Joint Global Statement of Major Groups and Stakeholders

for the 6th UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-6)

presented by the Children and Youth, Indigenous Peoples, Farmers, Local Authorities, NGO, Science and Technology, Women, and Workers and Trade Unions Major Groups based on a series of International Consultations and the 20th Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum

Preamble

We, the representatives of Major Groups and Stakeholders, welcome the focus of the Sixth United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6) on effective, inclusive, and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. We sincerely appreciate the **recognition of the urgency to take effective, coordinated, and timely international action to tackle the systemic threats posed by the triple planetary crises** of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution to sustainable development and their impacts on the well-being of all human beings, animals, plants, and the entire planetary system.

While most stakeholders recognise the urgency, **action is far too slow and too ineffective**. The slow response to environmental degradation and climate change not only exacerbates health and social issues, but also reduces the **window of opportunity for mitigating future risks**. Global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions continue to rise. The climate crisis is a reality around the world with severe floods, droughts, storms, and melting glaciers. Biodiversity loss is accelerating and whole ecosystems are at risk of breakdown. Pollution has reached all corners of the planet, with babies exposed to hazardous chemicals even before being born, and air pollution is the largest environmental cause of disease and premature death around the world.

The emergency particularly **affects future generations** and is **disproportionately impacting the marginalised and most vulnerable communities,** such as racialised communities, children and youth, women and Indigenous Peoples. The necessary transformation must therefore **equally prioritise environmental and social justice objectives**, integrating strong policies through all levels of government, to **secure the livelihoods and ways of life of communities** affected by the impacts of the triple planetary crisis and other environmental crises. It must be guided by the **full respect for human and labour rights**, including the **human right to a healthy, clean and sustainable environment**, and the protection and fulfilment of the **rights of youth and future generations** through long-term, future-oriented policies. Decision-making must be based on **democracy, subsidiarity, and the principle of intergenerational equity.** Truly effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions call for **meaningful engagement of underrepresented groups**, including youth, gender minorities, racialised groups, Indigenous Peoples and people from most affected areas, in all decision-making, budgetary, implementation and follow-up processes. We need a **just transition based on effective social dialogue** and engagement with all relevant stakeholders through leveraging the Major Group system.

Furthermore, it is crucial that the ambition of UNEA-6 includes effective policies and measures to deal with the **environmental impacts of armed conflicts, occupation, and military activities**, as they significantly exacerbate these crises and are increasingly triggered by environmental degradation and the impacts of climate change. Current conflicts and legacy impacts from past conflicts highlight the importance of addressing the environmental dimensions of war, and its effects on the health and livelihoods of current and future generations. **We call on Member States to recognise the negative contributions of conflict to pressing environmental challenges in the UNEA-6 Ministerial declaration, discussions, and decisions.**

We need to **move beyond siloed environmental and climate policies**. A one-sided focus on technological solutions which does not address the root causes of the triple planetary crisis is not enough. We need to **transform the predominant economic system** which is based on the exploitation of natural resources, extractive materials, and labour. The commodification of our relationship with nature is leaving little but scars for future generations. We need a **deep, structural transformation** away from **an economic model that depends on uncontrolled economic growth and wealth concentration** towards equitable wealth redistribution that is centred on **achieving wellbeing for all within planetary boundaries and preserving human rights**. It also requires the **decolonisation of the global economic system**. This includes actions to recognise the role of green and fair Small and Medium Enterprises and alternative business models, embedded in local and grassroots communities, respecting their environment and workers, to build sustainable, inclusive, and resilient economies.

We must enact stronger **rules for accountability, liability,** and the **transboundary responsibility principle for environmental damage**, including through criminal law and sanctions for individuals, companies, and governments. Moreover, this should include the application of the United Nations Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights on environmental issues. We need integrated legislation at the local and national level, together with economic and financial incentives to **transform existing financial flows** towards ecosystem restoration, zero pollution, and decarbonisation.

Urgent action to improve our **food systems** is needed in the context of the **billions who are suffering from food insecurity**, while acknowledging that our **food systems are a primary contributor to pollution**, account for a third of GHG emissions, and are the main cause of biodiversity loss. Food systems must transform in a way that benefits smallholders, women, and Indigenous Peoples, improves animal welfare, delivers nature-positive production practices, and provides good nutrition. These food systems must also achieve co-benefits such as reducing food loss and waste, and supporting nutrient-rich diets, which are essential and must be a priority for the United Nations and mainstreamed throughout environmental policy instruments.

The **One Health** approach that recognises the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment is key to designing the right solutions. It is imperative to draw lessons from the devastating impacts of Covid-19 and leverage the **One Health approach** to avert future pandemics. The animal health pillar of One Health needs to be strengthened in order to fully operationalise One Health, this is particularly important to curb the spread of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Developing non-chemical alternatives over insecticides and antibacterial substances are essential to **mitigate the risk of exposure to antimicrobial resistance** in human and animal populations and the environment. This not only safeguards against the proliferation of

AMR but also promotes healthier ecosystems and communities. We urge UNEA-6 to strengthen One Health and to feed into the upcoming high-level meeting on AMR during the United Nations General Assembly in September.

Meaningful engagement must also be built on **environmental education on all levels,** which sensitises people to warning signals from our natural environment, nurtures appreciation of nature and knowledge of its laws and enables us to find solutions and equip people with the knowledge and skills necessary to be able to cope and fight against the triple planetary crisis.

Citizen Science offers a unique opportunity to civil society to be part of the drive to implement Multilateral Environmental Agreements. A social revolution in the way scientific work is undertaken, citizen science is a practical and sustainable avenue for integrating the voices of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. We need 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.

There can be no sustainable development without peace, and no peace without sustainable development. We call on all member states to do everything they can to **end armed conflicts, to cease fire and to embrace non-violence and the respect of human dignity**. Only through a collective commitment to peace and sustainable development can we pave the way for a more secure, just, and harmonious world for present and future generations. A culture of peace is needed to cultivate harmony amongst humanity and between humanity and the planet.

Cluster A: Abating pollution and promoting the sound management of chemicals and waste

The **pollution crisis is intricately linked to the climate and biodiversity crises and is a threat to human rights**. Living in a pollution-free world is part of the basic right to a healthy environment.

We are extremely concerned that **even unborn children are already exposed to** a cocktail of hazardous chemicals, including **forever chemicals** (such as Per- and Polyfluorinated Substances - PFAS, Persistent Organic Pollutants - POPs, and Unintentional Persistent Organic Pollutants - uPOPs), **endocrine disrupting chemicals** (EDCs), reprotoxic, neurotoxic, and carcinogenic chemicals and highly hazardous pesticides, which already result in increased levels of irreversible disorders and diseases. Entire ecosystems are at risk from **pollinator-killing pesticides** and **all-pervasive microplastics**; however, **some producers of chemicals delay** urgent measures to **phase-out substances of concern** including hazardous pesticides. We call on Member States to increase **measures towards zero-pollution, which includes: prioritising transparency; access to information**; accountability; and good governance. This will contribute to the protection of our health and the environment, and ensure human rights to a healthy, clean, and sustainable environment and gender equality.

We call for urgent local, national, and international **legislative measures** and an **integrated approach** to the **sound management of chemicals and waste.** This requires the consistent implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, such as **BRS and Minamata,** of the

Global Framework on Chemicals, including its resolutions on **gender,** the **Science Policy Panel,** and the **Global Alliance on Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs).**

We call on governments to work together through the Alliance on Highly Hazardous Pesticides and to urgently **phase out highly hazardous pesticides** to protect human health and the environment. Farmers and rural communities need support in their practice, or transition to agroecology and other innovative approaches, and a guarantee for sustainable livelihoods and ways of life. Workers, farmers and their families need transparency and knowledge of the risks that are inherent in highly hazardous pesticides, and we call on Member States to make sure policy makers and the general public are well aware of the risks. We call on governments to phase out **highly hazardous pesticides (HHPs)** and to eliminate the risks they pose to vulnerable groups including workers, pregnant women and children, as well as wildlife. The continued export of **HHPs** from countries that have restricted their use domestically, must be stopped.

Access to information on the chemical composition of manufactured materials and products throughout their life cycle is fundamental to control and monitor the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements on chemicals and waste. Yet, there are no globally harmonised mandatory disclosure requirements and labelling provisions for chemicals in manufactured materials and products in any current multilateral environmental agreements, leading to challenges in their implementation. However, transparency and traceability of chemical information is now high on the agenda in the negotiations of the international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. This is paving the way for other multilateral environmental agreements to make necessary amendments and contribute to the development of a globalised circular economy that is free from toxins. Leading up to UNEA-7, Member States should prepare a **resolution for a globally harmonised cross-sectorial chemical transparency and traceability system** for informed decision-making on all manufactured materials and products throughout their entire lifecycle.

Air pollution continues to be the biggest environmental killer. We demand a comprehensive global agreement for monitoring industrial emissions and Short Lived Climate Pollutants (SLCP) to set air quality standards that meet or exceed WHO recommendations, and the immediate formulation and implementation of national air quality plans and short-term action plans.

The inability of the Rotterdam Convention to **ban chrysotile asbestos** leads to 250,000 workers dying every year. We need the strengthening of multilateral environmental agreements, such as the Rotterdam Convention, that will lead to a ban of chrysotile asbestos and ensure that countries and their workers have a right to know about hazardous chemicals, like asbestos, that cross their borders.

We call on all levels of governments, around the world, to stop the further spread of toxic materials through incorrect recycling practices. This is, in support of the Bonn declaration's commitment for recycling that is free from toxic chemicals. The petrochemical industry makes **false promises regarding the recyclability of plastic waste,** which should be exposed and not funded. It leads to a continued use and dispersion of hazardous chemicals added to plastics including endocrine disruptors and forever chemicals, which accumulate in recycled material.

We call on **developed countries to share expertise and experience** with developing countries in fulfilling their environmental responsibilities and mitigating pollution. This can include technology transfer; financial aid; and capacity-building initiatives. A collaborative and supportive approach is essential to address toxic pollution regulation and reduction in developing countries. Local and Subnational governments must be enabled to play their crucial role in the areas of waste management and air pollution.

Hazardous chemical pollution caused by **armed conflicts** creates an enormous, long-term risk to human health, nature, biodiversity, soil and water bodies, especially in karst landscapes due to their porous nature. We call on Member States to ensure and finance urgent measures to contain and clean up pollution that stems from military activities.

Finally, Major Groups and Stakeholders welcome and support the **Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste, and Pollution Prevention** as agreed at UNEA-5.2. However, we are concerned by the undue influence of representatives of the chemical industry on the development of the Panel. We call for strong due diligence measures to avoid any conflict of interest and to ensure equal access for experts from Indigenous communities and local communities, with a particular emphasis on including insights from women.

Climate-altering Technologies and Measures (CATMs) (reservations from the Children and Youth Major Group)

Solar Radiation Modification (SRM) consists of an array of geoengineering techniques designed to block out the sun and to mask the heating effect of GHGs. It does nothing to tackle the root causes of climate change. On the contrary, over-reliance on speculative future technologies **risks delaying action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in this critical decade**. SRM risks catastrophically overcompensating climate change regionally and seasonally and brings a whole host of new environmental and social risks that are likely to impact groups and future generations who are most vulnerable to climate change. Most SRM techniques involve **intentional and uncontrolled pollution on a planetary scale**. SRM is basically fighting multidecadal, global-scale pollution with multidecadal, global-scale pollution.

The Human Rights Council's Advisory Committee has warned that geoengineering technologies "could seriously **interfere with the enjoyment of human rights for millions and perhaps billions of people**". It also highlighted the disproportionate impact on Indigenous Peoples, peasants, fisherfolk, and others living in rural areas. These same groups have been vocal in rejecting geoengineering as a dangerous distraction and false solution that would violate their rights.

By their very nature, SRM technologies **cannot be tested effectively for their impact on the global climate other than through deployment.** There is no precedent in human history to give comfort that these technologies could ever be effectively governed. The **risk of unilateral deployment and weaponisation is real**. For all these reasons, hundreds of leading scientists from multi-disciplinary backgrounds and civil society organisations from around the world are in agreement on the need for states to commit to **non-use of Solar Radiation Modification.**

Along with other forms of geoengineering, SRM has been under a **de facto moratorium through the Convention on Biological Diversity since 2010**, and marine geoengineering techniques are the subject of a drive for **increased regulation under the London Convention / London Protocol**, which is where the first geoengineering ban on ocean fertilisation arose. The London Convention and Protocol adopted a series of decisions that call for utmost precaution, led to the ban of ocean fertilisation, and more recently called on governments to exercise extreme caution on four other marine geoengineering techniques (enhancing ocean alkalinity, macroalgae cultivation, and other biomass for sequestration, including: artificial upwelling; marine cloud brightening; and microbubbles, reflective particles and material because of their potential for deleterious effects that are widespread, long-lasting or severe). The ocean is a crucial element against impacts of climate change due to its ability to absorb vast amounts of carbon dioxide and heat and to regulate global temperatures. The implementation of some of the referred marine geoengineering interventions may inadvertently compromise the resilience of ocean ecosystems and disrupt their natural ability to mitigate climate change. All United Nations Member States agreed on the grave risks of flooding, droughts, and threats to biodiversity from these technologies.

We note that Member States have requested that any process under UNEP respect rights holders. **Rights holders have inherent rights, including free prior and informed consent (FPIC)** with regard to any activity that would impact their enjoyment of those rights, their lands and their cultures. We therefore call upon the Member States to ensure that any resolution strengthens duties towards rights holders as well as strengthening the engagement with stakeholders.

Member States at UNEA-6 should focus on **recalling and strengthening existing decisions under the CBD and LP/LP and** centre the precautionary principle in any discussion of SRM. Crucially, given the lack of access to information on SRM technologies, rights of Free, Prior and Informed Consent, access to information, public participation, and access to justice and remedy, must be upheld, as must compliance with long-standing norms of international law on the obligation not to cause transboundary environmental harm.

Beyond this, Member States should act decisively to prevent development and deployment of these dangerous, unnecessary technologies, by c**ommitting to non-use of SRM and Geoengineering, and urgently prioritise real solutions to the climate crisis**. We applaud the leadership of African Environment Ministers in calling for an international mechanism for Non-Use of SRM.

Cluster B: Halting and reversing the loss of nature while restoring ecosystems

Even with the adoption of the Global Biodiversity Framework and protected areas growing, we are concerned by the overall lack of action. Biodiversity is declining rapidly, and ecosystems are under threat. We call on Member States to bring the topic of biodiversity back to UNEA-6 and to discuss the establishment of a **transparent system of reporting and monitoring to ensure accountability**. We need to **better manage protected areas** through better transboundary cooperation for high value sites. We also need to ensure **conservation of habitats outside of protected areas, while further expanding protected areas** and complying with due diligence

of free prior and informed consent from the Indigenous Peoples in their land and territories. We call on Member States to develop initiatives to **better enforce agreements** for biodiversity protection and to enable **prosecution of environmental crimes,** such as habitat destruction and illegal wildlife trafficking. More research on the effective management and prevention of **invasive species** is needed.

We need to better protect and promote local and **sustainable eco-agricultural and fishing practices** that protect local biodiversity. Overall, we encourage Member States to build on UNEA-5.2 resolutions and to address the interconnection of human, animal, and ecosystem health with increased action from UNEP for cooperation to stop future pandemics. This includes the UNEA-5 resolution 5.1 on the animal welfare–environment–sustainable development nexus and the resolution 5/6 on Biodiversity and Health, which should be implemented promptly.

In addition to the urgent need for enhanced monitoring and reporting mechanisms, Member States must recognise the critical role of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, children and youth, local authorities and citizen science in biodiversity conservation efforts. We also call on governments to support **harnessing Indigenous knowledge and local stewardship** with the goal to protect habitats and species, and local livelihoods and ways of life. Strengthening collaboration with the local stewards of the land is paramount for the sustainable management of ecosystems. We advocate for: the integration of Indigenous knowledge and local stewardship in conservation strategies and, emphasise the importance of protection of habitats and species while respecting and promoting local livelihoods and ways of life.

Water and drought

Many parts of the world suffer from water shortage, water pollution, flooding, and droughts. Water is not just a resource; it is a **fundamental pillar of life for people, plants, and animals, and is a human right for all.** Our collective efforts must reflect its significance. We underscore the importance of community participation and ownership in developing and implementing water management strategies. Local communities and Indigenous Peoples possess valuable insights into their water ecosystems, and their active involvement is crucial for the success of any water-related initiatives. We call for fair and gender sensitive access to clean water.

We therefore welcome the draft resolution from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on land degradation in the resilience to droughts ahead of hosting the UNCDD COP16, and the draft resolution from the European Union to step up water policy at the international level. Recognising the critical importance of water resilience in the face of global challenges, we emphasise the need for **tangible actions to address water scarcity, overconsumption, pollution, and the impact of climate change on water resources**. A **comprehensive approach to water management** including stronger policies, technological innovations and public awareness is vital for achieving sustainable and equitable water use. In this approach, community and Major Groups and Stakeholders' participation and ownership, equity, and resilience are important.

We call on governments to step up **water policies that prevent water pollution,** in particular caused by industries and agriculture, as well as urban wastewater; **enhance water treatment technologies;** and to **regulate overconsumption and the wastage of scarce water resources** by certain industrial or production processes. Water is not for free, and prioritised access must be

given for clean drinking water, human consumption, local and sustainable food production, and irrigated agriculture. In the face of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, **innovative technologies in water treatment** are crucial to monitor and prevent the spread of waterborne disease, especially in the context of climate change. We recognise the interconnectedness of water and climate. We recommend the mention of technology transfer as well as conserving and scaling up cascades systems, and other traditional water management systems that can optimise water usage in regions prone to torrential rains, or those that are water scarce, bolstered by legislation to protect these vital systems.

To supplement stricter rules, we call on Member States to increase public awareness as a key component in fostering **responsible water consumption**. We ask for community-led monitoring systems to track water usage, quality, and potential issues, to promote a sense of responsibility and ownership. We all advocate for the inclusion of the need for equitable access to water, sanitation, and menstrual hygiene for girls, women, and the most vulnerable categories. We encourage the application of integrated water resource management (IWRM) into broader health and environmental initiatives. We echo the framework of One Water One Health, also leveraging on the Protocol on Water and Health, as examples for the maintenance of effective national and local surveillance and early warning systems for monitoring and responding to outbreaks or incidents of water-related diseases. The recognition of the **virtual water footprint in products** is essential. Water is intricately linked to various aspects of production, and understanding its virtual presence in goods can guide sustainable consumption and production practices.

We also call on Member States to step up **transboundary, inter-state cooperation on water basin management**, and to collaborate across borders to **protect the last free-flowing rivers and their** rich biodiversity, including through a moratorium on new dams. We also call on all levels of governments to recognise the vital significance of underground water and karst water systems.

We would like to highlight that **water resources, water ecosystems, and marine environments are often highly impacted by armed conflicts, both in terms of direct attacks and environmental pollution from war**. We call on Member States to endorse strong international legal rules and procedures around the protection of water resources in conflict areas and to support the restoration of water resources in affected areas.

Standards and criteria for nature based solutions (NbS)

Throughout the discussion on NbS in the UNEA-6 process, stakeholders have been warning of the risks linked to investments in NbS where these are not strictly defined through rigorous standards, there are not strong social and environmental safeguards, or when these are misused for greenwashing and avoiding decarbonisation responsibilities. Research of climate mitigation investments in NbS indicates that up to 90% results in **no net benefit to the environment**. Even if only 50% of investments are not beneficial, such projects often cause more harm than good and actually further degrade nature, such as monoculture tree plantations. Unfortunately, the consultation process that followed UNEA-5.2 was designed to have a positive outcome about NbS, and critical views were sidelined in the process and hardly included in reports.

What is missing from the discussion so far are **strict science and evidence-based criteria for NbS** for governments and investors to follow, including a **clear understanding of good and bad**

practices. We ask for clearly defined ways to **exclude non-compliant projects**. We also call on all governments to make sure that the **rights of Indigenous Peoples, of local communities, and of other vulnerable populations are fully protected**, and that all NbS projects respect human rights. Also, the International Labour Organisation's fundamental labour rights have to be respected to guarantee that jobs created through NbS are decent and reputable, which is today often not the case. **Indigenous and traditional knowledge** needs to be fully credited and directly benefit the communities. NbS investments must be planned and implemented on a **solid scientific basis and in close consultation with civil society, rights holders, and through social dialogue with social partners under strict monitoring of their net benefits to the environment and communities**.

This also requires strict guidelines for financial institutions, such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. A substantial portion of the commitments towards financing for NbS should be dedicated towards the **science-policy interface** for research, testing, new methodologies, criteria, and standard-setting for NbS through inclusive and cooperative processes that elevate different voices. Specific attention needs to be given to **tailor-made local solutions**, for instance, in an urban context, using local traditions as much as possible, and fostering collaboration amongst standard-setting organisations across scales. Moreover, **certification, verification, and long-term transparent monitoring by the public** must be harmonised and financed. Investments must also be linked to **anti-corruption and anti-greenwashing measures**, especially where the private sector is involved.

Finally, we support those Member States pushing for a **binding regulatory framework of NbS on the national or international level**, as research shows that voluntary approaches tend to be ineffective. We also support a whole of government approach that include Local and Subnational governments.

If a multidisciplinary Expert Working Group is to be established, there must be an **agreement on criteria, norms, standards, and guidelines for the implementation of NbS**. This Expert Working Group has to include **experts from the civil society, especially rights holders as Indigenous Peoples, women and youth**, since they have field knowledge of the implementation gaps for similar approaches and will be key partners for their implementation on the ground. An Expert Working Group on NbS criteria, norms, standards, and guidelines has to strive for **regional and gender balance**, and include experts representing the scientific fields, but also **traditional knowledge** on how to implement NbS so that it benefits both ecosystems and people.

Potential conflict of interest of members of the Expert Working Group has to be acknowledged and tackled to avoid interests outside the group influencing the development of criteria, norms, standards, and guidelines for NbS implementation. The compilation of criteria, norms, standards, and guidelines should be complemented with an extensive review of previous approaches to biodiversity and environmental finance that failed on their environmental and social goals, to avoid repeating previous mistakes and scenarios and predict the success or failure of NbS implementation. Such assessments should be done in close collaboration with IPBES and the IPCC. A process driven by the Member States to assess and negotiate the existing criteria, norms, standards, and guidelines should ensure the meaningful participation of civil society and especially rights holders as Indigenous Peoples, women and youth. Such a Member States driven process cannot be negotiated separately from the CBD and UNFCCC processes that tackle NbS.

Strengthening ocean and seas governance to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss, and pollution

We welcome the first two ratifications of the BBNJ Treaty, and we call on Member States to sign and ratify that Agreement so that it may enter into force and begin implementation as quickly as possible. We emphasise that the draft Ocean and Seas resolution should align with and support the BBNJ Agreement, and not include any language to weaken or undermine language and principles that have already been agreed.

Cluster C: International environmental governance

Political will must be strengthened. We highlight the importance of having **clear monitoring, learning, and evaluating mechanisms for environmental progress**, but also the need to review and readjust targets and to strengthen existing global partnerships while building new ones with relevant stakeholders, including the integration of environmental concerns into private sector initiatives and industrial development.

We call on Member States to establish or develop **appropriate national legislation to promote commitment to implement international environmental law** and for its integration into their national sustainable development and green economy strategies. We remind Member States of their commitment to coordinated and cooperative approaches and mechanisms through the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders. This includes capacity building through increased cooperation with all UNEP Major Groups, especially Indigenous Peoples and women, plus funding for participation of MGoS in regional meetings.

We support the inclusion of a **multisectoral integration approach and setting clear means of engagement for sharing stakeholder's experience and strategies** that are needed for implementation of resolutions. We support working through a multilevel governance approach to ensure national-regional-local coordination, locally efficient responses, and financing.

Enhancing the role and viability of regional environmental ministerial forums and regional offices in achieving multilateral cooperation in tackling environmental challenges

We recognise that regional forums on the environment create an important and much needed platform for multi-sectoral communication and engagement on critical topics that are specific and relevant to the regions to which they relate. Environmental governance has the potential to speak to new voices in decision-making – those who are most impacted, who hold insights into potential solutions to environmental challenges, but who are too often not being heard. It is of critical importance to ensure that all people have equitable access to the information and tools required to participate meaningfully in environmental governance.

We further call for the following related actions: r**ecognition of the role of civil society and Major Groups**; establishment of a **special fund for participation stakeholders** including Major Groups and other Stakeholders in regional ministerial forums; support for Periodic **Environmental Performance Review** to assess the environmental situation of the region and to define corresponding priorities; mobilise support to build political will and commitment for promoting **implementation and compliance of MEAs and UNEA** resolutions; and facilitation of

stock-taking and collaboration between regional ministerial forums on the environment, Major Groups and Stakeholders, and other actors, as appropriate, to measure progress to improve accountability and collaboration between Ministers of environment and Ministers of finance and economic planning.

Promoting synergistic approaches to address the interlinked global crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and support sustainable development

We expect that the intergovernmental consultations on ways to enhance understanding and promote synergistic approaches will include the full engagement of Major Groups and other stakeholders, in order to enhance the call to identify, collect good practices, and evaluate existing tools and guidelines and develop guidance.

Further, we request for the following point to be a basis for assessment of the draft resolution: coherence, synergy and coordination at international level to ease implementation at the national level; strategic efforts to establish or strengthen mechanisms to harness interlinkages and promote synergies for more effective implementation; mapping existing global and regional action plans and agreements to identify interlinkages; guidelines avoiding duplication of reporting and/or monitoring processes; and sharing of information among the different scientific bodies that support the work of related multilateral environmental agreements and strategies to develop common understanding of scientific information, including consideration of data sovereignty, supporting the co-development of data stewardship frameworks with local data owners, and expanding consistent access to critical datasets.

Environmental impact assessments have long been a critical component of environmental governance when implemented before decisions are taken, and consultations with Indigenous Peoples are a central strength of this approach. We call on Member States to ensure that assessment processes take a longer-term perspective, assessing impacts and benefits for future generations as well as current, which could help advance longer-term thinking and other areas of policymaking. This could involve stronger engagement of youth in environmental impact assessment processes. Related to this, adopting *Cathedral Thinking* in our approach to environmental governance is crucial. This means planning and acting with the wisdom of foresight, beyond our immediate lifetime, for the benefit of future generations. It aligns with our commitment to consider ecocide as a serious crime, reflecting the need for policies and legal frameworks that transcend our lifetimes and safeguard the environment for the long-term, and providing incentives for deterring and protecting against the most severe acts of environmental harm. This perspective encourages us to forge sustainable, inclusive, and far-reaching solutions, like investing in clean energy and sustainable agriculture.

Financing is a vital consideration related to governance. There is a need to incentivise investments, including in clean energy solutions, sustainable agriculture practices, and climate-resilient infrastructure. In parallel, we must support green innovation, nurturing a culture of scientific collaboration, and ensuring equitable access to technologies for all. We urgently need a global green financing pact to drive environmental action and accelerate climate mitigation and adaptation. Such a pact must also take into account issues around *where* the finances are being directed, given evidence that funds are not trickling down, especially from national governments towards cities, as heard at COP-28. Part of this pact could also support the development of a

global green financing mechanism to help address the lack of standardised metrics and technical expertise gaps in financial institutions, who tend to overestimate risk and underestimate value.

Effective, Inclusive and Sustainable Multilateral Actions towards Climate Justice

On ensuring Effective, Inclusive, and Sustainable Multilateral Actions towards Climate Justice, we emphasise the role of recognising **ecological interconnectivity and interdependence**, the need to promote the responsible and ethical use of natural resources, and the need to promote the **balance of power** between high income countries on the one hand, and developing countries, Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States on the other hand, as key to effectively tackling the inconsistencies regarding climate action.

We request that Member States support an integration of climate justice and environmental justice; supporting policies and action based on justice and mutual respect in order to achieve climate and environmental justice. Recognising the uniqueness of vulnerable groups, youth, Indigenous Peoples and women promotes integration of intragenerational equity and gender justice. Also, we would like to see more references about the role of Women, Youth and Indigenous Peoples in this resolution.

We further urge Member States to prevent and prohibit actions that endanger the fundamental right to clean air, water, land, and food. We urge them to promote the right to participate in environmental decision-making, promote financing for groups in vulnerable situations, and to guarantee the rights of persons harmed by environmental injustice to effective remedy.

UNEA is the best platform to address climate injustice, which is caused by environmental crises in their various dimensions, beyond climate change, including pollution, biodiversity loss, land degradation, chemicals, and waste; all of which are areas beyond the mandate of UNFCCC. Therefore, the **mandate to address climate justice and its holistic, overarching nature lies best with UNEA.**

Climate justice should be delivered by just transition policies and measures based on social dialogue with social partners and stakeholder participation, which promote and protect fundamental labour rights and human rights, social protection, and skills development.

Cluster D: Addressing root causes of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss and pollution

Amongst the root causes of the triple planetary crisis are **overconsumption and materialism**, greed, and a "**throw away**" culture that has developed in just a few decades. These are based on the exploitation of human rights of workers and abuse of the environment. Many business models have **profit maximisation** as their main goal, and therefore the DNA of business models must be addressed. Shareholder-based companies are a key driver of the planetary crises where they are built on increasing production the cheapest way possible. A "business-revolution" is needed with more emphasis on **regenerative business models** such as social enterprises, Green and Fair SMEs and steward-owned enterprises that put the planet and people above profit.

We must rethink our relationship to the multiple interconnected strands that weave the web of our natural environment, and leave succeeding generations with a healthy, clean planet that can meet their needs. A Māori faith leader: “The climate crisis is the product of an inherited Western mindset, including globalisation, capitalism and individualism, one that was nurtured by imperialism and colonialism. The response therefore needs to be underpinned by other ways of thinking and of being, especially that of Indigenous ways in which the environment and humanity are interconnected as part of creation. Therein lies the path to true justice and peace for our planet.” (2023). UNEA 6 draft resolutions give us a new way of being from a “throw away” economic system to a circular economy that recognises both the value of the environment and our interconnectedness with it. Human behaviour shapes the environment, so we need a shift of consciousness for the sake of the generations to come.

Sustainable raw material and resource use, Circular Economy

We highly welcome the EU initiative to present a draft resolution on Circular Economy at UNEA-6. The circular economy helps us work toward a change in the throw away culture, recognising that everything has value. We welcome and support this resolution, which can create a vision for a new relationship with nature and environmental stewardship, addressing the **major difference in per capita consumption** and **environmental racism** where waste is dumped. We need to acknowledge that **global economies are currently linear, not circular**. Excessive consumption levels in the Global North require resources from the Global South including raw materials and labour, with end-of-life products often dumped back into developing countries.

We support the work towards a Plastic Treaty but note the lack of progress and also the concern that the **trajectory for plastic is an increase in use** as the petroleum industries seek new outlets for oil production. We reject the concept that the life cycle of plastic begins when they are discarded, in fact, the life cycle of plastic begins with the oil from which they are made. Therefore, the focus on limiting production should be strengthened, to thus reduce the plastic in circulation. We need to address the lifecycle from production to disposal - within the circular economy framework. We note the danger of **nurdles** – they should be listed as **hazardous during transportation.**

A circular economy needs to be based on reducing consumption first, with clear **targets for material use reduction and production**. The concept has been misused for **greenwashing** products and processes, and the term needs clear definition. For instance, downcycling cannot be considered as being a circular practice (e.g. plastic bottles into flooring), and circular practices need to be sustainable in the broader senses.

We encourage **international initiatives to close all waste leakages** and illegal exports such as plastic waste, e-waste, and end-of-life vehicles. We call for **international initiatives to regulate products and strict standards** around durability, repairability, reusability, recyclability, and to establish international **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** schemes which benefit the local communities. We are particularly concerned about batteries, solar panels, cars, textiles, and buildings amongst others.

Unsustainable products and processes need to be phased out. We call for clear incentives such as tax breaks on repair and refurbishment, and support for sustainable local practices and

traditions that are already circular. We also note that **hazardous chemicals must be removed from the circular economy**. We encourage the resolution to advance on creating a **toxics-free Circular Economy** to ensure harmful chemicals are not recirculated in new products.

Finally, we encourage all countries to **collaborate with the Global South** in **ensuring sustainable waste management** in full respect of **the waste hierarchy with waste prevention** as the top priority. We call for support for governments to set up sustainable waste management systems rather than investing in unsustainable solutions, such as incinerators.

We call for a **just transition** -recognising the danger that the current transition could perpetuate inequality, lead to loss of livelihoods and ways of life, and greater vulnerability for marginalised groups. Just transition policies and measures need to include dialogue with social partners and active stakeholder participation to promote and protect fundamental labour rights and human rights, implement social and **health** protection measures, and skills development.

Principles of a just transition include justice between nations but also internally within nations to address **historic injustices of mismanaged waste**. The just transition requires necessary financing, skills and technology transfer. We also call upon Member States to include language on green jobs and re- or up-skilling for employment in sustainable industries.

Labelling should be universal, and the recyclable label not used when the technology for that product is not accessible in that community. **Green consumer rights** form part of the human right to a healthy environment.

E-waste - Critical raw materials are needed for the transition towards renewable energies and yet the dismantling and recycling of e-waste threatens the health of workers.

Textiles - overconsumption is driven by the richest consumers, failing to 'democratise' access to clothing for the poorest, and the growth of synthetic fibres is of increasing concern.

Biomass - We are concerned about the promotion of bio-economies, as fuel often trumps food, and this could lead to a competition for crops between fuel and food. We argue a moratorium should be placed on the use of **old forests for biomass and pellets**. **Plant based alternatives** such as bioethanol can lead to water and land resource stress, biodiversity loss, and compete with food crops. **Second-generation biofuels** should be prioritised, as well as the preservation of ecosystems and biodiversity. Importantly, a whole of government approach needs to underpin policy and implementation activities.

Environmental Aspects of Minerals and Metals

Given the environmental and social risks posed by mineral and metals extraction, we welcome the draft resolution on Environmental Aspects of Minerals and Metals and the mechanisms outlined for future collaboration between UNEP, Member States and stakeholders. The proposed resolution should support UNEP in motivating Member States to lead the design, implementation, and monitoring of best practices for environmental sustainability of minerals and metals throughout the full life cycle. This includes capacity building, technical assistance and knowledge transfers, as requested by the 113 National Focal Points nominated by governments from all the

UN regions during the intergovernmental consultation process established in resolution 5/12 on the Environmental Aspects of Minerals and Metals Management.

Both the current levels of consumption and production in our regions, as well as the transition to carbon neutrality, require enormous amounts of raw materials. The projected increase is enormous, for instance, if we look at the amounts of lithium required for electrification of transport and industry. We cannot simply address the issue of raw material and resource use from the perspective of securing our access to these materials and ensuring ‘‘sustainable’ mining. **Green mining is a myth** - each mining project comes with huge impacts on nature and people. Globally, we see a boost in mining projects that trigger **environmental conflicts and local resistance** and that threaten livelihoods and ways of life, often those of Indigenous Peoples or rural communities. The **Global North is dependent on raw materials exploitation** in the Global South. The power imbalance is huge.

Where mining projects are not avoidable, they need to adhere to the highest environmental and social standards in full respect of **human rights, labour, and environmental rights**, including the right of affected communities to say no. Even where mining projects are declared as strategic, **fast tracking** cannot be at the expense of the full respect to environmental rights, and full compliance with strategic environmental assessments and environmental impact assessments.

Mining disproportionately impacts Indigenous Peoples. According to the latest report by the International Renewable Energy Agency, about 54% of the deposits of minerals needed for the energy transition are located in the vicinity of Indigenous territories, and 80%of lithium and more than half of all nickel, copper and zinc deposits are actually within Indigenous lands. **Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is the first line of defence** that allows Indigenous Peoples sovereignty over their communities, lands, territories, and resources - the inclusion of FPIC in this resolution is essential. The rights of Indigenous Peoples must be respected at all times.

Biodiversity loss linked to **deep-sea mining will be inevitable and irreversible**. The transboundary impacts of deep-sea mining are likely to extend to many stakeholders, particularly to ocean economies, Indigenous Peoples and coastal communities. UNEA must consider the intergenerational and environmental, economic, and social impacts of deep-sea mining over many decades, with a special focus on the Precautionary Principle. As such, we urge UNEA to call on its Member States to support a **precautionary moratorium** or pause on this speculative, extractive industry.

We call for **strict rules on the technologies and chemicals** used in mining, including for tailings management. Mine waste can pose significant risks to downstream communities and ecosystems. Long-term chronic pollution, as well as catastrophic failures of waste retention dams, have lasting impacts that are nearly impossible to mitigate. We call on Member States and UNEP to promote mechanisms to improve tailings management to protect communities and ecosystems. Mining companies must be **fully liable for any environmental or economic damage** during the operation and after the closing, proper remediation and renaturation.

All mineral and metal deposits are finite and non-renewable. This means that mining is an inherently unsustainable process. The most sustainable material is the one that stays in the ground. Sustainable mineral resource governance needs to be embedded in a new economic

model which prioritises human and planetary well-being with a clear objective of reducing resource consumption, curbing overconsumption, and practicing sufficiency.

We first need to minimise mining as much as possible and focus on **secondary materials recovered by recycling and solutions that reduce the demand for raw materials** through the **reduction of material intensity and improving material efficiency.** A value chain approach should also account for water pollution, land degradation, and ecological destruction at a systemic, holistic level. In economies with high resource consumption, we need to downsize those sectors that are very resource intensive; there needs to be a high price tag on virgin materials and incentives for secondary material use; we need to address overconsumption and define consumption corridors, in particular in those countries that have the highest rate of per capita and total material consumption.

We need an international treaty for **global governance of raw materials** to ensure the **equitable** use of the world's resources. It needs to define **no-go zones**, such as the most fertile agricultural areas, primeval forests and biodiversity hotspots, sacred and culturally significant sites, areas that are key as water resources or the deep sea**. It also needs to establish material use reduction targets**, similar to CO2 reduction targets, at an international level.

We further note the landscape of existing and proposed initiatives to tackle the environmental impacts of minerals and metals and encourage UNEP to play an active role in coordinating and streamlining global and regional initiatives to avoid duplication of effort.

Environment and Conflict

We strongly support the adoption of the draft resolution on environmental assistance and recovery, submitted by Ukraine. In its current form, the text would be a valuable step towards better protection of ecosystems and the communities dependent on them, from the devastating impacts of armed conflicts. We call on States to preserve the draft resolution's strong language on state responsibility for conflict-linked environmental damage, its support for the wider legal framework, its suggested use of the multilateral environmental agreements as a tool for recovery, and its important and timely proposed inclusive and transparent consultative process on guidelines for data collection.

We note, with disappointment, that the **second draft of the Ministerial Declaration in its current version does not recognise the effects of armed conflict and military activities** on global climate and environmental and developmental challenges. This is at a time when the **devastating impact of the war** is contributing to serious conflict-pollution hotspots and loss of valuable natural areas and biodiversity, setting back whole countries and regions on their path to carbon neutrality, zero pollution, One Health, restored nature, and long-term sustainability. Fragility and conflict lead to the collapse of environmental governance, which can exacerbate underlying environmental challenges and weaken systems of protection, quality and health of the environment, and sustainable resource use. Ongoing hostilities hamper States' and cities' abilities for climate adaptation, leaving vulnerable communities poorer, less resilient, and ill-equipped to adapt to climate crisis on a local level. These concerns also come with particular gender angles in conflict areas that often put women and girls at risk from societal instability and degraded environmental conditions. We are convinced that recognising the **interlinkages between the**

triple planetary crisis, conflict and peace by UNEA-6 would not only contribute to better analysis of the nature of these global challenges but will also provide for effective and sustainable solutions to address them.

We welcome Ukraine's initiative for a **resolution on the environmental assistance and recovery in areas affected by armed conflicts**. We call on governments to:

- recognise that the adverse environmental effects of armed conflicts result in the impossibility of the impacted countries to implement their commitments under the 2030 Agenda and multilateral environmental agreements on water and air pollution, climate and biodiversity.
- support UNEP in working on the environmental dimensions of armed conflict and providing a clear plan, mandate, and resourcing that cements the commitment, including increased funds for comprehensive assessments of environmental damage and its public health impacts, with methodological and technical support for calculation of environmental losses and damages, taking into account that perpetrators of wars and conflicts should be held accountable to the 'polluter pays principle.
- include conflict sensitivity in relevant international environmental agreements for more coherent and effective multilateral response to pressing challenges related to climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution in the conflict settings.
- provide regions and countries that have suffered from environmental damages in armed conflict with financial and technical support for a green and sustainable reconstruction and recovery, an integration of environmental consideration in the peace-building process, including conflict-sensitive investment and redevelopment of energy projects, infrastructure, and industry.
- encourage States to adopt the International Committee of the Red Cross' Updated Military Guidelines on the Protection of the Natural Environment in Armed Conflict and the International Law Commission's Protection of the Environment in Relation to Armed Conflicts (PERAC) principles on how the environment should be protected before, during, and after armed conflicts as one of the ways to mitigate the triple planetary crisis.
- advance the international recognition of ecocide law. Ecocide law would provide a route to justice for those affected by severe environmental damage in the context of conflict.

Sustainable food systems, including sustainable nutrient use

We deplore the fact that the six priorities outlined for UNEA 6 do not include a **holistic approach to sustainable food systems**, but we welcome the priority set for the **sustainable use of nutrients**. We would like to share three main concerns and call on member states to bring sustainable food systems back to the agenda.

Across a number of areas, the risk to future sustainable food systems lies in the **challenge of attracting and retaining people working across the food system**. With movement from rural areas to urban and declining generational industries, such as traditional farming and sea fishing, there is a major challenge to bring in enough young people. Low income levels and the problems

of accessing capital are major barriers for young farmers. Member States should be urged to recognise the extent of the demographic problems within their own regions. We urge governments to support the use of agro-ecological practices and other innovative approaches to ensure sustainable livelihoods, including a gender sensitive response.

The loss of small traditional and mixed farms, and the financial pressure for cheap food that moves land use to monoculture under volatile markets, has put many soils under pressure and contributes to water and air pollution. **Good soil health** is the foundation of sustainable food systems and sustainable nutrition of the soil and the food it produces. Effective recycling of nutrients is both good for the soil and reduces the impact of particular fertiliser demand. There is much new understanding of soil biology and soil management techniques. It is vital for Member States to find improved communication and **education for future soil managers** and to **better regulate the input of chemical pesticides and fertilisers**. Good soil management offers a unique opportunity to build, retain, and store carbon in a natural way. Sustainable approaches to livestock systems need to be developed urgently, taking into consideration the sector's contribution to livelihoods and nutrition on the one hand, and pollution and climate change on the other. The role of livestock in regenerative agriculture and soil management should be explored.

Excess nitrogen from a number of sources, including agricultural sources is one of the main causes of water pollution in Europe, and in many other parts of the world. It stems from fertilisers and manure and can render water unsuitable as drinking water. A UNEA-5.2 resolution has recognised the multiple pollution threats resulting from anthropogenic reactive nitrogen.

The ongoing negotiations to establish an **intergovernmental coordination mechanism** for nitrogen policies requires **meaningful Major Groups representation**, and we call on governments to ensure that for the proposed mechanism.

It is widely recognised that the **future sustainability of water use across the food supply chain** will come under intense pressure as demand grows and climate events bring more frequent extremes. Member States need to fully understand future water requirements for their own food systems and how it can be made more sustainable. In addition, the exporting and importing of food has a water footprint that is often ignored.

We need a concerted focus on **reducing and eliminating food loss and waste**, and better enablement of cities and subnational governments to enhance current activities.

Animals should be included in addition, but separate, from the damage to the environment, with relation to the fact that animals provide the quality to a healthy environment, and that animals are linked to One Health in conflicts, food systems/security to address hunger, protect livelihoods addressing no poverty, link to gender equity as it is usually the poor and disempowered that cares for the animals, and directly as animals live on land and in water.

Summit of the Future

UNEA 6 is meant to contribute to the **Summit of the Future** scheduled for September 2024. The Summit the Future should :

- **ensure that civil society** is meaningfully included in decision making, starting from the UN Security Council, which should account for environmental consequences of armed conflict and for the environment as the main source of future conflicts. Civil society can make important contributions to the implementation of UN decisions, covering the gaps that persist in the implementations of global treaties. To do so, it must become a recognised member of the multilateral system.
- **push for the financial architecture** is restructured to enhance investments to support and not to impair the restoration of the environment. This requires the involvement of environmental advocates, especially young people, women and Indigenous Peoples, in the allocation of resources.
- secure that the sustainable future of our cities and regions is taken into account, through proper referencing in future pacts.
- agree that environmental felonies fall under **criminal law** while they are currently mostly persecuted under civil law, and that legal standing should be given to future generations and all living beings and ecosystems. The **right to a clean and healthy environment** must also entail the **right of the environment to be clean and healthy**, beyond the anthropocentric perspective.
- **work towards the universal recognition of ecocide as an international crime** to create a powerful deterrent against the most serious acts of environmental harm, address the gaps resulting from the current fragmentary approach to environmental regulation, and legislation, strengthen safeguards in places where the rule of law is weak and provide justice for those who have experienced the effects of ecocide.