalition will continue to support this transition by helping all stakeholders bring to life a global green deal, and the new social contract that articulates its societal mandate.

## C. Leadership dialogue: “Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”, held on Wednesday, 2 March 2022

### Summary report: Leadership dialogue: Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

#### Introduction

The Leadership Dialogue took place on the UNEA-5 theme of ‘Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals’, in a hybrid setting on Wednesday, 2 March 2022 from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm EAT.

This Leadership Dialogue brought together stakeholders from across governments, the scientific community, civil society, private sector, the UN system and other international organizations for an engaging discussion on how we can strengthen action for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and prevent, halt, and reverse the degradation of nature, in line with the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

Stemming from an analysis of the main constraints preventing nature-positive outcomes, three main points covered were how we can change individual behaviors, how we can change policies, and how we can change financial incentives in order to accelerate action on nature to achieve the SDGs. The participants consisted of 1 moderator, 1 keynote speaker, 3 panelists (including 1 youth), 2 video contributors (youth) and 17 state representatives contributing speakers from the floor (initially intended to be 19).

Most of the 17 countries chose to focus on what they are doing to address the three planetary crises, but interventions also flagged that responses have been fragmented while the three planetary crises feed and fuel each other. The government of Sweden chose to offer a space for their youth delegate to speak in lieu of the HE the Minister of Environment, considering that policy choices of today will be felt by and have a bearing on the lives of the young generation as their impacts start to materialize.

## **Key points and call to action**

Keynote speaker Amina J Mohamed, UN DSG set the scene by highlighting that it is crucial ecosystems must be protected and nature-based solutions (NBS) pursued in order to create the jobs necessary to revitalize economies, recover from Covid-19, adapt, and mitigate climate change.

### **On changing policy**

The key message on changing policy from the panel members and contributing speakers highlighted the need to ensure policies that protect and restore nature, otherwise, it is impossible to solve the triple planetary crisis. To do so states must be held accountable as they need to play a role as catalyst for action and also look to the UN for leadership at the highest level. This is the reason why citizen and youth activism are particularly important as they can shape policy with a long term view as opposed to short term political gains. The importance of holistic and multisectoral policymaking for enacting change was stressed along with the importance of NBS for coastal climate solutions. Several speakers highlighted the multiple demands on land and natural resources and the difficult trade-offs that require solid decision-making systems to support short term needs of a poor population and long-term requirements for realizing the SDGs.

Further discussion on changing policy informed on the need for spatial planning, natural resource management, and putting public policies into place. These policies need to benefit all people and encourage appreciation and understanding of the importance of nature as suggested by panel member State Minister of Land Use Planning Guy Loando Mboyo, DRC. Also highlighted was the importance of innovation, transparency, and data management.

Several state representative spoke of their country's efforts including but not limited to Sweden's pledge to double climate finance by 2025, invest in recycling schemes, and the set-up of an institutionalized youth council that sends young delegates to climate and environmental conferences; Korea's focus on its circular economy action plan, incentivizing producers, phasing out coal-fired power plants; Indonesia's efforts to manage forests, reduce deforestation, rehabilitate mangrove forests, move to renewable energy; France's focus of education, and the environment in school curricula and raising awareness; Denmark stressed a priority of tackling plastic pollution, including through recycling and re-use, and protecting marine areas; the USA noted the efforts it is making to conserving 30% of its lands and water and home, and support others to do the same, as well as recycle 50% of plastics.

### **On changing behaviours**

On changing behaviour, the discussion centered around the need to change our emotional relationship with nature and instill a love for it, and the need to encourage consumer sustainability. To do so, the recommendation put forward by panel member youth activist Elizabeth Wathuti is to reimagine our connection to nature, instill a love and compassion for nature and protect frontline communities facing the worst impacts of the crisis as a result of our actions today.

Throughout speaker's interventions the role and need for accountability and holding state actors to their words was highlighted, as well as the disconnect between commitments and the deployment of subsequent funding and implementation of actions to meet these commitments. The strong need for moving from commitment to planning to action that materializes in terms of real benefits for nature and people was flagged by many participants.

### **On changing finance**

The discussion on changing finance was rich in recommendations with an overarching message on closing the financing gap for nature and the need for more public financing that enables the leveraging of private finance. In order to do so, ecological destruction or protection must be translated into monetary values and stop hiding the costs of extracting from nature.

Another recommendation put forward by panel member Administrator of UNDP, Achim Steiner, is to encourage the private sector and all parts of the economy to reinvest in ecosystem restoration and sustainability. The contribution of the task force on nature-related financial disclosure was recognised as providing crucial information, as well as the important need to have climate and environment professionals in finance ministries/governments.

State representatives further highlighted some of their achievements towards changing finance such as the EU doubling finance in biodiversity; Egypt's focus on creating a Nature Fund that gives more responsibility to private sector and rewarding them with green labelling; Netherland's recognition of the government's role as an investor, facilitator but also creating incentives through greening finance.

### **Summary**

Overall, one of the clear key recommendations that resonated with all participants was the importance of building on these existing efforts but the absolute necessity to do more and do it better. Finally, this dialogue brought youth to the fore. There were 4 who contributed with 3 who had been invited and the fourth one was given the decision-maker seat by Sweden, in an acknowledgement that we the youth will live the consequences of today's choices.

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