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United Nations Environment Assembly written contribution to the 2024 High-level Political Forum on sustainable development (HLPF)

"Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions."¹

IMPACTS OF MULTIPLE CRISES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16 AND 17 FROM THE VANTAGE POINT OF YOUR INTERGOVERNMENTAL / EXPERT BODY.

1. The air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we get from the land, oceans, lakes and rivers are dependent on healthy ecosystems. Sustainable management of natural resources are critical to ending poverty, hunger and reducing inequalities.
2. Our current unsustainable consumption and production patterns are driving the global environmental challenges and crises including climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, as well as desertification, land and soil degradation, drought and deforestation, and creating serious impacts on the earth systems and ecological processes that underpin human well-being and the diversity of life on our planet.
3. If not addressed, the impacts of our resources use will derail the achievement of the multilateral agreed goals, including the SDGs. The Global Resources Outlook 2024² of the UNEP International Resources Panel notes the scale of impacts linked to the way material resources are extracted and processed for our global economy – over 55 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions contributing to climate change, up to 40 per cent of particulate matter that has health related impacts costing over 200 million disability-adjusted life years every year, and over 90 per cent of total land-use related biodiversity loss.
4. The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) recognized the main findings of the Synthesis Report for the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and that limiting global warming to 1.5°C, with no or limited overshoot, requires deep, rapid and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions. It also noted with great concern the findings of the Thematic Assessment Report on Invasive Alien Species and Their Control at the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services at its tenth meeting, recognizing that more than 3,500 of the 37,000 alien species introduced by human activity to regions and biomes around the world have become invasive and pose major global threats to nature, the economy, food security and human health.³
5. UNEA, in its third and sixth sessions, recognized that armed conflicts can impede the delivery of essential services and undermine effective environmental management, and that environmental degradation in situations of armed conflict and post-conflict, can impact human health, wellbeing and livelihoods, with people in all vulnerable situations.⁴

THREE KEY AREAS WHERE SUSTAINABLE, RESILIENT AND INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR ACHIEVING THE SDGs ARE BEING EFFECTIVELY DELIVERED, ESPECIALLY RELATED TO THE CLUSTER OF SDGs UNDER REVIEW IN 2024, CONSIDERING THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE INTERLINKAGES ACROSS THE GOALS AND TARGETS.

6. **Air quality to protect human health and the environment, reduce negative impacts, including on the economy, and promote sustainable development.** Clean air is necessary for health, poverty reduction and economic growth. Air quality management is about children who miss school, ending up illiterate or poorly educated, because of chronic respiratory ailments. Furthermore, air quality management is about the tens of billions of dollars lost every year due to illness and death attributable to the inhalation of particulate matter. It is about the economy, worker productivity, health-care costs, and tourism. Improving air quality can also result in climate co-benefits and, in turn, climate change mitigation efforts can result in air quality co-benefits.

¹ SDGs under in-depth review: SDG 1. No poverty SDG 2. Zero hunger SDG 13. Climate action SDG 16. Peace, justice and strong institutions SDG 17. Partnership for the goals.

² Global Resources Outlook 2024. UNEP, International Resources Panel. <https://www.unep.org/resources/Global-Resource-Outlook-2024>

³ UNEA 6 Ministerial Declaration.

⁴ Idem.

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7. UNEA, through its first,⁵ third,⁶ fourth,⁷ and sixth⁸ sessions, encouraged Governments to formulate action plans and establish and implement nationally determined ambient air quality standards, considering the World Health Organization Air Quality Guidelines and other relevant information and to establish emissions standards for their significant sources of air pollution. UNEA has underscored the need to elevate efforts at all levels of government, as well as the private sector to collaborate on addressing the significant impacts of air pollution, in line with the SDGs. In this regard, actions taken by UNEA have contributed towards the facilitation of cooperation on domestic and transboundary air pollution including in the context of initiatives such as the Climate and Clean Air Coalition and its recently launched Clean Air Flagship, and the air quality work programme under Montevideo Programme V.
8. **Enhancing innovative pathways to achieve sustainable consumption and production.** UNEA has recognized that sustainable consumption and production is an essential requirement for sustainable development. In its fourth session, UNEA invited Member States to consider approaches and policies for achieving sustainable consumption and production, when developing relevant national plans, sustainable development strategies and sector policies or equivalents to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation and primary resource consumption.⁹ In related developments, at its fifth¹⁰ and sixth¹¹ sessions, UNEA acknowledged that pursuing circular economy approaches as a pathway to achieving sustainable consumption and production patterns can contribute to addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, water stress, pollution and their impact on human health, thus contributing to the achievement of the SDGs and other internationally agreed environmental goals.¹² Circular practices within the agroindustry for example, can create economic opportunities and improve livelihoods for rural communities, thereby reducing poverty. Closed-loop systems and efficient resource management can increase agricultural yields, improve access to nutritious food, and contribute to achieving zero hunger goals.
9. With the world population expected to increase to 9.7 billion by 2050, there will be heightened demands for necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, shelter, and other associated desires. The choices of citizens regarding lifestyles will be important to ensure a livable planet. In its sixth session, UNEA encouraged member states to create the necessary evidence-based enabling conditions, foster public and private collaboration, pursue education at all levels and awareness-raising initiatives in support of empowering citizens to make informed choices, about sustainable lifestyles. UNEA also decided to discuss sustainable lifestyles practices in the context of, inter alia, the diversity of nature's values and approaches for living in harmony with Nature, or Mother Earth.¹³
10. **Sound management of chemicals and waste and the prevention of pollution.** Exposure to chemicals and waste often disproportionately affects people in vulnerable situations, including children, youth, the elderly, persons with disabilities, women, workers, migrants, farmers, people living in poverty, and Indigenous Peoples and local communities. In its fifth and sixth sessions, respectively, UNEA decided to establish a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and prevent pollution,¹⁴ and acknowledged the voluntary, multi-stakeholder, multisectoral Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste, requesting UNEP to continue providing support strengthened national capacity for its implementation.¹⁵

THREE EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC ACTIONS, POLICIES AND MEASURES THAT ARE MOST URGENTLY NEEDED TO EFFECTIVELY DELIVER SUSTAINABLE, RESILIENT, AND INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO ERADICATE POVERTY AND REINFORCE THE 2030 AGENDA, BUILDING ON INTERLINKAGES AND TRANSFORMATIVE PATHWAYS FOR ACHIEVING THE SDGs.

11. The ministers for the environment, gathered in Nairobi, Kenya, at the sixth session of UNEA, (26 February-1

⁵UNEA resolution 1/7. Strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme in promoting air quality.

⁶ Ministerial declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its third session: Towards a pollution-free planet and UNEA resolution 3/8. Preventing and reducing air pollution to improve air quality globally.

⁷ UNEA resolution 4/21. Implementation plan "Towards a pollution-free planet".

⁸ UNEA 6 resolution entitled "Promoting regional cooperation on air pollution to improve air quality globally".

⁹ UNEA resolution 4/1. Innovative pathways to achieve sustainable consumption and production.

¹⁰ UNEA resolution 5/11. Enhancing Circular Economy as a contribution to achieving sustainable consumption and production.

¹¹ UNEA-6 resolution entitled Circularity of a resilient and low-carbon sugar cane agro-industry.

¹² Idem

¹³ UNEA 6 resolution entitled "Promoting sustainable lifestyles".

¹⁴ UNEA resolution 5/8. Science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution.

¹⁵ UNEA 6 resolution entitled "Sound management of chemicals and waste".

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March 2024), acknowledged with a sense of great urgency the threats posed to sustainable development by global environmental challenges and crises including climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, as well as desertification, land and soil degradation, drought and deforestation, and their impacts on human health and the environment, which are further aggravated by persistent levels of poverty, inequality and food insecurity. They emphasized the importance of advancing integrated, science-based approaches, informed by the best available science, and the traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities, to strengthen resilience to current, emerging and future challenges and promote global solidarity.¹⁶

12. Recognizing the importance of sustainable development as a priority and the interlinkages between the global environmental challenges and crises and the achievement of the SDGs, including eradicating poverty and ending hunger, they decided to take a set of actions, including:
 - i. **Address climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution in a comprehensive and integrated manner, in line with relevant international obligations and different national circumstances:**¹⁷ UNEA committed to address climate change, in line with the objective and principles of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the goals of the Paris Agreement, and take action to achieve more sustainable outcomes, climate resilience, and disaster protection, and to strengthening efforts to address pollution. Commitments were also made to update national biodiversity plans, align targets with Global Biodiversity Framework, and provide means of implementation. UNEA seeks to support the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the Convention to Combat Desertification and to integrate climate, biodiversity, and pollution considerations into disaster risk management. On resource efficiency, UNEA will cooperate for a just and sustainable energy transition and will improve the sustainable management of minerals and metals. Other commitments include supporting the active engagement in negotiations on an international legally binding instrument on plastic, promoting the outcomes of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, and promoting gender equality and empowering women, girls, and persons with disabilities.
 - ii. **Implement effective and inclusive solutions for strengthening water policies to achieve sustainable development in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution,** considering it is critical for sustainable development and the eradication of poverty and hunger. UNEA calls upon Member States and relevant stakeholders to implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate; coherent responses to the water-related challenges and risks across sectors, regions and actors; enhance the collection and monitoring of reliable, up-to-date water-related data; mainstream sustainable water management and the protection, conservation, restoration and sustainable management of aquatic ecosystems into relevant intergovernmental processes, as well as national and local development strategies and relevant policies, with consideration of the One Health approach.¹⁸
 - iii. **Foster national action to address global environmental challenges through increased cooperation between the United Nations Environment Assembly, the United Nations Environment Programme and multilateral environmental agreements.** To promote synergies, cooperation or collaboration in the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, including through the establishment of coordinated and cooperative approaches, structured communication channels and convening of national focal points of various multilateral environmental agreements; and identify in the Voluntary National Reviews to the High-Level Political Forum, where applicable, contributions of MEAs to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.¹⁹

FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS AND MEASURES BEING UNDERTAKEN BY YOUR INTERGOVERNMENTAL / EXPERT BODY TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLITICAL DECLARATION OF THE SDG SUMMIT.

13. Recognizing that time is running out to tackle key environmental challenges, UNEA aims to drive multilateral action through a whole-of-society approach geared towards finding solutions to deliver a cleaner, greener

¹⁶ Ministerial declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its sixth session “Effective, inclusive, and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.”

¹⁷ Idem.

¹⁸ UNEA 6 resolution entitled “Effective and inclusive solutions for strengthening water policies to achieve sustainable development in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution”.

¹⁹ UNEA 6 resolution entitled “Fostering national action to address global environmental challenges through increased cooperation between the United Nations Environment Assembly, the United Nations Environment Programme and multilateral environmental agreements”.

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and safer future for all.

14. The following are examples of the actions agreed by UNEA over the six sessions that support the implementation of the Political Declaration of the SDG Summit:
- a. Responding to the commitment to address water scarcity and stress and drive transformation where water is a sustainable resource, UNEA adopted a resolution²⁰ which calls for mainstreaming sustainable water management into intergovernmental processes and national strategies, enhancing data collection, promoting integrated water resource management in agriculture and industry, and encouraging investment in sustainable water and sanitation infrastructure.
 - b. UNEA is also contributing to addressing gaps related to pandemics and health emergencies, including through urging²¹ Member States to integrate biodiversity conservation with public health policies, following the One Health approach, to better prevent, detect, and respond to health risks.
 - c. UNEA has taken action to promote sustainable ocean management, through the recent adoption of a resolution²² which calls for strengthening the ocean science-policy interface, promoting research and collaboration, and communicating scientific knowledge to policymakers, the private sector, and civil society.
 - d. To support achieving a world in which humanity lives in harmony with nature and the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, UNEA has taken action to adopt a multilaterally agreed definition of nature-based solutions²³ which represents a progressive advancement for climate and nature. It also contributes to the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, decided at the fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.
 - e. Finally, UNEA is contributing to making fundamental changes in consumption and production patterns, including through establishing innovative pathways²⁴ to achieve sustainable consumption and production and supporting the enhancement of a circular economy to achieve sustainable consumption and production.²⁵

RECOMMENDATIONS AND KEY MESSAGES FOR INCLUSION INTO THE MINISTERIAL DECLARATION OF THE 2024 HLPF.

15. Considering the main theme of the 2024 High-Level Political Forum - *Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions* – and the gap in the implementation of the environmental dimension, the Ministerial Declaration should underline the advances on the multilateral environmental agenda and propose concrete actions for the full integration of the environmental dimension in the implementation of the existing globally agreed goals, including those reflected in the multilateral environmental agreements.
- i. Acknowledge with a sense of great urgency the threats posed to sustainable development by global environmental challenges and crises including climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, as well as desertification, land and soil degradation, drought and deforestation, and their impacts on human health and the environment, which are further aggravated by persistent levels of poverty, inequality and food insecurity.²⁶
 - ii. Welcome the important agreed outcomes of:²⁷
 - o the **sixth session of the UN Environment Assembly** under the theme “Effective, inclusive, and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution”.
 - o the **twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change** and the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, including the decision to establish funding arrangements for responding to loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate

²⁰ UNEA-6 resolution entitled “Effective and inclusive solutions for strengthening water policies to achieve sustainable development in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution”.

²¹ UNEA resolution 5/6. Biodiversity and health

²² UNEA 6 resolution entitled “Strengthening Ocean and seas governance to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution”.

²³ UNEA resolution 5/5. Nature-based Solutions for Supporting Sustainable Development.

²⁴ UNEA resolution 4/1. Innovative Pathways to Achieve Sustainable Consumption and Production.

²⁵ UNEA resolution 5/11. Enhancing Circular Economy as a contribution to achieving sustainable consumption and production.

²⁶ Ministerial declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its sixth session “Effective, inclusive, and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution”.

²⁷ Idem.

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change, as well as the Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan.

- the **twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change** and the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, including the agreed outcome of the first global stocktake and the United Arab Emirates Framework for Global Climate Resilience to guide the achievement of the global goal on adaptation.
 - the **fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, including the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework** to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030.
 - **General Assembly resolution 77/161 of 14 December 2022 on promoting zero-waste initiatives** to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
 - the **fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification**, including the Abidjan Call to act on drought, desertification and land degradation.
 - the **fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management**, including the Global Framework on Chemicals –For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste.
- iii. Call for the implementation of existing commitments; strengthen synergies and complementarities in the work and implementation of the multilateral environment agreements, within their independent and respective mandates.²⁸
- iv. Welcome important multilateral achievements, including:
- the adoption of the internationally legally binding agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.
 - General Assembly resolutions A/76/296 of 21 July 2022, entitled “Our ocean, our future, our responsibility”, and A/77/242 of 20 December 2022, entitled “2025 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”.
 - the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028, and the General Assembly resolution 77/334 of 1 September 2023, entitled “Follow-up to the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, ‘Water for Sustainable Development’, 2018–2028”.
 - the High-Level Meeting on the Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.
 - the 2023 meetings of the conferences of the parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of the Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Minamata Convention on Mercury.²⁹
- v. Emphasize the importance of advancing integrated, science-based approaches, informed by the best available science, and the traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities, to strengthen resilience to current, emerging and future challenges and promote global solidarity, and recall General Assembly resolution 76/300 of 28 July 2022 on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.³⁰
- vi. Leverage digital transformation as an enabling tool to support sustainable economies and societies

²⁸ UNEA-6 resolution entitled « Promoting synergies, cooperation or collaboration for national implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and other relevant environmental instruments”.

²⁹ Ministerial declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its sixth session “Effective, inclusive, and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution”.

³⁰ Idem.

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through bridging existing digital divides, improving research, innovation, and equal access to environmental information, and harnessing emerging technologies and monitoring how they develop for sustainability, as appropriate, while ensuring that digitalization remains inclusive, equitable and sustainable.³¹

- vii. Support the global efforts to address plastic pollution, and the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment by 2024.
- viii. Call on Member States, in their efforts to combat desertification and land degradation, restore degraded land, promote land conservation and sustainable land management, contribute to land degradation neutrality and enhance drought resilience.³²
- ix. Reaffirm the commitment to:³³
 - o urgently addressing the environmental challenges before us through effective, co-sectoral, inclusive and sustainable actions, ensuring that such actions are science- and knowledge based, taking into account traditional knowledge, and are gender sensitive, with the engagement of all relevant actors and partners, including civil society, academia, Indigenous Peoples, local communities and the private and public sectors, as well as women and girls, children and young people, older persons, persons with disabilities, and other populations affected disproportionately by global environmental challenges and crises, leaving no one behind.
 - o continuing to advocate for a whole-of-society approach that can effectively empower societies at large, including women, children and youth, and particularly those in vulnerable situations, and to accelerate research, innovation, education and behavioral change and facilitate a just transition to sustainable consumption and production patterns.
 - o moving towards the implementation of economic and environmental policies and models, including through increasing resource efficiency along value chains, along with other related approaches such as sustainable and circular economies and sustainable lifestyles, taking into account the Global Strategy for Sustainable Consumption and Production 2023–2030.
- x. Reaffirm the interdependence of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, and call for the need to address them in a comprehensive and integrated manner, in line with relevant international obligations and different national circumstances.³⁴

³¹ Idem.

³² UNEA 6 resolution entitled « Strengthening international efforts to combat desertification and land degradation, restore degraded land, promote land conservation and sustainable land management, contribute to land degradation neutrality and enhance drought resilience».

³³ Ministerial declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its sixth session “Effective, inclusive, and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution”.

³⁴ Idem.