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

**First special session: commemoration of the
fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the
United Nations Environment Programme**
Nairobi (hybrid), 3 and 4 March 2022

**Proceedings of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its
first special session: commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary
of the establishment of the United Nations Environment
Programme**

I. Opening of the session (agenda item 1)

1. The first special session for the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was held at the headquarters of UNEP in Nairobi on 3 and 4 March 2022.
2. The session was opened at 10.20 a.m. on Thursday, 3 March 2022, by Ms. Leila Benali, President of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. Opening statements were delivered by Ms. Benali; Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, via video message; Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, via video message; Mr. Collen Vixen Kelapile, President of the Economic and Social Council; and Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP.
3. In her opening remarks, Ms. Benali said that the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of UNEP was a moment to celebrate environmental multilateralism, look to the future and reflect on past achievements and lessons learned. The previous 50 years had witnessed the growth and shaping of the multilateral institutions that would continue to protect the environment in years to come. Since the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, at which UNEP had come into being, the many notable achievements of its Governing Council had included co-establishing the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and creating the Montevideo Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law. In 2013, the United Nations General Assembly had adopted resolution 67/213 to strengthen UNEP in response to growing environmental challenges. Soon thereafter, the Governing Council had been replaced by the United Nations Environment Assembly. The task for the global community since then had been to honour the commitments entrusted to the Assembly. The results of the Assembly's work were tangible, and included, most recently, the adoption of a landmark resolution on ending plastic pollution, the implications of which were enormous. However, serious challenges remained. Increasing inequalities and the intensive use of the planet's finite resources threatened to undermine the progress made, while the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and associated challenges were too complex and multifaceted for any one State to tackle on its own. It was imperative to continue strengthening multilateralism in pursuit of lasting solutions. Respect for a global rules-based system, as embodied by the Environment Assembly, had underpinned environmental conservation over the previous 50 years. Although environmental multilateralism could be a slow and frustrating process, doubting it was counterproductive. In the words of the former Executive Director of UNEP, Klaus Töpfer, "the extraordinary rise in both human populations and consumption levels leaves us no choice but to take

innovative and ambitious actions to reverse the widespread destruction of species and ecosystems”. Recent achievements had been made possible by the foundations laid by previous generations. The challenge going forward was to take the multilateral environmental system to the next level, paving the way for future generations.

4. In his statement, Mr. Shahid said that, over the previous 50 years, UNEP had coordinated a worldwide effort to confront the planet’s biggest environmental challenges and had played a key role in creating institutions and reaching agreements that had enhanced knowledge of those challenges and propelled international action. It had helped to lay the foundations for scientific consensus on environmental decline, and its convening power and rigorous scientific research had provided a platform for countries to advance the global environmental agenda. As the international community commemorated the Programme’s efforts and achievements, it should reflect on whether it was doing enough to support those efforts and meet its obligations to the planet. It had to redouble its commitments and stay on track to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. His country, Maldives, was a small island developing State heavily reliant on its ecosystems for its sustenance and economy. He knew the human cost of environmental degradation and climate change, which was why he had made protecting the planet one of the key priorities of his “Presidency of Hope” and why he would continue to support the work of environmental champions such as UNEP. It had been almost 50 years since the historic conference in Stockholm that had led to the Programme’s establishment. The 1972 Stockholm Declaration had provided the first agreed set of principles for work in the field of the human environment, and its legacy lived on. In recognition of that, he would convene a preparatory meeting for the Stockholm+50 event at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The event itself would serve as a space for reflection on the dependencies between humanity and the environment, and on the international community’s responsibility for the well-being of both. The two commemorations would foster stronger partnerships for and with future generations, whose voices had to be heard. In May, he would convene a high-level meeting focused on the sustainable and resilient recovery of the tourism sector, at which he would emphasize the need for the world to transition to blue and green economic practices, while in July, he would convene a high-level thematic debate entitled “A Moment for Nature”, at which participants would reflect on solutions to common bottlenecks across the environmental agenda. Though the challenges were many, he believed that, through multilateralism and concerted efforts, the international community would prevail.

5. In his statement, Mr. Guterres spoke about the new way forward offered to the world in 1972 with the creation of UNEP, which had been based on a vision for a better, healthier Earth and built on the pillars of international cooperation. Over the years, UNEP and its partners had worked with Member States to combat air pollution, restore the ozone layer, protect the world’s seas, promote a green and inclusive economy and raise the alarm about biodiversity loss and climate change, showing that multilateralism worked and could deliver solutions for people and the planet.

6. Although humanity continued to wage a suicidal war against nature, with climate disruption, biodiversity and habitat loss, and pollution and waste threatening societies and much of life on Earth, it was now clear what needed to be done. First, protect the most vulnerable, which meant scaling up international cooperation to provide the financial and technical assistance that vulnerable countries and communities needed for greater resilience. Thus, donors and multilateral development banks should more than double the share of climate finance allocated to adaptation to at least 50 per cent by 2024. Second, cut global emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 to reach net zero emissions by 2050, meaning no new coal and no coal finance, the phase-out of coal in the countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development by 2030 and by 2040 everywhere else, and decarbonization of every sector, especially energy and transportation, in every country by 2030. Third, halt the extinction crisis, which called for an ambitious and actionable post-2020 biodiversity framework. Fourth, drastically reduce chemical, plastic and solid waste pollution, which meant tackling the drivers of environmental degradation, especially poverty and unsustainable consumption and production – the establishment of an intergovernmental committee to negotiate a legally binding global agreement on plastic pollution was an encouraging move in that regard. In addition, the world had to transform its financial and accounting systems to reflect the true cost of economic activities, including their impact on nature. It was also imperative to follow science and engage in multilateral action, both of which were supported by UNEP.

7. Mr. Guterres concluded by urging countries to draw on past achievements for inspiration to make the huge efforts needed to ensure that present and future generations could live on a sustainable planet. All countries had a crucial role to play in protecting people and the planet, and all should grasp the opportunities to work together in an active, open and networked multilateralism.

8. Mr. Kelapile began by commending UNEP for effectively implementing its mandate as the focal entity for environmental issues, notably through its focus on environmental education, its advocacy of sea and wetlands protection and its contribution to environmental multilateralism, as well as support for green technologies, particularly solar energy and electric mobility. The celebration of the achievements of the past 50 years was also an opportunity for Governments and other stakeholders to reaffirm their commitment to work even more closely and collaboratively with UNEP. With the future uncertain, UNEP would need strong support for its efforts to address the triple planetary crises.

9. The Economic and Social Council, the principal United Nations organ dedicated to development matters, valued UNEP input to the Council's work on championing the environmental dimension of sustainable development, particularly as environmental challenges mainly affected vulnerable groups in society. Building back better and recovering from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic should include addressing the triple planetary crises, which would require close collaboration with UNEP to inform policy measures on climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. The Council would be convening Member States and other stakeholders in July for the twenty-second session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, where goal 14 relating to life below water and goal 15 relating to life on land of the Sustainable Development Goals would be among the goals to be reviewed in depth. The Council counted on UNEP, Member States and other partners to ensure that the Forum benefited from the discussions and outcomes of both the special session and the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly. Member States were also invited to engage with the Council through participation in preparatory activities, such as the Council's forum on financing for development follow-up and the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, to ensure that those forums and the high-level political forum itself reflected the interconnectedness of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, as well as all the other multilateral environmental agreements. Concluding his statement, Mr. Kelapile reaffirmed his commitment to strengthening multilateralism, international cooperation and solidarity and engaging all stakeholders to increase ambition for sustainable development and climate action. Noting that the special session was taking place at a time when global peace was facing threats above and beyond the setbacks caused by the pandemic, he expressed the hope that global peace would be maintained, to enable the Council and the entire United Nations system, including UNEP, to contribute meaningfully to a recovery led by the Sustainable Development Goals.

10. In her statement, Ms. Andersen said that UNEP had come a long way since 1972. The journey had sometimes been difficult but had always been guided by vision, science and the certainty that a healthy environment benefited everyone. It had carried the environment from the fringes to the mainstream and had led to an understanding of the need to transform societies and economies to protect the earth. The current international community was standing on the shoulders of the Stockholm giants: Maurice Strong, Indira Gandhi, Olof Palme and Jomo Kenyatta. Their deeds and achievement in putting the environment on the socioeconomic map lived on. They had laid the foundations for modern-day awareness of the topic and had woven the tapestry of multilateral environmental agreements that held the international community to account. The obvious example was the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the implementation of which had saved millions of lives and shown that environmental multilateralism did deliver. Among many other achievements, there was one overarching success: UNEP had come to lie at the heart of environmental protection. The world had realized that it could not pollute its way to development and clean up later. Change was being demanded, and stakeholders were acting. None of that had been in place 50 years previously. However, the journey would end only when humanity could thrive without skewing the delicate balance of life on the planet. Accelerated action was needed before the triple planetary crises left the international community reeling in the wake of its destruction. The to-do list was long: ensure economic decisions accounted for nature; reshape energy, transport and food systems around decarbonization and circularity; transform economic and financial models so that capital backed people and the planet; and reinvigorate multilateralism through the common agenda. UNEP was committed to achieving those transformations, but it could not succeed alone. Everyone's input was needed to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals. While many people saw storm clouds gathering overhead, a glistening golden thread of environmental action had been woven in 1972, a thread that the environmental community had thickened into a guide-rope strong enough for all to grasp. The time had come to hold fast to that rope and follow it into a world where humanity lived as part of nature, not above it. The international community owed it to its past, its present and most certainly its future.

11. During the opening plenary meeting, prior to consideration of the adoption of the political outcome of the special session, representatives and other participants viewed a commemorative video on UNEP at 50.

12. Introductory remarks were delivered by Mr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, President of Botswana, Mr. Muhammadu Buhari, President of Nigeria and Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, President of Kenya.

13. Mr. Masisi applauded Kenya, particularly Mr. Kenyatta, and UNEP for providing leadership on environmental issues, and welcomed the opportunity to reflect on past achievements and current challenges in order to chart the way forward and strengthen UNEP. With the world facing multifaceted challenges to the achievements of sustainable development, including climate change, desertification, biodiversity loss and growing levels of poverty, it was essential for global leaders to champion the balance between environment and development. UNEP provided a strong platform for decision-making and an effective reference point that should be supported in every way possible.

14. Botswana had significant achievements in environment management, including for biodiversity, with the listing of the Okavango Delta as a world heritage site and the creation of the Makgadikgadi wetland system, and with 40 per cent of the country's land under protected area status. Environmental management was embedded in the national development planning processes and Botswana Vision 2036, the two key development instruments guiding the nation's development, and community-based natural resource management programmes were in place to enhance community livelihoods through the sustainable use of the environmental resource base. While the Government was fully committed to the path laid out by the multilateral environmental agreements to which it was a party, fulfilling its commitments remained a challenge owing to limited resources. All stakeholders, including the international community, green philanthropists, the private sector, research institutions and development agencies, were urged to prioritize incentivizing success in conservation: nations that succeeded in conservation, especially of critical global goods, such as those on the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species, should be supported for their success stories rather than punished through stringent global regulatory measures that deterred sustainable utilization and trade in wildlife resources. In closing, he reaffirmed Botswana's commitment to multilateralism, the collective interests of the global community as espoused in the Sustainable Development Goals, and UNEP, as a valuable leader in connecting the world to the future it aspired to.

15. In his statement, Mr. Buhari recognized the first special session of the Environment Assembly as an opportunity to bolster international cooperation and stimulate collective action to address the triple planetary crisis, which no country or continent could address on its own. Fifty years earlier, thanks to the efforts of Mr. Maurice Strong, many governments had become convinced of the need to make climate and environment action a priority. At the Glasgow Climate Conference, nearly 50 years later, countries including Nigeria, had worked to spur action on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and pledged to take steps to adapt to climate impacts. Nigeria was committed to transitioning to net zero, an ambition that involved both environment and development plans containing nature-based solutions, including expansion of protected areas through the creation of 10 new national parks and 2 marine protected areas cutting across the country's various ecological zones, as well as the sustainable management of critical wetland ecosystems across the land.

16. He applauded the efforts made by UNEP over the years and called for broader action to overcome the triple planetary crisis. Desertification and drought, in particular, were threatening lives and livelihoods, underscoring the need to boost biodiversity through ecosystem restoration. UNEP played an important role in the reduction of biodiversity loss and the global movement to slow deforestation and accelerate afforestation. Restoring key ecosystems was crucial to combating climate change and achieving sustainable development, and greater success could be achieved through collaboration with partners such as UNEP. In concluding his statement, he urged redoubled collective efforts to improve and sustain action on climate, nature, chemicals and pollution, air, biosafety, disasters and conflicts, green economy, gender, oceans and seas, resource efficiency, water and youth education, in order to save the planet and achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

17. Mr. Kenyatta, on behalf of the people of Kenya, welcomed participants to the first special session, marking a proud moment in the environmental journey of the global community. Since its establishment, UNEP had evolved into a formidable ecological consciousness for the world. While the journey had not been easy, UNEP had succeeded in establishing a credible platform for countries to come together and advance the global environment agenda. He paid tribute to Mr. Joseph Odera and Mr. Maurice Strong, key individuals behind the creation of an environmental organization and the hosting of UNEP in Nairobi, and to Ms. Wangari Muta Maathai, who had championed practical, local solutions to environmental degradation. He urged all stakeholders to enhance, mobilize and prioritize support for UNEP, which had clearly demonstrated its critical role in ensuring a sustainable planet.

18. Kenya remained committed to environmental sustainability, with the environment pillar anchored in its Kenya Vision 2030. It had also worked closely with the United Nations to provide support and facilities to the United Nations entities based in Kenya and the region to enable them to achieve their mandates. In that regard, he announced that his Government would provide land for the development of humanitarian and logistical hubs in Nairobi, Naivasha and Mombasa and for the creation of a diplomatic enclave adjacent to the United Nations Office at Nairobi complex. In addition, an integrated protocol management information system had been developed to enhance efficiency in the administration of diplomatic privileges.

19. Reiterating Kenya's commitment to ensuring that UNEP continued to deliver on its critical mandate, Mr. Kenyatta called on all Member States to prioritize their commitments and support for UNEP. He invited Member States to attend two events to consolidate the commitments made at the current special session and at the fifth session of the Environment Assembly: first, the international event marking the fiftieth anniversary of UNEP, "Stockholm+ 50: a healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity", which would act as a springboard for the implementation of the United Nations decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals and encourage the adoption of green post-COVID-19 recovery plans; and second, the United Nations Oceans Conference, which would seek to promote the much-needed science-based innovative solutions to sustainability in the management of oceans. Finally, he announced the creation of the Amani and Mazingira Global Award sponsored by the Government and the people of Kenya, a biannual award that carried a monetary reward of US\$20,000, for which the first awardee would be announced on 1 June, Kenya's national holiday to mark Madaraka Day.

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

A. Adoption of the agenda

1. The Environment Assembly adopted the following agenda for the session on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/EA.SS.1/1).

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Credentials of representatives.
4. Statements by representatives.
5. Presentation of the report of the Executive Director on the science-policy interface.
6. Presentation of the stakeholder report entitled "The UNEP We Want".
7. Leadership dialogues:
 - (a) Looking back: 50 years of UNEP;
 - (b) Looking forward: achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for people and planet.
8. Multi-stakeholder dialogue.
9. Adoption of the political outcome of the session.
10. Adoption of the report of the session and the Chair's summary.
11. Closure of the session.

B. Organization of work

20. Based on the organization of work as presented in the annotated agenda (UNEP/EA.SS.1/1/Add.1), the Environment Assembly agreed to the organization of work proposed by the President, including consideration of item 5, presentation of the report of the Executive Director on the science-policy interface, and item 6, presentation of the stakeholder report entitled "The UNEP We Want", during the second plenary meeting, to be held in the afternoon of 3 March 2022. The final structure of the first special session is set out in annex III to the present proceedings.

21. The Environment Assembly further agreed that the time limit for statements in explanation of a position before action and after action on a proposal be limited to three minutes. The Assembly agreed that delegations should exercise their right of reply at the end of the day whenever two meetings had been scheduled for that day and whenever such meetings were devoted to the

consideration of the same item or 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.

C. Attendance

22. The following Member States were represented at the first special 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.

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

24. 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.

25. 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.

26. 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.

27. In addition, a number of nongovernmental and civil society organizations were represented as observers.

III. Credentials of representatives (agenda item 3)

28. At the 4th plenary meeting, on the afternoon of Friday, 4 March 2022, 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 2 March 2022, 40 Member States had submitted formal credentials issued by the Head of State or Government or by the Minister of Foreign Affairs in physical form to the Executive Director of UNEP. As of 1 March 2022, 114 Member States had submitted information concerning the appointment of their representative to the Environment Assembly to the Executive Director of UNEP 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 39 Member States had not communicated any information regarding their representatives to the Executive Director.

29. 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.

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

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

IV. Statements by representatives (agenda item 4)

A. Statements by representatives

32. Ministers and other high-level representatives of countries, and representatives of United Nations entities and intergovernmental organizations, delivered statements during the special session to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of UNEP. A number of representatives expressed appreciation to all those who had worked to prepare for and organize the present meeting, including the UNEP secretariat and the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and thanked the Government and people of Kenya for hosting the meeting.

33. In congratulating UNEP on reaching the milestone of its fiftieth anniversary, several representatives said that it was apposite to reflect on the achievements of UNEP during its existence, the lessons learned from that experience, the present role of UNEP within the global environmental agenda, and the future directions it should take in combating the overwhelming environmental challenges facing the planet. Since its inception, the Programme had fulfilled its major role as the leading advocate for the environment within the United Nations system, a role that would grow in significance with increasing awareness of the need for nature-based solutions to global problems.

34. Several speakers reflected on the inception of UNEP following the landmark United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in June 1972. The event had been a catalyst in prompting countries to start working together to strengthen environmental governance at all levels, ushering in a new era for the global environmental movement. At that time, Nairobi had become the first, and remained the only, United Nations headquarters in the global South, symbolizing

the realization that the success of environmental action could only be achieved through equal, inclusive multilateralism. The mood at the time had been optimistic that the challenges could be addressed through strong environmental governance; and while those challenges had burgeoned, UNEP had played a pioneering role in taking measures to address the planetary crisis at all levels, at the same time evolving in line with the needs of a rapidly changing world.

35. The achievements of UNEP during its 50-year history had been considerable and impressive. The Programme had provided a platform for cooperation across the full spectrum of the international community in coordinating joint action to address environmental issues, and had been responsible for, or assisted in the creation of, many programmes, partnerships and agreements in its relentless efforts to combat the complex and multifaceted environmental challenges facing the planet. In taking such action, two factors were critical: issues should be dealt with based on the latest expert scientific knowledge; and the international community must respond in unison. In that regard, UNEP had played a vital role. For example, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, created by UNEP and the World Meteorological Organization in 1988, had provided the scientific basis to address climate change. In addition, numerous multilateral agreements had been prepared and supported by experts under the guidance of UNEP, including the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and its Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, adopted in 1987, which remained the only universally ratified treaty under the United Nations; the Convention on Biological Diversity, which became effective in 1993; the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora; the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal; and, most recently, the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

36. Other milestones alluded to by representatives in which UNEP had played a pivotal role included the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 1992, and its associated global treaties on climate and biodiversity; the 2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, which had been the first-ever survey of the health of the world's biological resources; the creation in June 2012 of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme; the establishment in 2013 of the first United Nations Climate Technology Centre and Network in Copenhagen; and the Paris Agreement, adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at its twenty-first session, held in Paris in December 2015. In addition, UNEP had helped to lay the foundations for a scientific consensus on environmental decline, thereby playing a key role in the body of law that had been enacted globally. All of those actions were testament to the gradual realization by humanity that long-term development was not possible without sustainable management of the planet's natural capital.

37. Several speakers gave consideration to the role and ethos of UNEP, and the attributes that had contributed to its success. One speaker defined the role of UNEP as recognizing and analysing challenges related to the natural and human environment, developing relevant plans and agreements, and promoting environmental knowledge and information. Another highlighted the role of UNEP in communicating to decision makers the fundamental importance of the environmental sector in recovery from crises, building resilient societies, and promoting the transition to a green economy, and emphasizing that the recovery of the environmental sector could remove much of the burden from the health sector and help countries to achieve targets of poverty reduction, ensuring that no one was left behind. The scientific basis of its actions, and its positioning at the science-policy interface, was viewed as a key factor; one representative said that its technical assistance, backed by rigorous scientific research, had helped Member States to engage, act boldly and advance the global environmental agenda. Another representative remarked that UNEP had been created as the world's first environmental conscience – an anchor institution for the environment that identified problems, suggested policies, connected countries, and promoted collective action. The strong relevance of the work of UNEP for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals was highlighted. One representative said that UNEP had provided a platform for countries to engage, act and advance towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Another remarked that, in the context of the 2030 Agenda, humanity must take action to preserve the planet, its environment, and collective well-being.

38. In keeping with the role of UNEP as an indispensable partner in delivering the environmental dimension of multilateral environmental agreements, several representatives spoke of the strong relevance of UNEP to the work of their organizations. The representative of the Convention on Biological Diversity stated that the Environment Management Group's Issue Management Group on Biodiversity, established in 2021 and co-chaired by UNEP, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, was preparing the ground for United Nations system collaboration on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, to which UNEP would make an essential contribution. The representative of the Organisation for

Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) said that the fiftieth anniversary of UNEP almost coincided with the establishment of the OECD Environment Committee in 1971. UNEP had become an observer of the Committee in 1974 and continued to work closely with OECD in its efforts to put environmental issues at the heart of economic policymaking. Finally, the representative of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) said that the two programmes worked in unison to establish a holistic approach to the built and natural environments at all levels of government. Further opportunities for cooperation would be presented by the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to assess progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum, both scheduled to take place in 2022.

39. A number of representatives spoke of the role of UNEP in improving environmental governance in their countries or regions. A wide range of areas that had benefited were cited, including the reduction in emissions with the assistance of the Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles; the preparation of environmental legislation and incorporation of environmental matters into long-term developmental planning; capacity-building, institution-building and the preparation of reports on environmental matters; biodiversity conservation, including rare flora and fauna; mitigation of chemicals and legacy pollution; the preservation and creation of national parks and protected areas; sustainable wetlands management and reforestation; sustainable waste management, including bans on plastic bags and single-use plastics; and climate change mitigation measures, for example the development of a national carbon offset framework, clean mobility and energy efficiency. From a regional perspective, representatives referred to the valuable role of UNEP in supporting the implementation of regional conventions, for example the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa, and the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution (Barcelona Convention) and its Mediterranean Action Plan.

40. At present, the planet faced escalating environmental challenges – including the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution – that placed at centre stage the pivotal role of UNEP in guiding humanity towards a more sustainable future. As one representative observed, the Programme’s mission was as critical in 2022 as it had been in 1972. The science-policy interface, for example, was more pertinent than ever as the global community sought evidence-based solutions to overcome such challenges as zoonotic diseases and plastic pollution. New, emerging challenges – typified by the issues of marine litter and plastics and the COVID-19 pandemic – required innovative solutions and strong, adaptive leadership, bringing UNEP to the fore. Ending poverty by 2030, as expressed in Sustainable Development Goal 1, would be unattainable without a strong environmental dimension to development programmes. Food security, access to safe drinking water, and the provision of adequate education and health services were other critical problems faced by a large proportion of the world’s population. Such issues were compounded by the lack of resources, technical capacity and funding faced by many countries.

41. In such circumstances, it was vital to re-evaluate the work and focus of UNEP to ensure that it was best positioned to add maximum value in its role as the leading global authority that set the global environmental agenda and promoted the coherent implementation of the environmental pillar of sustainable development, in accordance with paragraph 88 of the outcome document, entitled “The Future We Want”, of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012. Opportunities were available to reflect on the dependency between humanity and the environment, and the need to ensure the well-being of both. Humanity had a common responsibility to hand over to its successors an environment fit for habitation. In supporting that aim, it was essential that UNEP work closely and cooperate with other actors to utilize scarce resources most effectively within a spirit of multilateralism and synergy, embracing the contributions of governments, private sector organizations, civil society, non-governmental and youth organizations, and indigenous communities. One representative said that UNEP should increase its role in strengthening the national capacities of countries to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development at the national, regional and global levels. Another representative said that an inclusive and proactive UNEP must take account of the specific needs of vulnerable communities, including small island developing States.

42. More specifically, one speaker suggested three critical actions as part of the process of transformation and renewal: inclusive representation, including strong engagement of highly vulnerable economies; simplification of funding mechanisms to scale up interventions at the subregional and regional levels; and closing the gap between policy acceptance and implementation at the national, regional and international levels. Another remarked that a renewed science-policy interface would facilitate multi-stakeholder engagement and strengthen the link between policy and action, while another stated that it was imperative to provide greater voice to the scientific community in developing countries. UNEP should also act strongly to ensure that policymakers and decision

makers deliver on previous commitments to ensure an inclusive, green recovery. There was a need for more relevant governance frameworks, better performance trackers, accountability mechanisms, reliable data and digital tools. UNEP was uniquely positioned and had a crucial role to play in reinvigorating international cooperation and spurring collective action. The primary mission of UNEP to act as the environmental conscience of the United Nations and the planet was as relevant today as it had been 50 years ago.

B. Statements by representatives of regional and political groups

1. African States

43. The representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, speaking on behalf of the African States, paid tribute to UNEP and to Mostafa Tolba, one of the Programme's pioneers, stressing that African countries had been actively engaged in the creation of UNEP and remained committed to ensuring that the environment remained a central part of the global sustainable development agenda. While much progress had been achieved over the last five decades, the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution demonstrated that much work remained to be done, and it was to be hoped that over the next decades, greater emphasis would be placed on the implementation of agreed international environmental obligations in order to avert future threats to the well-being of both people and the environment. In closing, she said that the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of UNEP would help to cement the Programme's role as the global environmental authority, and she urged Member States to organize national-level activities to commemorate the anniversary, including activities that highlighted the important roles of women, young people and vulnerable communities in addressing environmental challenges.

2. European Union and its member States

44. The representative of the European Union, speaking on behalf of the European Union and its member States, and also on behalf of Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine, said that the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of UNEP stood in sharp contrast with the situation in Ukraine, and demonstrated the attachment of the international community to multilateralism and the international legal order, which was denied. Since its inception, UNEP had galvanized commitments and action to address the world's most pressing environmental challenges, and under UNEP leadership the world had seen an ever-stronger and growing global environmental agenda, and a whole network of multilateral environmental agreements developed under the Programme's auspices. Such agreements reflected global consensus on the challenges humanity faced, and were a testament to the importance of international solidarity in addressing them. Much progress had been achieved, but the world was far from overcoming all environmental challenges, and the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution must be tackled in an integrated way, through multilateralism and international cooperation, which were more important than ever. In closing he drew attention to three landmark resolutions adopted by the Environment Assembly at its resumed fifth session, on the development of an international legally-binding instrument to address plastic pollution, the use of nature-based solutions to address biodiversity loss and climate change, and the start of a process towards the establishment of an intergovernmental panel on chemicals, waste and pollution, which proved that, together with UNEP, Member States were strongly committed to tackling the triple planetary crisis without delay.

3. Group of 77 and China

45. The representative of Colombia, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the influence of the developing world had been significant throughout the 50-year history of UNEP, including through the leadership of two Executive Directors, namely Mr. Mostafa Tolba from Egypt and Mr. Achim Steiner, a German-Brazilian national, who had both shaped the contours of the leading global environmental authority. Reflection on past achievements also provided an opportunity to reinvigorate international cooperation and spur collective action and, in the context of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, as referred to in the General Assembly resolution 66/288 entitled "The Future We Want", it was important to underline the relevance of recognizing the individual efforts that developing countries were making to fulfil their environmental commitments in the context of multilateral environment agreements, taking into consideration national circumstances and priorities. It was also vital to develop integrated international and national financing frameworks in support of nationally owned sustainable development strategies in order to implement the Addis Ababa Action Agenda further, thus effectively mobilizing and aligning a wide range of financing sources and instruments with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, making use of the full potential of all means of implementation.

4. Latin American and Caribbean States

46. The representative of Chile, speaking on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States, said that the resolutions adopted at the resumed fifth session served as a strong indication to the world of the commitment of Member States and stakeholders to global environmental challenges, even during difficult and uncertain times. UNEP had, throughout its history, played a fundamental role in integrating different visions into the policy decision process and promoting global and multilateral agreements to protect the planet on the basis of scientific knowledge, such as the ozone treaties. It was therefore regrettable that important obligatory and voluntary targets relating to substances harmful to the ozone layer had been missed or were in danger of not being met.

47. She welcomed the political declaration adopted by the Environment Assembly at the current session. The declaration reaffirmed the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities enshrined in General Assembly resolution entitled 66/288, and would serve as a tool for supporting the strengthening of international environmental governance within the context of the institutional framework for sustainable development, renewing efforts at all levels to enhance implementation of existing obligations and commitments under international environmental law and recalling the need to enhance the provision and mobilization of all types and sources of means of implementation.

5. Asia-Pacific States

48. The representative of Oman, speaking on behalf of the Asia-Pacific States, said that UNEP continued to play the key role in dealing with environmental crises. Now, more than ever, it was vital for all countries to strive to strengthen their resilience in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had highlighted the interconnection between human and environmental health. It was incumbent on everyone to play their part to protect the planet in the face of the triple planetary crisis, and the 50-year anniversary of the founding of UNEP served as an opportunity both to reflect on the achievements of the past and to commit to a path for the future founded on joint efforts.

6. Arab States

49. The representative of Oman, speaking on behalf of the Arab States, said that, in its fifty years of existence, UNEP had acquired a wealth of experience that had seen an increasing role for the environment in the international arena since the world had first recognized its central importance at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972. It was now time to reflect on the lessons learned over the last five decades and to focus on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda, while giving special consideration to the circumstances and needs of developing countries and those countries that were most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. In closing, he paid tribute to Egypt's Mostafa Tolba, who had served as second Executive Director of UNEP for 17 years, and he expressed appreciation to the President, the Bureau, the Executive Director of UNEP and her team, and to the Government of Kenya for organizing the fiftieth anniversary commemoration.

V. Presentation of the report of the Executive Director on the science-policy interface (agenda item 5)

50. Introducing the item, the President drew attention to a report by the Executive Director entitled "Reflecting on the past and imagining the future: a contribution to the dialogue on the science-policy interface," which was set out in the annex to the note by secretariat on progress in the implementation of resolution 4/23 on enhancing the science-policy interface of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/EA.SS.1/2).

51. In her presentation of the report, the Executive Director drew attention to ozone-depleting substances, mercury and lead in petrol as three examples where the journey from science to policy to action had saved millions of lives and protected the environment. Yet in all cases, there had been a significant time lag between the identification of the problem by science and the policy and action needed to address it. In the case of ozone-depleting substances, the time lag of thirteen years from science to action had been due in part to industry resistance, and in part to the slow flow of information in the pre-Internet days. In the case of climate change and biodiversity loss, scientific panels had been raising alarms for some time, yet action continued to be insufficient, perhaps because climate change and nature and biodiversity loss had seemed like a future threat. However, it was now clear that they constituted immediate threats that were causing death and human suffering, be it from more frequent and intense storms and droughts, degraded soils incapable of producing food, or polluted air.

52. In order to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, it was essential to close the time lag between scientific discovery and action by creating a nimbler and more inclusive science-policy interface. The creation of this new interface would require reform in four broad areas. First, there was a need to make knowledge production systems more streamlined, efficient and open, and to provide real-time information on threats and solutions accessible to people everywhere. The revamped UNEP World Environment Situation Room would serve to fill that role, but, in order to ensure action followed, monitoring and evaluation of implementation would be critical. Second, science must be more proactive and identify existing and potential new solutions through mechanisms such as early warning, foresight, scenario-building, predictive analytics and a new generation of integrated assessment models. Third, the science-policy interface must involve not only scientists and politicians, but also engage with every group with an open mind, in particular with indigenous peoples and local communities, who had managed their land in harmony with nature for centuries and held invaluable traditional knowledge on solutions, as well as the private sector, which when determined to find solutions helped to effect change at lightning speed. Fourth, the digital revolution, which had democratized communication and the transmission of ideas, must be embraced; it was a great accelerator that held enormous potential if digital tools were used well.

53. In a nutshell, there was a need to rapidly develop specific and relevant solutions through the engagement of diverse stakeholders, and to communicate those solutions quickly through real-time digital tools. If this new science-policy interface were created, science would become more accessible, trusted and democratic, and therefore more useful. Society would be involved in producing and acting on science, while decision makers would have a wider range of solutions on which to act.

VI. Presentation of the stakeholder report entitled “The UNEP We Want” (agenda item 6)

54. Ms. Yugratna Srivastava, co-facilitator of the children and youth major group, provided an overview of the methodology used to produce the report entitled “The UNEP We Want”. Her group, together with the science and technological community major group, had been mandated by the Major Groups Facilitating Committee, in October 2020, to lead the development of the report, with the mandate being recognized by the Environment Assembly at the online meeting of its fifth session and subsequently during various subcommittee meetings; the process thereby serving as a model for designated and meaningful civil society engagement. The time-consuming, bottom-up consultation process had ensured that substantive information had been gathered as to how UNEP was viewed by the global population, and a consensus-based process had been used in drafting the joint statement of the major groups and stakeholders included in the report. The power of collective engagement and of youth was reflected in the membership of the drafting team, the majority of whom were based in countries of the global South, and which included, among others, young parents, full-time research students and those engaging with the United Nations system for the first time, all working against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic.

55. Mr. Stephen Stec, co-facilitator of the scientific and technological community major group, noting that the compilation process had truly been an example of intergenerational equity, provided an overview of the outcomes of the report, which hinged on diversity, equity and recognition. Major groups and stakeholders required opportunities to eschew the typical requirement of international processes that they speak with one voice, allowing the diverse voices of a complex global society to be heard. It was also necessary sometimes to allow traditionally marginalized voices to be louder than others, in order to redress imbalances in access and opportunity that persisted within both UNEP and its governing body. Although the effectiveness of UNEP at the national level had continuously improved, its visibility remained low at the grass-roots level and it lacked the resources and autonomy to work effectively with local and national communities. The open-access and responsive science-policy interface could support marginalized and indigenous communities, but more needed to be done. The authoritative voice and the information platform of UNEP was highly valued, sometimes even making the difference between life and death, but the organization needed to strengthen its support of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and do more to address all aspects of environmental equity and justice, in particular for those disproportionately affected by the triple planetary crisis.

56. The major groups and stakeholders should not be considered as a monolith or merely representatives of special interests, as they already resolved among themselves complex positions on many challenging and diverse issues, and should therefore receive more recognition and be used more effectively by UNEP. Annual meetings of the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum, with Member States attending as observers, would allow for the body to set its own agenda and pass its own

resolutions in years when the Environment Assembly was not being held, allowing for emerging issues to be identified, long-term challenges to be set and proposals formulated.

VII. Leadership dialogues (agenda item 7)

A. Looking back: 50 years of UNEP

57. Ms. Maria Ivanova, professor of global governance, moderator of the leadership dialogue on “Looking Back: 50 years of UNEP”, presented the key messages and conclusions of the dialogue, which had been held on the morning of Friday, 4 March 2022. A summary of the key messages and conclusions of the dialogue is set out in annex I to the present report.

B. Looking forward: achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for people and planet

58. Ms. Femi Oke, international journalist and broadcaster, moderator of the leadership dialogue on “Looking forward: Achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for people and planet”, presented the key messages and conclusions of the dialogue, which had been held on the morning of Friday, 4 March 2022. A summary of the key messages and conclusions of the dialogue is set out in annex I to the present report.

VIII. Multi-stakeholder dialogue (agenda item 8)

59. Mr. Joe Ageyo, journalist from Citizen TV Kenya, moderator of the multi-stakeholder dialogue, presented a summary of the key messages and conclusions of the dialogue, which had been held in the afternoon of Friday, 4 March 2022. A summary of the key messages and conclusions of the dialogue is set out in the annex I to the present report.

IX. Adoption of the political outcome of the session (agenda item 9)

60. At the opening plenary meeting of the special session, the President recalled that the Environment Assembly, in its decision 5/3, had decided that it would finalize, at the resumed meeting of its fifth session, implementation of the mandate entrusted to it by General Assembly resolution 73/333 of 30 August 2019 to prepare a political declaration for a United Nations high-level meeting and invited the General Assembly to consider the appropriate event for the adoption of such a declaration, including the option of adopting it as one of the outcomes of the special session. At its resumed fifth session, the Assembly had endorsed 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 and recommended it for adoption at the special session.

61. The Environment Assembly adopted, by consensus, the 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. The political declaration is set out in document UNEP/EA.SS.1/4.

X. Adoption of the report of the session and the Chair’s summary (agenda item 10)

62. At the 4th plenary meeting, the President presented the Chair’s summary of the special session. The Chair’s summary is set out in annex II to the present report.

63. Also at its 4th plenary meeting, the Environment Assembly adopted the present report on the basis of the draft report that had been circulated, on the understanding that it would be completed and finalized by the Rapporteur, working in conjunction with the secretariat.

XI. Closure of the session (agenda item 11)

64. The representative of the non-governmental organization major group, speaking on behalf of the nine major groups and stakeholders, said that since its inception UNEP had made major advances for the environment through ever-increasing collaboration with Member States, observers and civil society. UNEP had received the best possible gift for its fiftieth anniversary with the adoption by the Environment Assembly of a historic resolution to end plastic pollution. The resolution was the

culmination of several years of work and showed the power of multi-stakeholder dialogue. Over the next 50 years and beyond, UNEP must continue to embrace such collaboration with civil society, and strongly advocate for the environment, the implementation and enforcement of environmental laws and policies, the early identification of environmental challenges before they became crises, and the human right to a healthy environment, on which all living species depended.

65. The representative of the European Union, speaking on behalf of the member States of the European Union and Australia, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Iceland, Japan, Montenegro, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, Ukraine, Uruguay and Serbia, expressed satisfaction with the outcomes of the special session, in particular the political declaration that had been adopted. She expressed deep concern at the seizure by the Russian Federation of two nuclear power plants in Ukraine and other reported incidents at nuclear sites, including a fire at the Zaporizhzhnia plant caused by Russian shelling. The threats caused by military or any other action at nuclear sites posed safety and security risks that could have severe consequences for humanity and the environment, and which must be avoided at all costs. She condemned, in the strongest possible terms, the attacks on nuclear power plant sites, and called on the Russian Federation to cease its attacks immediately, and to abide by the United Nations General Assembly resolution ES-11/1 entitled “Aggression against Ukraine”.

66. The representative of the Russian Federation, exercising his right of reply to the statement by the European Union, said that the threat to nuclear power plants in Ukraine came from Nazi forces within the country, such as the Azov Battalion, which had subjected the Zaporozhye nuclear power plant to heavy military fire, despite the best efforts of the Russian Federation’s military forces, which had subsequently regained control of the site. There had been no recent increase in radiation levels at either the Chernobyl or Zaporozhye nuclear power plants or any associated reduction in power supply to the Ukrainian people. UNEP had remained neutral during conflicts in other countries, such as in Yugoslavia, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, and there had been no outcry from the international community against the Ukrainian regime, which had been waging a war for eight years against its own population in the Donbass region. The Russian Federation therefore called upon UNEP to adhere to its mandate of environmental issues and avoid the politicization of its agenda.

67. Mr. Keriako Tobiko, Cabinet Secretary for the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of Kenya, said that his country was privileged and proud to have once again hosted sessions of the Environment Assembly that had built upon the courageous vision and foresight of those who had founded UNEP 50 years previously.

68. The Executive Director expressed her appreciation to all those who had contributed to the success of the resumed fifth session and the first special session of the Environment Assembly. While both sessions had delivered major outcomes, including on plastic pollution, nature-based solutions, biodiversity and health, and chemicals and waste, history would ultimately judge them on the actions they had delivered, and whether they had helped to create a world without plastic pollution, where people lived in peace and enjoyed their right to a healthy environment. The environment was and had always been a casualty of war, as the Environment Assembly itself had recognized at its second and third sessions in its resolutions 2/15 and 3/1. Lamenting that the words of Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme at the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, which described the “immense destruction brought about by indiscriminate bombing, by large-scale use of bulldozers and herbicides” as an “outrage sometimes described as ecocide” that required “urgent international attention” still resonated today, she invited all participants to heed those words and to build a world in which people lived together as one people, on one planet, and in peace with nature and each other.

69. Following brief closing remarks by the President, the first special session of the United Nations Environment Assembly was declared closed at 6 p.m. on Friday, 5 March 2022.

Annex I

Summaries of dialogues*

A. Leadership dialogues

1. Looking back: 50 years of UNEP

Summary

Moderator: Maria Ivanova

At the leadership dialogue held on 4 March 2022, titled Looking Back: 50 years of UNEP, several distinguished guests gathered to reflect on the past successes of UNEP as viewed from their unique vantage points in the fields of diplomacy, law, academia, science, politics and religion.

The role of UNEP in transforming environmental action and global environmental governance was central to the dialogue, with frequent references to the organization's unique abilities to drive positive and progressive change, act as a platform for science and policy, and allow countries to focus on what unites us rather than what divides us.

Throughout the dialogue, panelists, ministers and other distinguished guests reiterated several common threads of discussion. The importance of intergenerational dialogue, reframed as "intergenerational transition" by one guest, permeated the session. Several speakers called for the need to bridge the gap between those who currently make decisions related to the environment and those who will be inheriting the planet in the next generation in order to ensure past mistakes are not replicated and future successes continue to be ambitious.

Speakers hailed past environmental successes since the establishment of UNEP, including the universal ratification of the Montreal Protocol, concerted action on mercury through the Minamata Convention, enhanced availability of sound science through the establishment of the IPCC and regular publication of its reports, strengthening environmental rule of law and recognition of the right to a healthy environment in the majority of countries in the world.

Speakers agreed that we must continually look toward strengthening UNEP for the next 50 years. UNEP's key role in driving cohesive and coherent environmental action will continue to empower the global community in addressing the triple planetary crises of biodiversity loss, pollution and climate change.

Opening

- **Moderator Maria Ivanova** remarked on the imaginative and courageous leaders who, in founding UNEP, created a system for global environmental governance.
- **Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator and former UNEP Executive Director**, highlighted three elements of UNEP's value: as an environmental authority; as a teacher to people and institutions; and as the convener of the global environmental agenda.
- Both noted that in a world of conflicts and crises, the environment is one agenda that can bring everyone together; this is our opportunity to shape what happens next.

I. Interventions by Invited Guests

- **Mr. Donald Kaniaru, Former Chief of staff, former Director of Law Division, Ecosystems Division, and Division of Policy Development and Law, UNEP**, attributed much of UNEP's strength to the passion and leadership of EDs. Highlighted action taken to move UNEP's influence from the global level to the grassroots through UNEP / UNDP MoU, and UNEP's leadership in bringing environmental issues to the global community, such as the conferences on climate change convened in the 1970s.
- **Ms. Christina Voigt, Chair, IUCN WCEL**, remarked on the important role of UNEP as secretariat and promoter of collective action for many MEAs. Highlighted the role of the Montevideo Programme and UNEP to support national governments in the development,

* The summaries are presented without formal editing.

implementation and enforcement of environmental law and strengthening of environmental rule of law.

- **Mr. Zakri Abdul-Hamid, Co-Chair of the Secretariat of Malaysia's Global Science and Innovation Advisory Council (GSIAC), former chair of IPBES**, emphasized the importance of ensuring the voice of science is heard in policy-making, recognizing that scientists are part of the solution for every environmental issue. Highlighted the importance of UNEP in sharing the voice of science through platforms like the IPCC and IPBES.
- **Ms. Vania Olmos Lau, UNEP MGC&Y, LAC**, highlighted the need for intergenerational dialogue to be strengthened and increased in UNEP's work, and in the global community, called for an end to 'us vs them' discussions between generations, and emphasized intergenerational collaboration.
- **Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary, UNCCD**, reiterated the need for intergenerational dialogue, and called for the strengthening of UNEA and UNEP to continue to communicate and inform the global community with consistent, coherent messages. Proposed UNEP to provide a 'state of the world' report to all global leaders to assist in making better-informed policy decisions related to the environment.

II. Reactions by Contributing Ministers / Heads of Delegations

- **HE Mr. Keriako Tobiko (Kenya)** noted that having UNEP HQ in Nairobi has contributed to its power in the last 50 years. Highlighted the importance of intergenerational dialogue and placing youth at the center of decision-making.
- **HE Ms. Zakia Khattabi (Belgium)** Highlighted some of UNEP's achievements since 1972, including the Montevideo Programmes, the 'Finance Inquiry,' and the International Resource Panel. Noted UNEP is essential for the global community to strengthen the environmental pillar of sustainable development. Highlighted the importance of UNEP's reports, such as GEO, for educating the global community. Recalled the urgent need to take environmental action which does not compromise the needs of future generations.
- **HE Mr. Kavydass Ramano (Mauritius)** acknowledged UNEP's critical role in supporting countries in the areas of environment, climate change and other socio-economic sectors of national importance. Highlighted the importance of technical assistance and financing to developing countries in the development and implementation of environmental action.
- **HE Ms Eve Bazaiba Masudi, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development** highlighted the development of national law, institutions, and initiatives.

III. Q&A / Discussion between Invited Guests and Contributing Ministers

- **Ms. Megumi Seki, Executive Secretary, Ozone Secretariat**, highlighted the achievements of the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol, which began with small achievable goals and has been continuously strengthened by periodic assessments, the multilateral fund, and a strong global partnership.
- **Mr. David Boyd, Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment**, remarked on the importance of UNEP's role in the universal recognition and implementation of the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and highlighted UNEP's work with various human rights institutions toward achieving this goal.
- **Mr. Marcos Orellana, Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights**, highlighted UNEP's ability to transform ideas into action since its inception in Stockholm, and the role of UNEP in harnessing the strength of the global community for a common agenda.
- **Ms. Monika Stankiewicz, Executive Secretary, Minamata Convention**, noted that the interrelatedness between human health and the environment has been recognized since the beginning of UNEP to the adoption of the Minamata Convention and beyond. Highlighted the importance of intergenerational dialogue, and shared that a youth representative once told her that 'we need a UNEP that gives us a reason to be optimistic'.

- **Bishop Dr. Thomas Schirmacher, Secretary General and CEO, World Evangelical Alliance**, recognized UNEP's cooperation and collaboration with faith leaders and communities through the Faith for Earth initiative and highlighted its importance in addressing environmental issues through providing a new platform for collaboration.
- **Ms. Wanjira Mathai, VP and Regional Director, WRI** reflected on the impact UNEP has had in Nairobi and throughout the world and called on UNEP to strengthen its platforms and entry points for the voice of youth to participate. Highlighted the ability of UNEP to create urgency needed to help build unified voices and perspectives on the environment.
- **Mr. Felix Dodds, Senior Fellow, Global Research Institute**, shared some important contributions of past EDs, especially in developing and shaping MEAs. Called for continued clustering of conventions to address gaps in governance and promote coherent and coordinated action in addressing environmental issues.

IV. Wrap up / Closing

- The panelists quickly shared their takeaways, noting the importance of intergenerational dialogue, action, and youth representation.
- Maria thanked everyone for their participation and expressed gratitude to everyone who continues to fight for the protection of the environment.

2. Looking forward: achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for people and planet

Key messages

A thought-provoking conversation involving guest speakers and several Ministers from across the world.

Opportunity to look forward to the next 50 years of UNEP. To reflect on the challenges ahead and how UNEP can be more nimble, dynamic and better equipped to accelerate the change towards the future we want.

Reflections on how to weave the golden thread of collective ambition through active environmental multilateralism, in a collective response to the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity and nature loss, pollution and waste.

Heard strong voice of the youth: "Every activist has a story to tell... and every story has a solution to give... and every solution has a life to change". A call for strong, real-commitments from governments, not just empty words and promises.

We must connect the dots between the triple planetary crisis and elevate its intersectionality with other social issues.

Strong call to support youth environmental activism and secure platforms for young people to engage with leaders.

Future-proofing the Science Policy Interface is key – to better capture the non-linear nature of our relationship with nature, considering social and economic inequalities and investing in behavioral change – moving beyond short-termism and towards – preparedness, with clear metrics and citizen engagement.

Heard about reforming our economic models towards sustainability - upscaling capacity of governments around sustainable finance, channeling funds into lower income countries, using digital tools to gather environmental data to inform economic decision-making.

Empower the private sector to create the consumption and behavioral habits we need to shift towards sustainability. States must set adequate rules to incentivize behavioral change (e.g. carbon pricing). Society must come together and put pressure on leaders to make these changes happen.

Heard about a number of broad initiatives from Member States in the circular economy space and promoting sustainable consumption and production towards the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda; also about climate and biodiversity protection pledges; about innovation and digitalization and sustainable finance. Promising efforts for the road ahead.

Appreciation for UNEP's work as the leading global environmental authority – and its scientific role in sounding the alarm on the crises we face. UNEP must continue to innovate in this space.

Strong words about the need to build a fit-for purpose UNEP to face the challenges ahead, with more visibility and impact, more adequate funding and political support – to truly function as vehicle for and custodian within the UN System of the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

Recognized the importance of environmental rights as a human right and embedding environmental protection across laws and constitutions around the world.

Support from governments for the direction outlined in UNEP’s medium-term strategy 2022-2025, looking at the 2030 Agenda and beyond, for people and planet.

B. Multi-stakeholder dialogue

Moderator: Joe Ageyo

Introduction Segment	<p>Described as the most visible and enduring outcome of the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), has registered mixed fortunes. It has catalysed major international environmental agreements and mainstreamed environmental conversations around the world. But it has also stumbled owing to factors within the UN system as well as at the multilateral level.</p> <p>This was the broad summary of the UNEP@50 Multi Stakeholder Dialogue held on the 4th of March, 2022 at UNEP@50 celebrations in Nairobi, Kenya, on March 4th 2022. The mixed picture was attributed to the original design of UNEP as small but nimble organization, while its perceived failures were partly accounted for by its institutional form as a subsidiary body in the UN system in addition to competition from other UN agencies.</p>
Scene Setting	<p>The dialogue provided an opportunity for direct interaction of Major Groups and Stakeholders with Member State representatives, including at ministerial level. The session provided an opportunity for a frank exchange of views on the last 50 years of UNEP, an assessment of its current status as well as peering into the future through the lenses of Major Groups and Stakeholders.</p>
<p>Speaker 1</p> <p>Question: What are the main lessons of 50 years of UNEP, its failures, and achievements?</p>	<p>The first contribution came from Dr. Maria Ivanova, of the University of Massachusetts, Boston, the author of: “The Untold Story of the World’s Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty”. Dr. Ivanova emphasised the deliberate design of UNEP as a small but effective organization that was meant to be the anchor institution designed to measure, envision and craft programmes and let other entities carry them out. She argued that the long-held notion that UNEP was deliberately created as a weak organization, was not supported by empirical evidence. She lauded the great strides made by UNEP in increasing the prominent of environmental concerns and catalysing international cooperation around major environmental problems. She saw the next phase of UNEP as that of transforming itself into the veritable global authority or the ‘go-to institution’ for information on the state of the planet, for a normative vision of global environmental governance, and for support for domestic environmental agendas and for non-state actors.’</p>
<p>Speaker 2</p> <p>Question: What are the possible alternatives to the current UNEP governance system that would strengthen the organisation and position it for better engagement of stakeholders</p>	<p>Fabio Arturo López Alfaro of the International Science Council, Youth representative from Mexico and co-author of the “UNEP We Want” report, reiterated the key findings listed in the report but overall, called for the strengthening of UNEP through a more effective mandate that gives it greater authority and a stronger voice within the UN system. He also emphasised the need to secure the sources and quantities of funding directed as UNEP to increase its capacity to deliver on its mandates amid growing environmental crises.</p>
<p>Speaker 3</p> <p>Question: What ought to be the priority areas of work for UNEP in the next 10 years to address the triple (+) planetary crisis i.e climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution?</p>	<p>The strengthening of UNEP was also a key part of the contribution from Leida Rijnhout of the Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future who pointed out the many environmental governance processes going on across the globe without any proper coordination and enforcement of laws. She argues that there are currently no compliance mechanisms to ensure countries are respecting existing laws. This a role she believes UNEP through the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) should take up. Further, she notes the needs for greater collaboration between UNEP Secretariat, UN Member States, Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGS) for better results. She emphasised the need for put science at the centre of policy making and to ensure there is a better interface between science, policy and society.</p>

<p>Speaker 4 Question: How do we make UNEP ready to play a leading role in implementation of the environmental dimension of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development</p>	<p>Ms Lucy Muchoki, of the Pan African Agribusiness Consortium, (PanAAC) saluted UNEP's role in coordinating global efforts to tackle the planets biggest environmental challenges. She noted that UNEP had provided a platform for countries to engage and act, through its convening power and scientific rigour. However, she called for 'upscaling' and 'out scaling' of UNEP's activities through well thought out partnerships targeting key stakeholders including small businesses. She further made a case for the creation of a community of green companies whose activities would be well documented in order to inspire the rest of the world.</p>
<p>Speaker 5 Question: How do we ensure that UNEP's future work translates into concrete action for the environment?</p>	<p>The final panelist in the dialogue was Rev Canon Dr Rachel Mash, the environmental coordinator of the Anglican Church in South Africa. She argued that the challenging facing UNEP going forward was to move from being just institution to a new space of supporting and facilitating a movement bringing together politicians, civil society, young people and faith leaders in a vision of the restoration of this planet. She listed three reasons why she believes faith groups can play a key role in moving the UNEP agenda forward:- Faith Groups are Accessible - They are to found in the most remote rural village, in the poorest peri-urban community and in the wealthiest suburb. Faith Communities are acceptable: They are part of the local community, and they have a high level of acceptability, sometimes higher than state or foreign organisations. Faith communities can have a positive role in facilitating a change in values and behaviour They have a large constituency and often a 'captive audience' on a weekly basis. The Scriptures of all major religions have key texts on being stewards of the Earth and the moral dangers of greed and abuse of the poor and the earth.</p>
<p>Member State Responses</p>	<p>The session had an overwhelming number of responses from member states. The representatives who spoke included those from the European Union, Finland, Estonia, Norway, Sri Lanka, Republic of Maldives and Indonesia. Overall, the responses echoed the need for strengthening UNEP for better engagement within the UN system but more critically, with the other stakeholders.</p>
<p>Reactions to Member State Responses</p>	<p>Ms Anne Olhoff, Lead Author, UNEP Emissions Gap Report , reminded the participants of the central role played the report, which tracks the difference between where greenhouse gas emissions are projected to be in 2030 and where they ought to be to avert the worst effects of climate change. She emphasised the need for greater collaboration between countries and UNEP to ensure science affects policy and policy affects societal actions. Ms. Martha Rojas Urrego, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands made a case for the critical role played by wetlands as carbon sinks the need to for closer partnership with UNEP to achieve the ends of a better climate.</p>
<p>Summary</p>	<p>The moderator thanked the panel, the Member State representatives and the audience noting the key takeout of the meeting that the next phase of UNEP should be 'political', must have greater emphasis on leadership and must be characterised by great courage.</p>

Annex II

Chair's summary of the first special session

Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I have been honoured to join 4 Heads of State, 4 deputy Heads of State, 88 ministers, 17 vice-ministers, representatives of 169 Governments and hundreds of stakeholders in this special session of the United Nations Environment Assembly to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme under the theme “*Strengthening the United Nations Environment Programme for the implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.*” I would like to extend a particular word of appreciation to the Government of Kenya for hosting this session and so many important meetings of UNEP over the past 50 years, as well as the UNEP secretariat. The Assembly is proud to have its seat in the only United Nations headquarter duty station located in the global South.

At the opening session of this fiftieth anniversary celebration, we adopted the 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, as endorsed and recommended for adoption by the Assembly at its resumed fifth session. In this political declaration, we have reaffirmed that a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is very important; it is actually an undeniable constitutional right of critical importance for the enjoyment of human rights. We have reiterated our collective commitment to enhancing international and national environmental governance and law, promoting and fortifying the science-policy interface and supporting the development of big data for environment. The declaration also recognizes the importance of providing access to information, public participation in decision-making processes, justice in environmental matters, and of mobilizing capacity-building, technology and finance.

We were honoured to hear from an array of global luminaries, including four attending Heads of State and one Vice-President, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the President of the General Assembly, the President of the Economic and Social Council and the UNEP Executive Director, in addition to multiple Heads of State and Government by video. These voices celebrated the contributions over the last 50 years of the unique and impactful institution that is UNEP and created a conversation on how to build on past achievements and lessons learned to further strengthen multilateralism in the service of the global environment.

Speakers celebrated the development of environmental multilateralism from its beginnings as a little-known subject to becoming the focus of a United Nations Environment Assembly with universal membership. They praised the role of UNEP in establishing environmental agreements, such as those that have successfully protected the ozone layer; they praised the important efforts to address the planetary crises of climate change, global biodiversity loss and chemical pollution. UNEP successes in removing lead globally and most recently in establishing an intergovernmental committee to negotiate a legally binding global agreement on plastic pollution were also lauded. We stressed the importance of continued support to UNEP in addressing the triple planetary crisis, and most important I think, was the call for a collective commitment to strengthening environmental multilateralism as vital for peace and security, economic development and global equity.

We heard 92 national statements from representatives. Several speakers reflected on the inception of UNEP following the landmark United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in June 1972. We highlighted various achievements in the context of the domestic efforts of countries. We heard 6 statements from regional and political groups, reflecting on lessons learned over the last five decades and the work that still lies ahead.

Ms. Inger Andersen, UNEP Executive Director, presented her report on the science-policy interface and drew attention to ozone-depleting substances, mercury and lead in petrol as three examples of issues where the journey from science to policy to action saved millions of lives and protected the environment. She highlighted that a nimbler and more inclusive science-policy interface was critical and would require reform in four broad areas.

We also heard from the major groups and stakeholders on the presentation of the report “The UNEP We Want”. They provided the outcomes of the report, which hinged on three words that I remember in particular: diversity, equity and recognition. Major groups and stakeholders emphasized the importance

of opportunities to avoid the typical requirement of international processes that they speak with one voice, allowing the diverse voices of a complex global community to be heard. They said that although the effectiveness of UNEP at the national level had continuously improved, its visibility remained low at the grassroots level and it lacked the resources and autonomy to work effectively with local and national communities. The open-access and responsive science-policy interface could support marginalized and indigenous communities, but more needs to be done in that regard.

We then convened two successful leadership dialogues. These dialogues provided us with an opportunity to look back on the past five decades and to look forward to the future of UNEP and the Assembly. We reflected on the challenges ahead and how UNEP can become more nimble, dynamic and better equipped to accelerate the change towards the future we want. Speakers and invited guests reflected on ways in which UNEP could strengthen its platforms and entry points for greater inclusion of the voice of young people, given their importance in the coming 50 years. The multi-stakeholder dialogue, which has only just concluded, also provided us with numerous reflections and suggestions for the kind of UNEP we want in the next 50 years.

With that, I would like to celebrate the last two days, which were an incredible two days of commemoration of the golden jubilee of UNEP - happy birthday UNEP! The UNEP mandate will be even more significant in the next 50 years and, in the light of the triple planetary crisis we are facing, the role of UNEP really has to be non-traditional. In closing, I would like to say a word of thanks and appreciation to everyone who contributed to this special session.

Thank you very much.

Annex III

Structure of the first special session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme: commemoration of the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP@50)

Theme: “UNEP@50: Strengthening UNEP for the implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”			
Thursday, 3 March 2022		Friday, 4 March 2022	
10 a.m.–1 p.m.	Opening plenary meeting Opening of the session Adoption of the agenda and organization of work Credentials of representatives Adoption of the political outcome of the session National statements CR-2	3rd plenary meeting National and stakeholder statements CR-2	High-Level Leadership Dialogue 1 Looking back: 50 years of UNEP CR-1 [10–11.30 a.m.] High-Level Leadership Dialogue 2 Looking forward: Achieving the 2030 Agenda for people and planet CR-1 [11.30 a.m.–1 p.m.]
	2nd plenary meeting Presentation of the report of the Executive Director on the science-policy interface Presentation of the stakeholder report entitled “The UNEP We Want” Statements by political and regional groups National statements CR-2	4th plenary National and stakeholder statements CR-2 [3–4.30 p.m.]	Multi-stakeholder dialogue CR-1 [3–4.30 p.m.]
3–6 p.m.			