

Science & Technology Major Group Opening Statement to UNEA-6

Good morning excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. I am Stephen Stec speaking on behalf of the Science and Technology Major Group

At the beginning of UNEA-6 our group would like to make 5 points – on Oceans, Nature-based solutions, Solar radiation modification, citizen science, and chemicals and waste.

1. We welcome the first two ratifications of the Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement, and we emphasize that the draft Ocean and Seas resolution should align with and fully support the BBNJ Agreement. Deep Sea Mining remains a significant threat to the ocean and its biodiversity. Given potential irreversible damage to biodiversity, and the lack of comprehensive scientific understanding of the impacts of this activity, we recommend including stronger language on the need for precaution on Deep Sea Mining.

2. About Nature-based Solutions, it is of paramount importance to tackle the root-causes of problems (such as, emission reduction) as otherwise NbS can cement the status quo. And without financial governance, the vast majority of NBS investments will result in no net benefit to the environment. We therefore need standards promulgated on a solid scientific basis according to evidence-based criteria, co-developed through inclusive, consultative processes involving civil society and rights holders, respecting Indigenous knowledge. Financing for NBS must be dedicated towards the science-policy interface, i.e., research, testing, criteria - and more importantly: certification, verification, and long-term monitoring - within binding legal regulatory frameworks, since research shows that voluntary approaches tend to be ineffective.

3. Pollution on a global scale cannot be the solution to pollution on a global scale. We favor a No Use approach regarding Solar Radiation Modification - including a ban on open-air testing - because that is where the science leads us. We welcome the proposal to establish a multi-disciplinary repository of knowledge under UNEP on the potential risks and impacts of SRM with input from stakeholders and rights-holders, given that climate interventions have the potential to affect every aspect of life on our planet. At the same time, our members are deeply troubled by efforts to commit the consideration of holistic assessment of SRM to a narrow program on climate-related considerations with limited intergovernmental oversight and limited engagement of rights holders and stakeholders.

4. Citizen science is one practical and sustainable avenue for integrating the voices of Indigenous Peoples, and communities, and represents a social innovation in the way scientific work is undertaken. We call on UNEA and UNEP to support regions, Member States and cities to scale up the most effective research programmes with speed and agility, through the establishment of a citizen science framework.

5. Finally, we call upon the Member States to include 3 independent, non-governmental scientists, chosen in consultation with the S&T MG, on the Interdisciplinary Expert Group of the Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution Prevention.