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United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme

**Annual subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives
to the United Nations Environment Programme**

Ninth meeting

Nairobi, 24 – 28 October 2022

10:00 – 18:00

Hybrid meeting

Conference Room 2

Agenda item 9: Consultation on the theme for the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

Defining the theme for the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

This background document has been prepared by the Secretariat to guide the discussion under agenda item 9: Consultation on the theme for the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6). The document includes three proposed options presented to the Joint Bureau meeting of the UNEA6 Bureau and the CPR Bureau scheduled for 17 October 2022 for initial consideration.

The three options for the theme of UNEA-6 as proposed by the Secretariat are as follows:

- 1. Environmental multilateralism fit for the future: Towards healthy economies, healthy societies and a healthy planet.**
- 2. Towards the implementation of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.**
- 3. Multilateral solutions for climate change, nature loss and pollution.**

The note outlines a brief rationale for each of these three options.

In accordance with paragraph 9 of [UNEA decision 5/4](#), the UNEA-6 Bureau is requested to define a theme for the sixth session of the Environment Assembly no later than twelve months in advance of the sixth session, in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

For more background information about the process to select the theme, please see the [Secretariat background note](#) and [meeting summary](#) of the [meeting of the UNEA-6 Bureau held on 1 July 2022](#).

The discussion under this agenda item will be led by the President of the UNEA-6.

Proposed option 1:

Environmental multilateralism fit for the future:

Towards healthy economies, healthy societies and a healthy planet

The Secretary General's [Our Common Agenda Report](#) and the [Stockholm+50 international meeting](#) have launched a global call to reinvigorate the multilateral system to overcome the multiple social, economic and environmental crises that put the very viability of life on earth at risk. Finding effective solutions to these crises calls for a transformative, inter-generational approach that can look at present and emerging risks with inclusivity and global solidarity, whilst harnessing the actions of both State and non-State actors with equal weight and towards mutually beneficial outcomes.

As the centerstage of environmental multilateralism, UNEA-6 can provide effective and timely solutions to increase resilience to global risks and accelerate the achievement of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda through a reinvigorated governance that accounts for the interests of present and future generations. Investing in tangible, science-based solutions that can promote peace, and long-term planetary wellbeing, eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions and reverse inequalities are all indispensable preconditions to enable a strong multilateral response fueled by increased confidence and collective representation. Similarly, leveraging the transformative opportunities offered by digital cooperation, bridging the digital divide and strengthening the sharing of knowledge and access to emerging technologies are important elements to meaningfully connect economies and societies towards truly networked and inclusive common goals.

UNEA-6 can build on and scale up its past achievements while maintaining a focused look to the future that identifies key environmental spillover risks, enhances anticipatory action and preparedness to related future crises and puts long-term, inter-generational sustainable development at its core. Possible focus areas under this theme could include: advancing solidarity-based responses, such as the generation and provision of timely and predictable public and private finance, capacity building and technology transfer to help countries implement internationally agreed global and environmental goals, emphasizing adaptation and resilience, social protection and consideration for the most vulnerable; improving access to relevant data, science, and information to stimulate technological innovations and enable evidence-based and inclusive policymaking; re-shaping economic governance models to account for the environment in measuring progress beyond GDP; enhancing strategic foresight and horizon scanning capacities at all levels to encourage long-term, anticipatory environmental decision-making; investing in environmental education and behavioral change towards sustainable patterns of consumption and production to shape the social norms and values that can ensure the handover of a healthy legacy to future generations; unlocking meaningful youth engagement and the role of youth as agents of change for sustainable development and the recognition of inter-generational equity in national and international justice systems.

Several key international processes taking place throughout 2023 would contribute to defining the scope of the outcome under a theme that focuses on environmental multilateralism fit for the future under UNEA-6. These include: the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the Secretary General's Climate Summit and SDG Summit, the G20 Leaders' Summit, COP28 and the continuing negotiations towards a Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and Post-2020 Chemicals and Waste Framework and many more. This theme will also provide an important contribution to the SG's Summit of the Future that will take place in 2024.

Proposed option 2:

Towards the implementation of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) [resolution 76/300 \(A/76/L.75\)](#) has declared the access to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment a universal human right. Building on its inclusion by more than 150 UN Member States in their constitutions, laws or regional treaties, and its recent recognition by the [UN Human Rights Council Resolution 48/13](#), the right has finally been fully recognized and confirmed as an independent and universal human right by an intergovernmental body. The resolution also recognizes that environmental stewardship is a precondition for the enjoyment of all human rights, and that exercising human rights, including the rights to seek, receive and impart information, to participate effectively in the conduct of government and public affairs and to an effective remedy, is vital to the protection of a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

The fulfillment of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is central to improve the legitimacy and effectiveness of environmental policy, promote increased trust in global and national governance systems and mobilize responsible action from the business and finance world towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. A strong foundation in environmental justice, grounded in science, can act as a catalyst for increased implementation and enforcement of environmental laws and policies. It can promote higher levels of public participation and engagement in environmental decision-making at national level with increased focus on risks and impacts related to poverty, conflict, and structural inequalities for the benefit of present and future generations. It can shape the discourse around how current financial flows can prevent or account for negative environmental impact, while holding business with increased accountability for environmental harm.

UNEA-6 is uniquely positioned to advance the implementation of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Bringing together the right leadership, political will and ambition to enable the implementation of this right at all levels of law and policy, UNEA-6 can catalyze transformative actions that will strengthen the capacity of duty bearers and rights holders at all levels of society. Possible focus areas of this theme could include: enhancing participatory mechanisms for environmental decision-making, with emphasis on women, youth, indigenous peoples and local communities and persons in vulnerable situations; reducing environmental injustices to effectively protect those who defend nature; enacting regulatory reforms that promote the environment/human rights interface and more responsible business engagement; shaping finance and investment strategies to align them with circularity, sustainable development and human rights approaches that decrease climate, nature and pollution footprints of key high impact sectors; promoting targeted gender-based actions, including combating gender-based violence arising from environmental harm; strengthening criminal justice and anti-corruption measures in relation to environmental crimes; and deploying resources and capacities towards those who are most affected by the climate change, nature loss and pollution crises. All of these pathways would also advance the aspirations of the [Secretary General's Call to Action for Human Rights](#) and his recent report [Our Common Agenda](#), as well as the outcomes of the [Stockholm+50](#) international conference.

Several key international processes taking place throughout 2023 would contribute to defining the scope of the outcomes under a human right to a healthy environment theme at UNEA-6. These include: the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and 30th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action on Human Rights; the Secretary General's Climate Summit and SDG Summit; UNFCCC COP 28 and the ongoing negotiations towards a

Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and towards a Post-2020 Chemicals and Waste Framework, as well as several UN and non-UN fora at the global and regional levels.

Proposed option 3:

Multilateral solutions for climate change, nature loss and pollution

Climate change, loss of nature and pollution are jeopardizing our collective economic and social well-being and profoundly undermining opportunities to reduce poverty and improve lives and livelihoods, yet we still have a window of opportunity to reverse it.

The [Making Peace with Nature](#) report, presented to the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, highlights the interconnectedness of these three crises and the urgent need to address them in conjunction with related economic and social issues. This requires a strong multilateral response that can accelerate existing commitments to reverse negative planetary trends, enact a transformation towards sustainable patterns of consumption and production and drive sustainable development, including for our food and energy systems, towards a climate-stable, nature-positive, and pollution-free future where no one is left behind.

Multiple international processes and outcomes, within and outside the intergovernmental space, such as past UNEA-3 and 5, focused on how to achieve a pollution-free world and strengthening actions for nature, respectively, and the most recent [Stockholm+50 international conference](#), have built a strong momentum and a call for action. In these and other multilateral fora, both Member States and non-state actors have committed to take action to address the root causes and drivers of the three crises of climate change, nature loss and pollution and turbocharge the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030.

The sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6) is an opportunity to leverage these existing commitments and mobilize the necessary political resolve around these three crises with increased trust and collective ambition in support of effective multilateral solutions which can set us on a credible path towards a just and inclusive transition. Possible focus areas of this theme could include: strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerabilities to support sustainable development while scaling up South-South and triangular cooperation; accelerating system-wide and structural transformations of economic and social protection models, engaging financial and economic actors and leveraging digital transformations; accelerating system-wide transformations of high impact sectors, such as food, energy, water, buildings and construction, manufacturing, and mobility, promoting circularity, resource efficiency, regenerative production approaches and nature-based solutions in value chains; transforming food systems by promoting regenerative farming and fisheries approaches that provide healthy diets and minimize food waste, including investments in the ocean economy; environmental sustainability and equitable resource management in peacebuilding; the role of future generations and widespread societal engagement in environmental leadership, drawing on the capacities of civil society and the youth, regions and cities, businesses, academic and scientific institutions.

This UNEA theme would provide a platform for Member States to engage with the private sector, financial institutions, civil society, women, academia, Indigenous Peoples, children and youth, farmers and local and regional authorities, amongst others. Leveraging the comparative advantage of these allied actors, including through existing platforms such as the Science-Policy Business Forum and

the UNEA Youth Assembly, will multiply bridges, opinions and insights to define innovative approaches, increase a collective resolve and inspire the needed action on all levels.

Several key international processes taking place throughout 2023 would contribute to defining the scope of the outcomes under an overarching theme that focuses on solutions to overcome the triple planetary crisis at UNEA-6. These include: the Secretary General's Climate Summit and SDG Summit; UNFCCC COP28, and the ongoing negotiations towards a Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and towards a Post-2020 Chemicals and Waste Framework.