

Sixth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-6)

EU and its MS comments on the zero draft Ministerial Declaration

Overall, the EU and its Member States (MS) welcome the zero draft of the Ministerial Declaration (MD). We believe that it includes many important components and references to key major environmental areas/issues and processes, and forms as such a good basis for further discussions. However, as the declaration should present the political outcome of the UN Environmental Assembly, it seems important to strengthen the politically committal messages, beyond welcoming the progress achieved at the different fora of relevance, including at Conferences of the Parties to Multilateral Environmental Agreements. Two aspects are of particular importance to the EU and its MS, namely that the MD:

- truly reflects the theme of UNEA-6 with its emphasis on *action* to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, the *Triple Planetary Crisis* (emphasis added);
- constitutes a strong UNEA input to the Summit for the Future. The UNEA-6 MD should present the environmental dimension to the Summit for the Future. If we are to truly move towards a reinvigorated multilateral system that is better positioned to positively impact people's life through transformational change of our society and economy to sustainable patterns, the environmental dimension with the challenges of the Triple Planetary Crisis must be at the core of the Summit. To that end, we need to be forward-looking and ambitious. With that said, and to provide more detailed input, please see further the comments below. These comments are a general, first set of comments from EU + MS and should not be regarded as exhaustive (further input will depend on future drafts).

The EU + MS **welcome** the following in the current zero draft of the MD:

- The suggestion to present this MD as the UN Environment Assembly's contribution to the General Assembly for the Summit of the Future.
- The acknowledgement of and reference to the systemic threat to security and human development posed by the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.
- The references to the major developments in the international environmental arena since UNEA 5.2., e.g. the UNFCCC COP; the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework; the BBNJ agreement; the COP to the UNCCD, including the Abidjan Call to act on drought, desertification and land degradation; the UN Water Conference and, if agreed, the outcome of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM-5).
- The inclusion of references to: The Sustainable Development Goals, the politically recognized right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, the the Stockholm +50 meeting and the UNEP@50 meeting.

- The inclusion of reference to the negotiations a new multilateral agreement (alt. instrument) on plastic pollution.
- The inclusion of references to the gender perspective.

The EU + MS are **missing** the following aspects in the current zero draft of the MD:

- In times of need for rapid action and closing of the science-policy gap, language should be strengthened so as to truly reflect the urgency captured in the theme of UNEA-6: “Effective, inclusive, and sustainable multilateral *actions* to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution” (emphasis added).
- While we welcome the reference to the recommendations made by the SG in his report *Our common agenda*, we see that the UNEA declaration should give more action-oriented guidance on how the multilateral system can be strengthened to implement these recommendations. The report made by the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism offers inspiration in this regard.
- The politically committal messages, beyond welcoming the progress achieved at the different fora of relevance or the MEA COPs, need to be strengthened. In this regard, we would like to suggest a more ambitious and clear vision of UNEA and UNEP’s intended specific contribution to the Summit of the Future, including UNEA’s and UNEP’s key role in strengthened international environmental governance.
- There is the opportunity to promote further synergies and coherence in action and financing in addressing the triple planetary crisis, which is needed. This call for reinforced synergies should be enabled by a transformation of the economic and financial systems to align them with our climate and environment objectives. As it stands now, the declaration addresses the three areas of importance for the current triple crisis, but it does not well reflect the importance of action beyond silos, such as on ecosystem degradation and enhanced protection of ecosystems. Nature-based Solutions are important actions that could be more clearly reflected in the MD, including a stronger commitment for their implementation.
- Particularly important, given that this would be the input to the Summit of the Future, is the inclusion of a clear reference to meaningful youth involvement and the intergenerational perspective.
- More ambitious language on mitigation. There is a discrepancy between the high ambitions on the one side regarding biological diversity and plastic pollution and on the other hand the lesser ambitions for climate change. A strengthening of the mitigation ambitions in the declaration would be needed.
- We would like to add a reference to GS’s initiative on EW4All and express our support for it, such as “We are committed to provide Early Warnings for All, to protect lives and livelihoods, build resilience and avert potential losses and damages.” One third of the world’s population is still without early warning systems and building these services is a low hanging fruit in adaptation and effective means to avoid potential climate-induced losses and damages.
- It is important to be specific on issues that are key for the green transition, particularly to include references to Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) and circular

economy, as well as on resource use, possibly reflecting the findings of the Global Resources Outlook of the UNEP International Resource Panel (IRP), that will be presented at UNEA-6. This should include developing a narrative on resource efficiency strategies as well as sufficiency strategies, to reduce the use and increase the recycling of natural resources, making it sustainable and ensuring the protection of human health and the environment. It would also be important to highlight linkages between biodiversity and circular economy as well as SCP, since circular economy can help us to halt biodiversity loss. More than half of global GDP is dependent on nature, according to an estimate by the World Economy Forum.

- In addressing the greater efforts needed for chemicals safety and management, as well as mobilizing and allocating adequate resources for such efforts, it is also important to integrate a commitment to strengthen the science-policy interface to address the current and emerging issues in that field. Currently, a lot of work is invested in establishing the Science Policy Panel for chemicals, waste and pollution, and UNEP's role in the science policy interface for the three planetary crises should be strengthened.
- The declaration does not sufficiently underline the direct negative environmental impact on health and human well-being. Moreover, it should highlight more the necessity of multisectoral cooperation, on the national as well as international levels, including through the One Health approach, to document and mitigate the effects climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution have on health and the environment.
- References to important nexus areas, such as Water-Ecosystems-Food-Energy (WEFE) + climate.
- A reference to drought management should be included in the document.
- UNEP's important role in integrated water resources management and aquatic ecosystem conservation (as the custodian body for the indicators related to SDG6) could be reiterated. Addressing water scarcity and stress should be added. (Such as: We will address water scarcity and stress and drive transformation from a global water crisis to a water-secure world, ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.)
- A reference to the UN Decade on ecosystem restoration, a reference to the role of forest conservation, restoration and sustainable use of forest and a reference to land degradation. Recall the need to tackle deforestation, using language from the UNCCD and G20 Global Land Initiative, and include reference to agroecology from target 10 of the Kunming Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework.
- A reference to the importance to advance and reshape economic governance models to better account for the environment in measuring progress beyond GDP.
- A link to the conflict perspective: Addressing the risks that triple planetary crisis poses to global security, in particular with regards to natural resources, and not at least the critical situation in fragile states and conflict zones. Conflicts further accelerate the Triple Planetary Crisis.
- A reference to environmental crime through the enhanced commitment of the Member States to tackle this cross-cutting form of crime which aggravates the triple planetary crisis, building on United Nations General Assembly resolution 76/185.
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Other comments, further clarifying our thoughts set out in the general comments:

- In para 3, suggest replacing ‘*the three planetary crises*’ with ‘*the Triple Planetary Crisis*’, which is standard term.
- In para 4, replace “of a Loss and Damage Fund to support vulnerable countries” with “of new funding arrangements on Loss and Damage including establishment of a fund for assisting developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, including with a focus on addressing loss and damage by providing and assisting in mobilizing new and additional resources.”
- In para 5, suggest adding reference to the UNGA resolution on human rights and the environment.
- In para 4-5: The momentum created by the UN Water Conference 2023 justify the need to advance the outcomes of the Conference and further develop its follow-up. In this sense, we consider that the mention to the UNWC should be in para. 4, instead of para. 5, with a reference to the follow up of its outcomes. Furthermore, the outcomes of ICCM5 and its relevance for combating the Triple Planetary Crisis, in particular pollution, should be mentioned and welcomed.
- In para 5, complement the reference to the adoption of the BBNJ treaty with “inviting all states to promptly ratify this treaty and to effectively implement its provisions”
- Para 6: Add reference to peaking of GHG emissions by 2025 at the latest and reaching GHG net zero at the latest by 2050.
- In para 8 on stakeholders, suggest adding reference to youth. Furthermore, we are finding the following wording somewhat unclear in terms of whom and what they are referring to in relation to: “developing middle-income countries” and “the special needs and circumstances of the least greenhouses gas emitters”;
 - a) Replace “its” with “the” Paris Agreement and add after Paris agreement “increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1,5 °C above pre-industrial levels”.
 - c)
 - We prefer language that emphasizes the importance of reaching an ambitious legally binding outcome with regards to “end plastic pollution”. The first part of that para focuses only on some elements of the solution. We suggest deleting that and keep the reference to the work of the INC.
 - Call for clear mentions of circular economy and reduction of plastic production and consumption: by enabling a circular economy of plastics in which consumption and production of polymers and plastic products would be reduced, fostering innovation...”
 - Add a sub-item/letter: Following the conclusion of the BBNJ agreement, a call for its swift adoption and ratification and for strengthening international cooperation on marine biodiversity protection, the designation and effective management of a network of marine protected areas and ecosystem restoration should be made, as well as key messages on blue economy, blue carbon and blue finance.
- Para 10, It would be better to split the para, as the first part (until ‘neighbourhood change’) is separate from the second part. In the second part, the link to environment

could be clearer, and a reference to SCP should also be included before “circular economy”, SCP being the wider concept (SDG12), in line with UNEA resolutions 4/1 and 5/11. Also, ‘including’ should be added before the reference to value chains.

- In para 10: Digitization must take place with a circular economy approach in mind as the digital sector has a large footprint. Suggest rephrasing of the sentence.
- In para 11, the call should be broader and include International Financial Institutions, international development banks and big private foundations and funds.
- In para 12, suggest amending the text in line to read “all levels of governance”.
- Para 13 should be one of the first paragraphs in the MD (move up). Further, the following should be added at the end of the para after the words “and financial resources”: “..., and to amplify the coordination of activities between IGOs while using existing structures as the Inter-Organizational Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) to use available funds and other resources most efficiently and avoiding duplication of efforts.
- Para. 14 is very interesting in welcoming in advance the future outcomes of the Summit of the Future. As it is currently drafted, we see opportunities to strengthen it by inviting not only MS and NGOs, but also UNEP, MEAs and other relevant international organisations to work on strengthening not only environmental multilateralism, but also governance and strengthen synergies between the work and implementation of the MEAs.
- In para 16, it is important to invite both UNEP and the governing bodies of MEAs to implement the commitments. Furthermore, the governing bodies of other IGOs should be invited, too, as a closer cooperation is needed to use the limited resources available more efficiently on the way to achieving the SDGs.
- References to human health and the environment can be added in paras 3, 8 and 8a.