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**United Nations Environment Assembly  
of the United Nations Environment Programme  
Sixth session**  
Nairobi, 26 February–1 March 2024

## **Proceedings of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its sixth session**

### **I. Opening of the session (agenda item 1)**

1. The sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme was held at the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Nairobi from 26 February to 1 March 2024.
2. The session was opened at 10 a.m. on Monday, 26 February 2024 by Leila Benali, President of the Environment Assembly. Opening statements were delivered by Ms. Benali; Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP; Zainab Hawa Bangura, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi; and Soipan Tuya, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Forestry, Kenya. The opening of the session was preceded by a cultural performance by the Redfourth Academy of Music, Dance and Drama.
3. In her opening remarks, Ms. Benali said that five successful sessions of the Environment Assembly had resulted in over 90 resolutions that had spurred action on critically important issues. Once again, the international community was looking to the Assembly to deliver. In 2024, the world was in a time of turmoil marked by three inflection points: at least two major conflicts and geopolitical tensions; elections for 50 per cent of the global population; and a need to restore trust in multilateralism, humanity and humanism. The Assembly had to demonstrate that multilateral diplomacy could deliver and strengthen the environmental foundation of sustainable development.
4. History showed that, when faced with turmoil and conflict, humanity dug deep and changed course. There was no better example of that than the United Nations. Over the previous decade, the Assembly had lived up to the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, bringing together all stakeholders to shape global environmental policy and decision-making. In 2024, it had to work towards effective multilateralism that included diverse voices and left no one behind. In the early days of the United Nations, the issues of sustainability and the environment had not been at the forefront of the international agenda, but that had changed with the realization that the environment was the very foundation of economic progress and that the world could no longer pollute its way to wealth.
5. Time was running out to tackle environmental challenges. Global temperatures had smashed records in 2023, hundreds of thousands of species were careening towards extinction, over 3.2 billion people were affected by land degradation and millions of people were dying each year from exposure to pollution, humidity and chemicals. At its sixth session, the Assembly would aim to drive multilateral action through a whole-of-society approach geared towards finding key solutions. There was only one Earth and one blueprint for it. The time had come for the Assembly to deliver a cleaner, greener and safer future for all.
6. In her statement, Ms. Andersen said that the intensifying triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste cast a shadow over everyone, regardless

of nationality, colour, faith or gender. The Assembly, which had consistently shown the unity needed to overcome the crisis, was more powerful and united than ever, with record numbers of countries represented and of delegates and ministers in attendance. The sixth session would feature the voices of young people, civil society, Indigenous Peoples, women and businesses, among others. Inclusive, proactive, nimble and clear-sighted environmentalism was needed to tackle new and urgent challenges.

7. The Assembly would consider draft resolutions that could accelerate the transition to net zero, improve air and water quality, strengthen ocean and sea governance, build resilience to drought, support efforts to restore degraded land, address climate justice, spark conversations on emerging technologies, help to usher out the “take, make and waste” culture that was the twisted heart of the triple planetary crisis, and much more. It was time to lay aside political differences and focus on the planet to secure a pathway to a safe and sustainable future. By agreeing on the draft resolutions before it, the Assembly would boost multilateral actions and ensure intergenerational justice and equity. Time and again, the Nairobi spirit had delivered on environmental multilateralism. She urged participants to unite once more and adopt resolutions capable of having a real impact in addressing the needs of people struggling under the burden of the triple planetary crisis and in shoring up the environmental foundations of a peaceful, equitable and sustainable future.

8. In her comments, Ms. Bangura said that, despite deep geopolitical divisions, countries around the world continued to collaborate on the planet’s most pressing environmental concerns. To tackle the triple planetary crisis, the international community had to deliver action that embedded those concerns into every facet of daily life, every government policy and every household. It was to be hoped that the sixth session of the Assembly would unite the world under the banner of environmental action and guide the work of UNEP during what was a critical period for people and the planet.

9. With regard to the United Nations Office at Nairobi, every effort was being made to overcome challenges related to the conferencing equipment and facilities, which were no longer fit for purpose. The General Assembly had approved funding for a project to increase the capacity of the Office’s conference rooms from 2,000 to 9,000 participants. The anticipated completion date was 2030, and the cost was not expected to exceed \$267.5 million. The concept design for the project would feature several prominent buildings and interior spaces that could provide ideal opportunities for donations or in-kind contributions by Member States or private donors. A compendium of potential donor opportunities would be produced in due course. In 2019, as part of efforts to “walk the talk” in integrating environmental sustainability, the Office had issued an environmental policy statement committing its personnel and operations to the protection of the environment and striving towards a fully integrated environmental management system certified to International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 14001:2015. A milestone had been reached in 2022 with the completion of the Office’s first potential net-zero building, while in 2023, work had begun on a \$22 million project to construct net-zero office facilities. Other milestones had included the adoption of a construction waste management plan and the introduction of an electric vehicle fleet. Under a complex-wide reforestation strategy launched in May 2023, more than 2,000 indigenous biodiversity-supporting tree species had been planted. In 2024, environmental sustainability efforts would focus on retrofitting existing buildings with solar panels. The Office was committed to achieving a net-zero complex by 2030. On 26 January 2023, it had become the first and, to date, the only major United Nations office site to be awarded ISO 14001:2015 environmental certification.

10. In her remarks, Ms. Tuyu said that, a decade on from its first session, the Environment Assembly could look back with pride at its achievements and milestones, which included the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste and Environment Assembly resolution 5/14 aimed at developing a legally binding agreement on plastic pollution by 2024. However, scientific assessments continued to provide stark evidence that more action was required to address the environmental crisis and that the international community had to change course as soon as possible. Efforts were needed to expedite the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to provide renewed hope to the world, including millions of people for whom poverty remained a daily reality.

11. In September 2023, as part of efforts to support UNEP and meet its local and international environmental management and climate action obligations, Kenya had hosted the inaugural Africa Climate Summit in Nairobi, which had resulted in the adoption of the African Leaders Nairobi Declaration on Climate Change and Call to Action. At the core of the Declaration lay the resolve of Africa to pursue green growth by leveraging its immense climate action potential in sectors such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, critical minerals and the blue economy.

12. Kenya was also accelerating its transition towards a circular economy and implementing a national landscape and ecosystem restoration programme, through which 15 billion trees would be planted to meet a commitment of achieving 30 per cent tree cover in the country by 2032. Some 30 per cent of the trees planted would be fruit and fodder species to increase food and nutritional security and household income. During the sixth session, on behalf of all the delegates present, 2,700 trees would be planted by volunteers, including college students. The session represented a singular opportunity to restore faith in a strengthened global environmental governance system underpinned by science-based multilateral diplomacy.

## **II. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (agenda item 2)**

### **A. Adoption of the agenda**

13. At the 1st plenary meeting, on the morning of Monday, 26 February, the Environment Assembly adopted the following agenda for the session, on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/EA.6/1) (decision 6/1).

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Credentials of representatives.
4. Report of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.
5. International environmental policy and governance issues.
6. Programme of work and budget and other administrative and budgetary issues.
7. Stakeholder engagement.
8. Contributions to the meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
9. High-level segment.
10. Cooperation with multilateral environmental agreements.<sup>1</sup>
11. Provisional agenda, dates and venue of the seventh session of the Environment Assembly.
12. Adoption of the resolutions, decisions and outcome document of the session.
13. Election of officers.
14. Other matters.
15. Adoption of the report of the session.
16. Closure of the session.

### **B. Organization of work**

14. At the 1st plenary meeting, on the morning of Monday, 26 February, in accordance with rule 63 of its rules of procedure, the Environment Assembly decided to establish a committee of the whole, open for participation to States Members of the United Nations, members of the specialized agencies and the regional economic integration organizations, for the consideration of various items of its agenda. On the recommendation of the Bureau, the Assembly elected by acclamation Norbert Kurilla (Slovakia) as Chair of the Committee of the Whole and also elected by acclamation Silvio Albuquerque e Silva (Brazil) as the Rapporteur. The Assembly decided that the Committee would consider item 5, international environmental policy and governance issues, and item 11, provisional agenda, dates and venue of the seventh session of the Environment Assembly. In accordance with rule 61 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly, the Committee would establish contact groups as it deemed necessary (decision 6/2).

15. The Environment Assembly further decided that the time limit for statements would be three minutes for statements by representatives of individual delegations, including statements by observers

<sup>1</sup> Inclusion on the provisional agenda of the sixth session requested by the President of the Environment Assembly on behalf of the Bureau of the Environment Assembly (UNEP/EA.6/15).

and representatives of major groups and stakeholders; five minutes for statements by representatives speaking on behalf of a group of States; and three minutes for statements in explanation of vote before action and after action on a proposal. The Assembly decided that the right of reply should be exercised at the end of the day whenever two or three meetings had been scheduled for that day and whenever such meetings were devoted to the consideration of the same item or before the conclusion of the consideration of the item, with the number of interventions in the exercise of the right being limited to two per item for any delegation at a given meeting, the first such intervention being limited to three minutes and the second to two minutes (decision 6/2).

16. The Environment Assembly also decided that a high-level dialogue on the theme “Strengthening the science policy interface for effective implementation of environmental commitments” would be held in the morning of Wednesday, 28 February, and that a second high-level dialogue on the theme “Strengthening cooperation between UNEA, UNEP and MEAs to enhance effective implementation at national level, including through means of implementation” would be held in the afternoon of the same day (decision 6/2).

17. The Environment Assembly further decided that a leadership dialogue on the theme “Super-highway or still in slow motion: are science, data and digitalization really speeding our transition to a sustainable future?” followed by a multi-stakeholder dialogue on “Partnering for the environment: inclusive multilateralism fit for purpose” would be held in the afternoon of Thursday, 29 February, and that two leadership dialogues on the themes “Show me the money: can the global financial system really tackle climate change, nature loss and pollution” and “Alive and kicking: environmental multilateralism is a beacon of hope but is it delivering fast enough?” would be held in the morning of Friday, 1 March (decision 6/2).

18. Pursuant to rule 69 of the rules of procedure, the Environment Assembly took note of a list of newly accredited intergovernmental organizations (decision 6/3). The list of accredited organizations is available on the website of the Environment Assembly.

19. The President ruled, in accordance with rule 33 of the rules of procedure of the Environment Assembly, that it was her intention to treat all the regional groups on an equal basis and, as such, that all the Chairs of the regional groups would participate on an equal basis in the proceedings of the sixth session in order to present the positions of their respective groups, without prejudice to the rights and privileges of political groups.

### C. Attendance

20. The following Member States were represented at the sixth session: Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Latvia, Libya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

21. The following non-Member States were represented: Cook Islands, Holy See, Niue and State of Palestine.

22. The following United Nations bodies, conventions and related secretariats were represented: Adaptation Fund; Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme; Basel Convention Regional Centre for French-speaking countries in Africa (BCRC-Senegal); Department of Economic and Social Affairs; Department of Safety and Security; Economic Commission for Europe; Executive Office of the Secretary-General; Global Environment Facility (GEF); Global Information and Communication

Technologies Department; Green Climate Fund; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; International Labour Organization; Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations system; Office of Legal Affairs; Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer; secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions; Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region; secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity; secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals; secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna; secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat; secretariat of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; secretariat of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services; secretariat of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture; secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury; secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa; secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; secretariat of the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; UNEP; secretariat of the United Nations Global Compact; United Nations Human Settlements Programme; United Nations Industrial Development Organization; United Nations Office at Nairobi; United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction; United Nations Office for Project Services; United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; United Nations Population Fund; United Nations System Staff College; United Nations University; World Food Programme.

23. The following United Nations specialized agencies and related organizations were represented: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; International Atomic Energy Agency; International Civil Aviation Organization; International Fund for Agricultural Development; International Labour Organization; International Maritime Organization; International Organization for Migration; International Telecommunication Union; World Bank; World Health Organization; World Intellectual Property Organization.

24. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented: African Development Bank; African Union, Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa; Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Centre for Biodiversity; Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe; Commonwealth Secretariat; East African Community; Economic Community of West African States; Economic Cooperation Organization; Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia; European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; European Investment Bank; European Space Agency; European Union; Intergovernmental Authority on Development; International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology; International Chamber of Commerce; International Committee of the Red Cross; International Criminal Police Organization; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; International Union for Conservation of Nature; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; Organization of Southern Cooperation; secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme; Shanghai Cooperation Organization; Southern African Development Community; Sovereign Order of Malta; Task Force of the Lusaka Agreement on Cooperative Enforcement Operations Directed at Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora; West African Economic and Monetary Union; West African Development Bank; World Organization for Animal Health.

25. In addition, a number of non-governmental and civil society organizations were represented as observers. The list of participants is available in document UNEP/EA.6/INF/20.

## **D. General statements**

26. Following the opening of the sixth session, representatives of regional and political groups of Member States, representatives of Member States and observers made general statements focusing on the theme of the session “Effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution”.

### **1. Statements by regional and political groups**

#### **(a) African States**

27. The representative of Ethiopia, speaking on behalf of the African States, said that the theme of the session implied an urgent need for collaborative efforts in tackling all global environmental

challenges. The current session of the Environment Assembly was taking place at a critical juncture wherein the climate crisis had escalated to a state of emergency. Countries were struggling to meet ambitious targets against backdrops of pollution from hazardous wastes, desertification and land degradation, which threatened African countries and compromised development. All stakeholders must take action in order to elevate environmental multilateralism as a key principle. The global financial pledge must also be fulfilled to provide African countries with adequate means to meet their commitments under various multilateral environmental agreements. Meanwhile, the Addis Ababa Declaration and the various decisions reached by the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment at its nineteenth session required the cooperation of UNEP and the international community for their implementation. He also called for a demonstration of solidarity with Africa by the international community to support the continent in its efforts to address environmental challenges and to ensure a collective response and commitment at a time of urgent need.

**(b) Asia-Pacific States**

28. The observer of the observer State of Palestine, speaking on behalf of the States of the Asia-Pacific region, said that the region was significantly affected by environmental challenges, as well as conflicts and disasters that hindered the advancement of environmental initiatives and development, including the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions on the environment were key, together with enhanced integration and synergies between such actions. The region had taken numerous steps to advance the development agenda, working actively to contribute towards meaningful outcomes of the Environment Assembly.

29. He expressed concern at the lack of consensus on the draft ministerial declaration of the Environment Assembly at its sixth session, which did not duly reflect some of the key issues raised by Asia-Pacific States. He expressed the hope that the region's proposed resolutions, which were urgent for the health of the planet, would be duly considered and adopted. Priorities included ensuring the health of the oceans and seas; scaling up climate action, particularly on biodiversity loss; continued efforts to reduce pollution; and meaningful engagement with all stakeholders in decision-making processes on the environment. All such actions could be more effectively implemented with the provision of adequate financing for developing countries and capacity development. The Asia-Pacific States were committed to contributing positively to the work of the Environment Assembly.

**(c) Group of Latin American and Caribbean States**

30. The representative of Barbados, speaking on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, expressed the hope that the "Nairobi spirit" would prevail at the current session of the Environment Assembly, enabling the fulfilment of its many ambitious mandates. The Group was actively working to conclude negotiations on an international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution and advocated the adoption of concrete actions for the protection, conservation and sustainable use of oceans. Regional cooperation should be strengthened to improve the monitoring and capacity to address air, soil and water quality, and resources should be mobilized to that end. The Group also welcomed the adoption of the Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste, and called on all stakeholders to provide the necessary resources for its implementation.

31. The adoption of commercial and, in some cases, unilateral measures for environmental protection was a matter of concern. Such measures failed to account for the challenges faced by developing countries and the impact on small producers and traditional communities. Moreover, developed countries must provide developing countries with adequate, predictable, timely and additional means of implementation, in line with the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. The Group reaffirmed the role of regional forums of environment ministers in tackling environmental challenges, highlighting the historic role of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean in that regard. Lastly, the Group reiterated its commitment to cooperation and constructive support to the Environment Assembly at its sixth session.

**(d) European Union and its member States**

32. The representative of the European Union spoke on behalf of the European Union and its member States, noting that Georgia, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine also aligned themselves with the statement. Since the fifth session of the Environment Assembly, significant achievements had taken place in environmental multilateralism. The upcoming conclusion of a legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution and the establishment of a new science-policy panel on chemicals, waste and pollution would equally constitute breakthroughs, and were both urgently needed.

33. Given the insufficient level of progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to the environment, more effective, inclusive and

sustainable multilateral action was required without delay. Furthermore, the Global Youth Declaration on Environment 2024 was unequivocal in its call for intergenerational equity, commitment to environmental multilateralism and systemic science-based policy action. The European Union and its member States looked forward to the imminent launch of the 2024 edition of the Global Resources Outlook, whose findings on natural resources management in current economies should inform discussions in the Environment Assembly and beyond.

34. A sense of urgency and compromise were required at the current session, as all the draft resolutions and decisions were yet to be met with agreement. The European Union and its member States remained committed to accelerating work towards resolving the outstanding issues, to ensure successful and ambitious outcomes, including through the draft ministerial declaration, which would serve to send an important message to the 2024 Summit of the Future.

**(e) Group of 77 and China**

35. The representative of Malaysia, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group remained committed to acting in solidarity and unity for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous world; to genuine international cooperation for development; to upholding the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development; and to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, for which poverty eradication was paramount. Progress on sustainable development had been insufficient, with limited support for developing countries, particularly in terms of financing for development, technology transfer and capacity-building, which required increased international cooperation and responsive actions. The full implementation of major outcome documents related to developing countries was necessary, in line with the principles of multilateralism and international cooperation.

36. Fair treatment and resource mobilization were key to the implementation of all the draft resolutions tabled at the current Environment Assembly session, and the resolutions adopted at previous sessions. Developed countries must provide adequate financial and technical assistance, technology transfer and capacity-building to developing countries. The adoption of an international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution was also vital. The Group reiterated its support for the achievement of a successful Environment Assembly session, and expressed the hope that the draft resolutions and the draft ministerial declaration would be adopted by consensus.

**(f) Arab States**

37. The representative of Kuwait, speaking on behalf of the Arab States, welcomed efforts to address the gaps related to climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation and pollution in preparation for the current session of the Environment Assembly, as well as the continued recognition of the resolutions emanating from past sessions. The sixth session of the Environment Assembly had come at a key moment for the planet. As climate change was accelerating, 1 million species were threatened by extinction and pollution remained one of the main causes of early death worldwide. It was vital to focus on international cooperation; to strengthen multilateral institutions to address environmental challenges; to implement multilateral environmental agreements; to consolidate means of implementation, including through funding resources; and to enable countries to fulfil their environmental commitments. Attention must also be paid to the environmental situation, in particular in the State of Palestine against the backdrop of the recent practices of the Israeli occupation, particularly in Gaza.

38. The Group reaffirmed the common but differentiated responsibilities reflected in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and the need to combat pollution and poverty in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The Group also remained willing to participate in constructive negotiations on draft resolutions, with a view to reaching consensus-based outcomes, and called for joint action and cooperation in addressing environmental challenges.

**2. General statements by representatives**

39. Ministers and other high-level representatives of countries, and representatives of United Nations entities, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and observers, delivered statements addressing the theme of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, “Effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution”.

40. One representative highlighted the urgency and significance of collective action in confronting the planetary crisis. In the light of unprecedented biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution, ambitious targets must be set at the current session of the Environment Assembly to match the scale of the challenges, and promises and pledges must be backed by concerted actions. Another representative stressed that solutions to the crisis must avoid exacerbating issues in other areas or creating further

inequalities. At the current session, the Environment Assembly should clearly communicate parameters that denoted environmental limitations around which economies could be organized, to avoid a focus on actions that merely promoted economic growth. Moreover, solutions should be favoured that enabled nature itself to regenerate and to overcome the challenges of the climate crisis. Scientific information and data from expert groups were also indispensable, in order to avoid engaging in selective approaches that would benefit certain States at the expense of others.

41. One representative reaffirmed the importance of tackling issues affecting Member States, including desertification and land degradation, in a just manner, while also addressing their impacts. Some representatives highlighted the need to bear in mind the requirements and any deficiencies in terms of resources among States. Notably, fragmented finance and inadequate, disjointed resource allocation posed a significant barrier to collective efforts, which particularly affected Pacific small island developing States. One representative said that the reconstruction of the financial architecture and the creation of fiscal space for a public response to the crisis would also be beneficial.

42. Several representatives expressed support for the draft ministerial declaration, and one highlighted the actions required to support small island developing States and least developed countries that were at the frontline of the triple planetary crisis. One representative noted that the draft resolutions to be considered by the Environment Assembly would be key to creating synergistic approaches to address the interlinked global crises.

### **3. Other statements**

43. The representative of the United States of America, speaking on behalf also of Australia, Canada, Chile, Georgia, Japan, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the European Union and its member States, expressed gratitude for UNEP work in countries suffering from conflict and disaster and said that, for two years, the unprovoked and unjustified full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation had been causing the continuing suffering of the people of Ukraine, the destruction of their country and unprecedented damage to its environment. Ongoing hostilities and damage posed a serious threat to the biodiversity of Ukraine. Mines gravely threatened the environment of the region, with ramifications for ecosystems and human health. Dangerous chemical releases and pollution stemming from the devastation and ravaged cities and towns had also directly affected human lives and livelihoods. The activities of UNEP in Ukraine were welcome and should be complemented by further environmental assessments, including in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov region. The Russian Federation should immediately cease its hostilities and withdraw all its troops from the territory of Ukraine.

44. The representative of the Russian Federation, speaking in exercise of the right of reply to the previous statement, said that the false allegations made were unacceptable attempts to jeopardize the work of the Environment Assembly through politicization, diverting attention away from the needs of developing countries and sustainable development, which his country had tried to avoid, in keeping with the Nairobi spirit. The United States and the European Union and their accomplices should instead reflect on their own criminal role in instigating the conflict in Ukraine. They had carried out countless brutal, unprovoked and unjustified aggressions around the world. The most significant environmental crime they had perpetrated was the destruction of the Nord Stream natural gas pipeline, which would reverse many years of efforts by the international community to reduce emissions and mitigate climate change. The parties responsible would have to be held to account for such crimes.

### **E. Work of the Committee of the Whole**

45. The Committee of the Whole held three plenary meetings to consider the agenda items assigned to it, concluding its work on the evening of Wednesday, 28 February 2024. At the 7th plenary meeting of the Environment Assembly, the Chair of the Committee reported on the outcome of the work of the Committee. The report on the work of the Committee is set out in annex III to the present proceedings.

## **III. Credentials of representatives (agenda item 3)**

46. At the 1st plenary meeting, on the morning of Monday, 26 February 2024, the Environment Assembly decided to defer consideration of the item to the plenary meeting on Thursday, 29 February, in the afternoon, to allow sufficient time for the Bureau to examine the credentials of representatives and submit its report to the Assembly.



47. At the 4th plenary meeting, on the afternoon of Thursday, 29 February 2024, in resuming its consideration of the item, the Vice-President of the Assembly, Susana Muhamad Gonzales (Colombia), reported that the Bureau had received and examined the credentials of Member States submitted in accordance with rules 16 and 17 of the rules of procedure of the Environment Assembly. As at 28 February 2024, a total of 49 Member States had submitted formal credentials issued by the Head of State or Government or the Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Executive Director of UNEP. A further 122 Member States had submitted information on the appointment of their representatives to the Environment Assembly to the Executive Director by means of a scanned copy in electronic form of formal credentials signed by the Head of State or Government or the Minister for Foreign Affairs, or by means of a scanned copy of a letter or note verbale from the permanent mission concerned or by means of another form of official communication. A total of 21 Member States had not communicated any information regarding their representatives to the Executive Director.

48. With regard to Myanmar, the Vice-President reported that the Bureau had decided, in accordance with the decision of the General Assembly of the United Nations on the same matter, to take no action with regard to the Member State's communications concerning the credentials of its representatives.

49. Since the Bureau's examination of credentials, the Vice-President reported that seven Member States had submitted formal credentials issued by the Head of State or Government or the Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Executive Director of UNEP.

50. The Bureau recommended that the Environment Assembly accept the credentials of the Member States.

51. The Environment Assembly approved the report of the Bureau on credentials and accepted the credentials of Member States (decision 6/4).

#### **IV. Report of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (agenda item 4)**

52. At the 1st plenary meeting, on Monday, 26 February, Firas Khouri, Permanent Representative of Jordan and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, presented the report of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, including the outcomes of the sixth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives, held in Nairobi from 19 to 23 February 2024 (UNEP/EA.6/INF/2).

53. Following consultations between the President of the United Nations Environment Assembly and Member States, the Open-ended Committee had transmitted a revised final draft ministerial declaration, without prejudice to the rights of Member States to make further adjustments and improvements, for further consideration and adoption by the Assembly.

54. Under item 6 of the agenda of its sixth meeting (UNEP/OECPR.6/1), "Preparation of decisions and outcomes of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly", the Open-ended Committee had considered 22 draft resolutions and two decisions submitted by Member States and the secretariat. The Committee had worked tirelessly and in a constructive atmosphere. A spirit of compromise had been demonstrated, with one draft resolution being withdrawn and two others being merged. The Committee had decided to defer consideration of 19 draft resolutions and 2 draft decisions to the Environment Assembly. Significant further progress had been made on an informal basis over the weekend prior to the opening of the sixth session, with a view to reaching the broadest possible consensus on several draft resolutions. In addition to the draft versions of the texts, non-papers reflecting the outcome of the informal discussions held over the weekend had been made available.

55. In closing, he expressed his appreciation for the efforts of his fellow members of the Bureau of the Open-ended Committee, the co-facilitators and the secretariat. Further information on the sixth meeting of the Committee was available in the Chair's draft summary (UNEP/OECPR.6/8).

56. The Assembly took note of the report of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

57. The Assembly decided to allocate to the Committee of the Whole the task of finalizing the pending draft decision and resolutions.

## **V. International environmental policy and governance issues (agenda item 5)**

58. Agenda item 5, and the draft resolutions and decisions related to it, were considered by the Committee of the Whole. At the 7th plenary meeting of the Environment Assembly, on Friday, 1 March, the Chair of the Committee reported on the outcome of the work of the Committee. The Assembly took note of the report of the Committee. The report on the work of the Committee is set out in annex III to the present proceedings.

## **VI. Programme of work and budget and other administrative and budgetary issues (agenda item 6)**

59. At the 7th plenary meeting, the President recalled that the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives had considered the report of the Executive Director pertaining to the programme of work and budget for UNEP for the period 2022–2025, with the budget and targets being prorated (UNEP/EA.6/13). There being no outstanding matters under agenda item 6, no further action by the Assembly was required.

## **VII. Stakeholder engagement (agenda item 7)**

60. At the 1st plenary meeting, on Monday, 26 February, the President invited the representatives of the nine major groups and other stakeholders to address the Environment Assembly.

61. A representative speaking on behalf of the business and industry major group said that the private sector played a critical role in addressing the interconnected challenges currently faced, acting as important engines of innovation, mobilizers of investment and capacity-builders. Businesses were making vast investments to address global challenges; small and medium-sized enterprises, youth start-ups and global companies alike were delivering equitable, green and sustainable jobs. Risk- and evidence-based policies were needed, however, as was the effective sharing of best practices. He noted with concern a recent trend of reopening draft resolution text that had previously been agreed, which risked creating an inconsistent policy landscape and undermining the achievement of goals and objectives. Consistency in terms of language, a sharpened focus on deliverables and avoiding duplication of effort were key. It was also important to give UNEP clear mandates and the resources to implement them. Global governance must enhance opportunities for productive partnerships. The Environment Assembly should therefore explore its convening responsibilities in order to build collaborative approaches.

62. A representative speaking on behalf of the children and youth major group said that more than 450 young people had recently gathered in Nairobi for the Global Youth Environment Assembly, where they had learned about technical topics and gained a better understanding of UNEP and its processes. She welcomed the proposal in the draft ministerial declaration to acknowledge the Global Youth Environment Assembly, as well as the draft resolutions on climate justice and on sustainable lifestyles. She called on Member States to formalize intergenerational equity in UNEP processes, codify the Global Youth Environment Assembly and strengthen the role of UNEP in the science-policy interface, taking into account the perspectives of those communities most affected by environmental crises. The sixth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives had ended without a single draft resolution having been agreed. At a time when planetary systems were on the brink of collapse, many of the texts had lost the ambition and core values contained in earlier drafts. Given the broken promises and the increasingly dire consequences of inaction, the world's young people called upon the Environment Assembly to ensure that the sixth session concluded with more ambition and greater awareness of the collective responsibility for environmental governance. A robust, comprehensive and enforceable global environmental governance framework was needed to hold every stakeholder accountable for their actions and place the well-being of the planet and its inhabitants above financial gain. She urged participants to take a long-term perspective, commit to protecting the planet for future generations and restore trust in multilateralism by demonstrating that the Nairobi spirit was alive and well.

63. In his statement, a representative of the farmers major group said that farmers – a term that encompassed farmers, ranchers, pastoralists, foresters and fishers – increasingly faced perpetual conflicts that posed some of the greatest threats to humanity, including invasive pests, zoonotic diseases, global trade disruptions and climate change. Noting that, in another United Nations platform, the terms “agriculture” and “farmers” had been replaced with “food system” and “front-line actors”, he said that a reliable food supply had never been more essential to humanity. Agriculture, in all its many

forms and dimensions, produced that supply, day after day, against a backdrop of challenges, disruptions and misunderstandings. Farmers were not “actors” on the stage of humanity; farmers had built the stage on which humanity existed. He emphasized that the use and application of good science and Indigenous knowledge were valuable in all forms of production, as farmers of all sizes sought to adapt, mitigate and transform, all while rising to the challenge of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

64. A representative speaking on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples major group said that, to address the triple planetary crisis effectively, Member States must ensure an enabling environment in which Indigenous Peoples could play a more active role as guardians of nature, rights holders and knowledge holders; and recognize, respect, protect and fulfil their collective rights to their lands, territories and resources, in accordance with the principles enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Many of the resolutions of the Assembly, however, did not take into account Indigenous Peoples’ rights, particularly with regard to their lands, territories and resources, which were now heavily polluted and increasingly degraded. Effective mechanisms were therefore needed to hold to account those infringing on Indigenous rights and harming their environment. Indigenous Peoples’ ancient wisdom and knowledge systems had provided them with sustainable ways of living, managing resources and preserving their environment. For that reason, they should be incorporated, on a par with scientific knowledge, in policy decisions, plans and projects. By ensuring Indigenous Peoples’ meaningful, informed and inclusive participation in decision-making, sustainable strategies for the mutual benefit of humanity and nature could replace exploitative practices that served only the few. Finally, she stressed the need to distinguish between “Indigenous Peoples” and “local communities”, terms that should not be used interchangeably; Indigenous Peoples had specific rights under international law that must be respected.

65. In his statement, the representative of the local authorities major group expressed concern about the draft resolution on solar radiation modification, in particular with regard to the experimentation and use of that technology. The risks of geoengineering currently outweighed the benefits and solar geoengineering did not address the underlying issue of unsustainable production and consumption. The recently held third Cities and Regions Summit and the twentieth session of the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum had served to reinforce the group’s concerns and the need to contribute to solutions. A number of issues had impeded coherent and effective sustainability actions at the local government level. For example, there was an acute lack of an integrated and multilateral policy environment being included in resolutions. Local authorities witnessed the complications that stemmed from the resulting policy misalignment. A whole-of-government approach was therefore needed to deliver the impact and efficient implementation that the people deserved. The increasing usage of terminology such as “equity”, “social cohesion” and “just transition” was to be welcomed. Member States should consider how those concepts would be materialized for the most vulnerable people. A sustainable environment and planet for future generations was the common goal, and local authorities could contribute support, insights and expertise to advance a just transition, the circular economy and other environmental opportunities.

66. In her statement, the representative of the non-governmental organizations major group urged Member States to seize the opportunity to secure and advance the health of humans, animals and ecosystems and combat the triple planetary crisis through the rapid implementation of recent resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. She called for destructive technologies, such as solar radiation modification and geoengineering, to be rejected, and stressed that the state of the environment and implementation of relevant resolutions depended on true peace. Ecosystem destruction was escalating at an alarming rate owing to wars and conflicts, the environmental dimensions of which should be addressed by the Environment Assembly. She also urged Member States and all stakeholders to promote peace and security in every region; the time to silence the guns and protect the Earth was now.

67. One representative, speaking on behalf of the scientific and technological communities major group, said that the draft resolution on oceans and seas should be fully aligned with the 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. In particular, stronger language should be included on the need to exercise caution with regard to deep-sea mining, given the lack of comprehensive scientific understanding of the impact of that activity, which posed a significant threat to the ocean and marine biodiversity. Standards based on solid science and evidence-based criteria were needed to ensure that nature-based solutions were of benefit to the environment, and legally binding regulatory frameworks were needed to ensure that financing for nature-based solutions was dedicated to the science-policy interface. As far as solar radiation modification was concerned, the group favoured following the science and taking a “no use” approach, including through a ban on

open-air testing. The group also had serious concerns about the assessment of that technology being limited to a narrow scope, with insufficient intergovernmental oversight and engagement of rights holders. The establishment of a citizen science framework could contribute to the integration of the voices of Indigenous Peoples and communities and the scaling up of research programmes. In closing, he called on Member States to include three independent, non-governmental scientists on the interdisciplinary committee of experts of the proposed science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution.

68. In her statement, a representative speaking on behalf of the women major group, said that immediate action should be taken to phase out highly hazardous pesticides, which had an alarming impact on the health of women farm workers, causing breast cancer, infertility and reproductive health disruptions. Domestic solutions, including non-chemical alternatives, should be promoted and international support provided to support the transition. It was also essential to take regulatory action to prevent and limit exposure to chemicals in various industries. Given the uncontrollable risks and costs of solar radiation modification, Member States were urged to heed calls for a global non-use agreement on that technology. Regarding the draft resolution on sustainable lifestyles, she proposed the inclusion of language on intergenerational equity and emphasized the importance of gender equality and women's knowledge. Finally, given that women and girls in developing countries were disproportionately affected by climate change, collective action was needed to support vulnerable countries, reduce risk and promote resilience and adaptation.

69. A representative of the workers and trade unions major group said that the impact of drought, heat stress and dangerous chemical products had become central concerns for workers and their trade unions, who were directly affected by bad and ineffective environmental policies but could be part of the solution, in particular by applying a just transition approach to policies. Regarding the draft resolution on the sound management of chemicals and waste, she called for a ban on the use of chrysotile asbestos, which caused 250,000 workers' deaths annually. A paragraph on the just transition, which was important for all formal and informal workers, should be incorporated into the draft resolutions on the circular economy and on the environmental aspects of minerals and metals. Finally, she called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and a sustainable solution to the terrible conflict in the State of Palestine.

70. Speaking on behalf of the major groups and stakeholders regions, one representative said that it was essential to ensure respect for human dignity and human rights. Making a non-negotiable commitment to upholding human rights was a prerequisite for progress on the common environmental agenda. The right to food security and food sovereignty was a basic human need. A socially responsible, inclusive and equitable transition towards sustainable food systems was needed. So, too, was participatory food system governance and enhanced accountability and transparency mechanisms. Innovative and regenerative practices, such as agroecology, contributed to protecting health and the environment, enhancing livelihoods and promoting resilience. It was critical to move beyond a purely anthropocentric approach to environmental policy by explicitly acknowledging, supporting, safeguarding and championing the rights of nature. Human rights and the rights of nature were essential and interconnected.

71. The Rapporteur of the Cities and Regions Summit, providing an overview of the outcomes of the Summit, held in Nairobi on 23 February 2024, said that, since over half of the world's population lived in urban centres, cities bore the brunt of environmental issues. At the same time, cities were uniquely positioned to develop and implement solutions to address those issues. In some cases, their plastic production initiatives had surpassed national efforts. A multilevel approach was therefore needed, with national Governments working hand in hand with cities, and cities engaging with communities and stakeholders, to replicate local successes and transform them into global impact. To unlock cities' full potential as environmental leaders, the barriers that prevented local authorities from accessing vital financing mechanisms must be lifted.

72. The need for stronger local and subnational government involvement in implementing multilateral environment agreements and commitments had been emphasized. To that end, frameworks, like the Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships for Climate Action under the Paris Agreement, should be established and multilevel engagement enhanced and strengthened. Finally, it was to be hoped that local authorities would be able to participate as critical actors in implementing future resolutions and environmental initiatives. While the challenges faced were immense, the potential for collective action was even greater.

73. At the 7th plenary meeting on the afternoon of Friday, 1 March, Sarojeni Rengam, the representative of the major groups and stakeholders, in her statement, expressed concern at the unwarranted divergence in the resolutions from language that had been agreed in various international

forums concerning the rights of Indigenous and other peoples, which undermined good governance; the weakening and deletion of references to vulnerable and marginalized groups, which broke the links between human rights and a healthy environment; the lack of a commitment to take into account labour-oriented just transition policies; and the failure by Member States to deliver a strong statement on climate justice. She called upon all Member States and stakeholders to take effective measures to phase out highly hazardous pesticides and promote the transition towards safer and affordable alternatives, including agroecology and integrated pest management, in line with the Global Framework on Chemicals. She urged them to adopt a science-based approach that took food security and peoples' livelihoods into account. Solar radiation modification technologies would negatively affect communities that were already most impacted by climate change. Studies conducted by international experts on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and under the Convention on Biological Diversity had led to a de facto moratorium, which the major groups and stakeholders supported, owing to the uncontrollable risks and costs of such technologies, which did not address the root causes of climate change. She welcomed the focus in many of the resolutions on the importance of transitioning to a circular economy, and she called upon Member States to ensure the strong, participatory and equitable governance of natural resources and protect environmental defenders in order to minimize the impact of mining. All the major groups and stakeholders called for an end to all conflict, which undermined sustainable development and caused food insecurity. Multilateralism, financing and the enforcement of environmental legislation should be stepped up, governance at all levels should be enhanced and human and labour rights should be incorporated into all activities. The major groups and stakeholders offered their full support to the President of the seventh session of the Environment Assembly.

## **VIII. Contributions to the meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (agenda item 8)**

74. At the 1st plenary meeting, on Monday, 26 February, the Environment Assembly, on the recommendation of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives, decided to request the Committee of Permanent Representatives to consider and approve written contributions to the meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development to be held in 2024 and 2025 (decision 6/5).

## **IX. High-level segment (agenda item 9)**

75. The high-level segment was opened at 10.30 a.m. on Thursday, 29 February 2024, at the 3rd plenary meeting of the Assembly, followed by opening statements by high-level speakers. The opening of the high-level segment was preceded by performances by the youth orchestra Ghetto Classics and a "rap battle" between musicians Dex McBean from the United States and Frida Amani from the United Republic of Tanzania.

### **A. Opening statements**

76. Opening statements were delivered by Leila Benali, President of the Environment Assembly; Dennis Francis, President of the General Assembly; Paula Narváez, President of the Economic and Social Council; António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, via video message; Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP; Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization; William Samoei Ruto, President of Kenya; Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, President of Botswana; Ismaël Omar Guelleh, President of Djibouti; Brice Oligui Nguema, Transitional President and Head of State of Gabon; Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of Somalia; Moussa Al-Kouni, Vice-President of the Presidential Council of Libya; Kembo Mohadi, Vice-President of Zimbabwe; Gervais Ndirakobuca, Prime Minister of Burundi; Russell Mmiso Dlamini, Prime Minister of Eswatini; and Édouard Ngirente, Prime Minister of Rwanda.

77. Ms. Benali, in her remarks, warned of several potential distractions from the path towards sustainable development in 2024: armed conflicts in Europe and the Middle East that were having an impact in every part of the globe; elections in countries that were home to 40 per cent of the world's population that risked diverting the attention of policymakers and causing leadership changes that could threaten sustainability achievements; and unprecedented pressure on multilateralism. The sixth session of the Assembly provided a crucial opportunity to reconsolidate the multilateral system and

previous achievements, because, as the negotiations on the international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution had shown, multilateralism worked.

78. To revamp environmental multilateralism during the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration required coordinated work between the United Nations system and enlightened leadership in the private and public sectors; cutting-edge technologies; research and development investment; and engagement with local communities. To that end, she had written to the Secretary-General to propose an alliance of goodwill environmentalists who could build deeper engagement with industry and support future presidencies of the Assembly.

79. Points of unity must be nurtured and synergies between multilateral environmental agreements and multilateral agencies built on. The hard-won Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste had been agreed, but greater efforts were needed to ensure an energy-secure future for all, while respecting local and national needs.

80. The effects of environmental crises were worsening and had a greater impact on some people than others: 2023 had been the hottest year on record; catastrophic events, including storms, droughts and wildfires, were becoming the new normal; and 3.2 billion people, 40 per cent of the world's population, were suffering from ecosystem degradation that required immediate action. In many places, the point of no return had already been reached. The Assembly needed to commit to implementing decisive actions and credible solutions faster and with greater ambition.

81. In his remarks, Mr. Francis said that, while it had long been known that a healthy environment was essential to a more safe, just and prosperous future, progress on the Sustainable Development Goals remained off track. At the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, held in New York in September 2023, world leaders had pledged to accelerate progress, including on environmental issues. The political declaration of the Summit had called for stronger implementation of both the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, and had promised urgent action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, including the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. Crucially, the serious threats of plastic, air and chemical pollution had been acknowledged and firm support had been expressed for an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution.

82. The high attendance at the current session of the Assembly demonstrated strength in numbers. The Assembly was well placed to bring about urgently needed tangible results on sustainable development, which was vital given that the global temperature had risen by 1.5°C over the most recent 12-month period for the first time on record; biodiversity was degrading at the fastest rate in history; pollution was causing 9 million premature deaths each year; and plastic had entered every ecosystem on the planet, meaning that, on current trends, the oceans would contain more plastic than fish by 2050.

83. In order for the outcomes of the sixth session to help bring about a more equitable, inclusive and resilient future for all peoples, everywhere, it was crucial to consider those who were often underrepresented at the negotiating table, including women, children, Indigenous Peoples, persons belonging to minority groups, and other vulnerable communities. Some countries were also at risk of being left behind. In 2024, there would be opportunities for Member States and stakeholders to work together to that end, including at the third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries and the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States. The General Assembly would also convene an inaugural "Sustainability Week", to be held at United Nations Headquarters from 15 to 19 April, featuring events on transport, tourism, energy and infrastructure, as well as debt sustainability and socioeconomic equality. To translate commitments into meaningful change, the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda should be stepped up to increase finance for sustainable development and provide means of implementation to developing countries. He concluded by welcoming the intention of the Environment Assembly at its sixth session to draw attention to the Summit of the Future and its anticipated outcome, the pact of the future, in its ministerial declaration.

84. Ms. Narvaez, in her remarks, said that urgent, collective action was needed to address climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. With 1.3 billion people at risk from the impacts of climate change and 1 million species facing extinction due to human activities, the challenges could not be addressed in isolation, but only with an understanding of their interlinkages. The recent report *Synergy Solutions for a World in Crisis: Tackling Climate and SDG Action Together*, published by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, had underscored the need for coordinated and integrated approaches.

85. At the midpoint for the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, the challenges were daunting and the pace too slow, with 50 per cent of the Goals behind schedule, 30 per cent stalled, and 15 per cent off track. Nevertheless, they remained attainable, and the report highlighted the potential opportunities emanating from synergies: climate action was linked to 80 per cent of the Goals; health and agricultural co-benefits could offset climate policy costs and improve global gross domestic product; effective climate policies could lower the cost of universal electricity access in sub-Saharan Africa; and aligning efforts on climate and the Sustainable Development Goals could boost economic output by \$43 trillion by 2070. The undeniable benefits of such integrated approaches could only be achieved with deliberate efforts to tailor policies and approaches.

86. Preparations were under way for the annual meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2024, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. The outcomes of the sixth session would feed into deliberations of the forum and contribute to the work of the Council, particularly its review of Sustainable Development Goal 13 – take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. She urged participants to seize the opportunity to raise ambitions for impactful outcomes, to forge new partnerships, mobilize resources and catalyse transformative change.

87. Mr. Guterres, in his statement, said that the work of the Environment Assembly at its sixth session was urgent in nature. Humanity was to blame for the current situation, in which the planet, its ecosystems and the climate were all suffering major adverse effects, the consequences of which, including poisoned rivers and rising seas, harmed all of humankind. The fact that those who were the least responsible suffered the most was a profound injustice. Collaboration was vital to combating the environmental crises being faced, as was recognizing their interlinkages, in order to give major momentum to sustainable development. Urgent action must also be taken to accelerate a just transition from fossil fuels to renewable energies; to adapt to extreme weather; to deliver climate justice; to effectively manage pollution; and to protect and restore ecosystems.

88. For their part, Governments must set national targets to deliver on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework; capitalize on the new loss and damage fund; create nationally determined contributions to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2025; negotiate a new treaty on plastic pollution; significantly increase financing for sustainable development and climate and biodiversity action in developing countries; and deliver on the proposed Sustainable Development Goal stimulus. All commitments made by developed countries needed to be met, while ensuring that the production and trade of minerals critical to the renewables revolution was sustainable and provided maximum benefits to developing countries. The Environment Assembly played a vital role in driving environmental action and, given the many important draft resolutions under consideration at the current session, the opportunity should be seized to reach multilateral solutions and channel the Nairobi spirit once more.

89. Ms. Andersen said that the spread and intensification of environmental crises had given rise to a climate emergency. Despite the multitude of threats faced, the power of change lay with the Environment Assembly and with other relevant stakeholders, who needed to unite to combat the triple planetary crisis. Such unity would enable the stabilization of the climate, the recovery of the natural world, and the sustainable flourishing of economies and societies, while creating intergenerational equity to equip young people with enhanced capacities and knowledge. It was crucial to demonstrate the Nairobi spirit yet again at the current session of the Environment Assembly, putting aside national and regional differences in favour of a long-term, common vision that would serve to foster inclusive environmental multilateralism. The draft resolutions and draft decisions under consideration should be adopted in the most impactful manner possible and implemented both with speed and with determination.

90. The Environment Assembly provided a forum for the global community to generate ideas that were ambitious in scope, as exemplified during the meetings at the current session on the multilateral environmental agreements, which had already delivered concrete results in noteworthy displays of environmental multilateralism. Nonetheless, even more could be achieved by unifying efforts to build future resilience. Despite the intensification of environmental threats, the Environment Assembly embodied a palpable surge in hope, commitment and action. Unity of purpose could serve to overcome the triple planetary crisis, through a rejection of fossil fuels in favour of renewable energy; the restoration and conservation of the natural world and land; and the elimination of harmful chemicals, pollution and waste. Billions of people depended on the Environment Assembly for the successful execution of those tasks.

91. Mr. Ghebreyesus said that the health of humans, animals and the environment were inextricably interwoven in a fragile bond. Humans had plundered the planet in the name of progress

for centuries. Consequently, the planet was deteriorating rapidly, with rising temperatures, the destruction of forests and the contamination of water sources, all to the detriment of human health. More frequent and severe weather events caused death, injuries and damage; increased heatwaves, air pollution and chemicals had contributed to a rise in disease; and drought and water scarcity affected food production and prices. Climate change was also leading to behavioural shifts in various species that were spreading infectious diseases. Meanwhile, illegal wildlife trading increased the risk of zoonotic spillover, which could trigger a pandemic.

92. The multisectoral causes and impacts of the triple planetary crisis necessitated a collective multisectoral response. Among the draft resolutions under consideration, those on air quality and chemicals, waste and preventing pollution were particularly welcome. Health aspects should also be strongly reflected in the new legally binding instrument on plastic pollution. The work of the Environment Assembly would directly impact the implementation of the One Health Joint Plan of Action, for which he urged expressions of support. Transformative action was also needed for energy, transport, food and health systems, while breaking out of siloed mindsets to ensure effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral action. The World Health Organization remained committed to supporting all countries with evidence-based technical tools.

93. Mr. Ruto stressed that the magnitude of the current crisis demanded effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral action, and the Environment Assembly had a critical responsibility to deliver on its agenda. While collective determination and strategic foresight had led to progress, more effective action was needed to address the ongoing trends in global greenhouse gas emissions, pollution patterns and threats to biodiversity. Although no country could tackle those challenges alone, all efforts should begin with effective domestic measures. In that regard, his Government had established an institutional framework for interventions related to energy, pollution, forest conservation, landscape restoration, agriculture and food systems, nature and biodiversity. Partnerships were also key to collective success; Governments and institutions were therefore invited to collaborate with Kenya.

94. The existing multilateral system was not equal to the task of ensuring transformative global cooperation. Reforms must begin at the structural level by realigning multilateral institutions with the core values of the international community, including sovereign equality and effective democratic representation. The failure of such endeavours could result in the collapse of multilateralism. In September 2023, Kenya and the African Union Commission had convened the first Africa Climate Summit in Nairobi, at which participants had called for urgent reform of the global financial architecture. African countries paid significantly higher costs than others for their debt and investments in private projects faced high costs of capital driven by real and imaginary risks, resulting in an unjust and untenable state of affairs.

95. He urged the international community to support the establishment of the secretariat of the proposed legally binding instrument on plastic pollution at UNEP in Nairobi, particularly given the fragmented state of global environmental governance. The fact that financing for UNEP both from the regular budget of the United Nations and from voluntary contributions, remained insufficient was a matter of concern, and should be reviewed by the General Assembly. With six years remaining for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, collective action was an imperative. He called for the Environment Assembly at the current session to mark a significant advancement towards that goal.

96. In his statement, Mr. Masisi said that his country was affected by prevalent global challenges, including those linked to the expansion of the industrial sector, mining activities, commercial centres and urbanization. Nevertheless, it was making significant strides to make the transition from coal-fired electricity generation towards renewable alternatives. His Government had decided to increase renewable energy penetration from 2 to 30 per cent by 2030, doubling the ambition of the country's nationally determined contribution, as well as investing in waste recovery, recycling and reuse infrastructure and awareness campaigns to help nature recover and generate jobs and income. Recognizing the serious threat that pollution posed to human and animal health, his country had worked to develop an electronic waste management strategy and to eliminate mercury from dental amalgam in line with the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

97. His country's commitment to preserving biodiversity and vital ecosystems was evident in its dedication of 40 per cent of its land to conservation, and it was no accident that Botswana was home to the world's largest herd of elephants in the wild. Yet, financing was still required, and he urged countries to fulfil their pledges, including those related to the loss and damage fund adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at its twenty-seventh session. To bridge the biodiversity funding gap, a commercial bank in Botswana had



launched the first ever sustainable bond on the Botswana Stock Exchange, which had amounted to around \$3.6 million.

98. Like other southern African countries, Botswana was experiencing prolonged periods of drought and extreme temperatures that would impact food security. The Water Changemaker Awards, of which his country was Chair, had launched the International High-level Panel on Water Investments for Africa to help countries mobilize at least \$30 billion each year by 2030 towards the achievement of the water-related Sustainable Development Goals in Africa. As the Africa Climate Mobility Champion, he sought to mobilize political support for local solutions to climate mobility, and as Botswana currently chaired the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, he underlined the importance of the sixth session attending to the situations of the countries bearing the most pressure, which also included least developed countries and small island developing States. Not only were they vulnerable, they had been left behind, and needed support to uplift their people, create jobs and foster sustainable growth. Shared responsibility and collaborative action were required to create a sustainable legacy for generations to come.

99. In his remarks, noting that climate change was the biggest of the environmental crises facing the planet, Mr. Guelleh said that inaction was not an option. Multilateral financing remained below the levels needed for climate change adaptation and mitigation and bold measures were required in that area. Despite its marginal contribution to greenhouse gas emissions, Djibouti was resolutely committed to low carbon development. The Government was investing in solar, wind and geothermal energy sources and had established a regional observatory on climate change. Given the devastating consequences of deforestation, uncontrolled urbanization, pollution and excessive exploitation of natural resources, his country had established several protected areas and had launched reforestation initiatives. The scourge of plastic pollution was of such a scale that only global efforts, including an international agreement on plastics, could resolve the issue. He emphasized the importance of mobilizing international financial resources for sustainable action in favour of biodiversity and called for multilateralism to be strengthened to meet the environmental challenges.

100. In his statement, Mr. Nguema reaffirmed his country's commitment to tackling pollution from single-use plastics, given the serious threat that it posed to peoples' well-being and to sustainable development. Thanks to action taken by the Gabonese State over the previous five decades, 88 per cent of the country was covered in forest, over a quarter of its maritime territory was protected, the country was a net absorber of carbon and it had one of the world's largest elephant populations. However, given the human-wildlife conflict which had resulted in the loss of human life and the destruction of crops, he stressed that the Government would not pursue its environmental commitments at the expense of the human population. It was clear that the selfish and predatory attitude to nature since the dawn of the industrial revolution was negatively affecting both humankind and the environment. He called for greater fairness in global environmental governance and more solidarity in global action in response to the triple planetary crisis.

101. Mr. Mohamud, in his remarks, underscored the timeliness and relevance of the theme of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly, especially given the existential threat of climate change. Effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral action was the only realistic way to address climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution and their effects. Somalia had passed the point of climate crisis and was in a state of climate emergency following four years of drought. Going forward, extreme weather events would have a significant impact on the population's lives and livelihoods and on the country's infrastructure, biodiversity and food security. Immediate action by the international community was imperative. Having established the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change in 2022, the Government was in the process of finalizing its environmental protection policies and legal framework, which included a new law on environmental protection and management. The trade in and importation and use of plastic bags would be banned from June 2024.

102. Multilateral actions must include the provision of climate financing, without which developing countries like Somalia would not be able to meet their most pressing needs in terms of climate change adaptation and mitigation. The cost of implementing the country's strategies in those areas had been estimated at \$15 billion in the period up to 2030 – more than the Government received in revenue or was able to borrow from vertical or multilateral funds, or from private finance markets. In its current state, the climate financing architecture was not fit for purpose. The Government was working on bankable and investment-ready projects to attract climate financing and investors in line with its climate financing strategy. He called for greater international unity and more burden-sharing between developed and developing countries to achieve sustainable development up to and after 2030. Better management and protection of the environment and natural resources would translate into more green energy, jobs and growth in Somalia and other countries in the Horn of Africa.

103. In his statement, Mr. Al-Kouni highlighted the need for joint action to address the significant and increasingly complex challenges posed by climate change. The natural disasters it had caused had claimed thousands of lives and destroyed infrastructure in Libya and many other African countries. For its part, the Libyan Government was increasing investment in technology and capacity-building to ensure the sustainability of water resources and protect the environment. He called for international and regional cooperation to realize countries' commitments under the Paris Agreement and ensure effective climate change adaptation by States across the African continent. To that end, he highlighted the importance of financial contributions from developed countries to the loss and damage fund and urged all States to share experience and expertise on climate change adaptation and mitigation.

104. In his statement, Mr. Mohadi spoke about his country's commitment to environmental conservation and sustainable practices and the goals of the 2030 Agenda. Environmental degradation was a significant threat to the economic and ecological well-being of Zimbabwe, and the Government was determined to implement plans, policies and strategies that supported sustainable development. Zimbabwe planned to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 40 per cent per capita across all sectors of the economy and transition to a low-carbon economy by 2030. The Government had a comprehensive national climate-change response strategy focused on mitigation, adaptation and resilience-building, and was promoting renewable energy and implementing energy efficiency initiatives to reduce the country's carbon footprint.

105. Zimbabwe had an extensive network of national parks and protected areas intended to safeguard its rich biodiversity. It was strengthening law enforcement to combat poaching and wetlands invasion and introducing community-based conservation programmes to provide sustainable livelihoods for local communities while preserving biodiversity. To further protect wetlands, the Government had developed policy and strategy documents on the sustainable management of wetlands and designated certain wetlands as ecologically sensitive areas. It was also working to restore degraded land and protect the country's forests, and was investing in water infrastructure and promoting sustainable water use practices to improve access to clean water and sanitation. More broadly, it was promoting environmental awareness by integrating environmental education into the national curriculum and organizing awareness campaigns. In closing, Mr. Mohadi invited all representatives to attend the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat, to be held in Zimbabwe in July 2025.

106. In his statement, Mr. Ndirakobuca reported that Burundi was aiming to be an emerging country by 2040 and a developed country by 2060. "Vision Burundi" aimed to promote a peaceful country, where everyone lived in decent conditions and no one died of avoidable causes, within a competitive economy driven by high value-added agrifood and industrial sectors and mining for the benefit of all society, all in the context of a clean and well-preserved natural environment. The themes of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly were aligned with the issues the country would address in achieving its vision of restoring harmony between nature and humanity by improving the living conditions of the most vulnerable strata of its population. Burundi was suffering greatly from the effects of climate change, however, potentially compromising its ability to achieve its objectives.

107. In the last two decades, Burundi had backed international decisions taken under multilateral environmental agreements on biodiversity, climate and desertification and had taken steps to fulfil its commitments, including by establishing a national reforestation programme, revising its national biodiversity strategy and action plan to align with the new global biodiversity framework and extending its national protected areas. Burundi welcomed international solidarity in the fulfilment of its commitments but also called for greater involvement of civil society organizations, the scientific community and the private sector, with an emphasis on the empowerment of young people and women. Burundi had made progress in its fight against the triple planetary crisis, but faced persistent challenges associated with insufficient technical and financial resources, and sought additional support in its efforts to achieve its vision.

108. In his statement, Mr. Dlamini said that for Eswatini, multilateralism was the only hope for lasting global peace and living sustainably in harmony with nature. He called for a renewed Nairobi spirit of international cooperation in seeking lasting solutions to the triple planetary crisis. Scientific assessments continued to indicate that the world was not doing enough to address the environmental crisis and he called on the entire international community to take the urgent action needed.

109. In Eswatini, recent climate-change-induced weather events were reversing hard-won development gains. The country had adopted its first economy-wide emissions reduction target, which would require transformative changes across all sectors of the economy. Eswatini sought a just transition while leveraging its abundant natural resources to ensure a secure energy supply and

enhance investor confidence. It currently met 15 per cent of its energy consumption through renewable sources. In meeting its biodiversity targets, it was pioneering the global concept of “other effective area-based conservation measures” and funding national programmes to increase the area under conservation by 10 per cent of the total land area. Those elements were part of the 2030 national development plan, which focused on inclusive, sustainable and effective management of natural resources and the environment; resilience to climate change; and the reduction of environmental degradation and disaster risk through adaptation and mitigation. Eswatini had established a strong environment institution and a robust environmental framework on chemicals and waste management, environmental impact assessment, pollution control, biosafety and the management of genetic resources, and looked forward to the restructuring of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and to partnerships that would contribute to overcoming the triple planetary crisis.

110. In his statement, Mr. Ngirente said that it was high time to agree to effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral action on the triple crisis. The multilateral system was critical to overcoming the current global environmental challenges, which everyone agreed required effective collective action. The sixth session of the Environment Assembly provided an opportunity to showcase the power of multilateralism to deliver timely, inclusive, science-based solutions to the planet’s worst environmental threats. Rwanda had signed and domesticated over 60 multilateral environmental agreements and monitored their implementation, and he was proud to report that it had complied with all its obligations.

111. In enforcing the environmental agreements to which it was a party, Rwanda had learned that national efforts alone could not save the environment from ever-growing pollution. It therefore joined the members of the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution in calling for a global target to reduce plastic production to sustainable levels, and a dedicated fund to deliver the means of implementation. The Environment Assembly should nurture the “Nairobi spirit” of its fifth session by building on the resolutions and commitments of that critical session, including the plastics treaty resolution coauthored by Peru and Rwanda. He sought support for the two countries’ joint candidacy to host the diplomatic conference for the treaty, saying that the two countries wish to accelerate progress toward a life free from plastic pollution.

## **B. Other statements**

112. At the 3rd to 6th plenary meetings, ministers and other high-level representatives of Member States, and representatives of United Nations entities, intergovernmental organizations, multilateral environmental agreements and non-governmental organizations, delivered statements addressing the theme of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly: “Effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution”. A number of representatives expressed appreciation to all those who had worked hard to prepare for and organize the current session, including the UNEP secretariat, and to the Government and people of Kenya for hosting the session.

113. Many representatives highlighted the timeliness and relevance of the theme of the session, given the pressing need to take affirmative action to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Alarming shifts were being witnessed in rainfall patterns, the intensity of weather events, biodiversity resilience, the acidity levels of oceans, and waste generation, particularly plastics. A number of consequences were already irreversible. By its own actions, humanity was threatening the very foundation of its future survival, as severely altered environments lost the capability to provide beneficial nature-based services, threatening livelihoods worldwide. Destructive and unsustainable production and consumption models failed to take account of external costs in profit and loss calculations. Several speakers noted that while the three main components of the triple planetary crisis had been identified by the international community as particularly worthy of focus, this should not be to the neglect of a wide range of associated issues, including conflict and insecurity, poverty and vulnerability, food insecurity and the disease burden. Indeed, the multiple crises faced by the planet were deeply interconnected, and the complexity of the challenges and the urgent need for global solutions required effective international cooperation within a synergistic and holistic approach.

114. Concerted efforts, creativity and leadership were therefore needed to deliver transformative solutions in an effective, inclusive and sustainable manner. In that regard, the leadership of UNEP, as the primary intergovernmental entity responsible for the environment, was crucial, while the United Nations Environment Assembly must continue to be a beacon of hope as the overarching global forum for enabling humanity to deal with pressing and emerging global environmental issues. All multilateral environmental agreements, measures and initiatives had a role to play in taking synergistic, collaborative action to support the achievement of global environmental targets, including

those enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its associated Sustainable Development Goals. The resolutions adopted by the Environment Assembly at the current session, and, importantly, their implementation, formed a vital component of those actions.

115. The representative of the Basel Convention on the Control of 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 and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants said that the theme of the current session resonated deeply with the implementation of those conventions. Chemicals and wastes were very much part of everyday life, making it easy to disregard their impact. While the multilateral environmental agreements on chemicals and wastes had been instrumental in making them visible through a life-cycle approach, the growing output of plastic wastes and e-wastes, the hundreds of toxic additives to products and the prolific use of highly hazardous pesticides remained a global concern.

116. Several representatives expressed their commitment to supporting UNEP and the global community in championing actions to address environmental action, and examples were offered of the leadership roles that various Member States had playing in that regard by catalysing regional and global initiatives that would contribute to a resilient and sustainable future, including through the contribution of funding. Active and effective international cooperation was the cornerstone of efforts to transition towards sustainable and environmentally friendly economies at national level.

117. Several factors that would bolster and give impetus to that transition were recognized. Science offered the evidence and guidance to design and implement effective and sustainable solutions that protected human health and the environment, and promote inclusive and equitable development. In that regard, UNEP played an important role in strengthening the science-policy interface to prioritize scientific research that could stimulate decision-making on global environmental issues. Pragmatic and achievable solutions were needed in such areas as investing in renewable energy and innovative technologies and promoting ecosystem restoration and conservation. Political will and determination were essential to mobilize the resources necessary for countries to fulfil the commitments made under multilateral environmental agreements. The engagement of all sectors of society and the economy was crucial, including the private sector, civil society, academia and non-governmental organizations. Innovative financing mechanisms were needed, as well as mechanisms to exchange experiences and good practices. Due recognition should be given to the circular economy, and sustainable management of resources, as the main drivers for addressing the triple planetary crisis.

118. Climate change, in particular global warming, was highlighted as one of the great challenges facing the planet at the current time. Many other challenges followed in its wake – sea-level rise and flooding of coastal ecosystems and communities, desertification, ocean acidification and coral bleaching, increased incidence of extreme weather events such as hurricanes and droughts, and changing climatic zones impacting agricultural patterns. Several representatives drew attention to specific habitats and locations that were particularly under threat, including wetlands, forests, lakes, coastal zones, mountain regions and small island developing States. Vulnerable populations had been subject to increasing poverty and poor quality of life.

119. More stringent and effective multilateral measures were needed to boost climate change mitigation and adaptation and move towards a more climate-resilient, low-carbon future. Many Governments had committed to ambitious international agreements in that regard, including the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, but the continuing rise in global temperatures pointed to the need for more urgent, focused action to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5°C and accelerate the net-zero agenda. Measures were needed to facilitate access to reliable, clean, sustainable and affordable energy sources, leaving no one behind. Several representatives stressed the need for approaches that gave due cognizance to climate justice, given that many of the countries hardest hit by the impacts of climate change had little historical responsibility for the carbon emissions driving climate change.

120. The crucial importance of the tropical rainforests was highlighted – tropical forests captured significant quantities of greenhouse gases, and the peatlands of the Congo Basin stored several billion tons of carbon, representing a huge bulwark against climate change on a global scale. Recognizing that, the Congo Basin Climate Commission constituted an exemplary approach for resilient development at the regional level with considerable potential global benefits. It was important therefore to accelerate the operationalization of the Blue Fund for the Congo Basin as an innovative mechanism for funding climate change-resilient projects and achieving the targets of the Paris Agreement. The Three Basins Summit, held in Brazzaville in October 2023, had brought together leaders from the Amazon, the Congo and the Borneo–Mekong basins to agree on cooperative

development and climate action in the three basins while strengthening existing exchanges with other regions.

121. On the second aspect of the triple planetary crisis – biodiversity loss – representatives alluded to many habitats and ecosystems where considerable impacts were being felt, including forests, mangroves, coral reefs and marine environments. Deforestation, desertification and land degradation were impacting vast areas of the planet, and urbanization and excessive exploitation of mineral resources were further compromising the integrity and balance of ecosystems. The world was witnessing the consequences of those activities – the accelerated disappearance of plant and animal species and increasing disruption of natural habitats and ecological cycles.

122. The importance of multilateral instruments in tackling these trends was recognized, including the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat. The creation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework was seen as a particularly promising way forward to guide nations as they developed their biodiversity action plans. Such measures contributed to the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity, ensuring fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources, including associated traditional knowledge.

123. The creation and effective management of marine protected areas was fundamental to the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean, not only safeguarding biodiversity and marine ecosystems but also ensuring the continuous supply of resources essential for human well-being. Innovative mechanisms, such as blue carbon bonds, would help incentivize conservation efforts. The 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 promised to extend protection to previously uncovered areas, and would augment the provisions of the Convention. Attention was drawn to the economic value of marine and coastal environments as a touristic and fishery resource in many locations, and the importance of those functions to local economies. In addition, healthy oceans helped to protect marine biodiversity and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Science played a crucial role in guiding policy development, adaptive management and the spatial planning of marine environments.

124. The representative of the Convention on Biological Diversity, speaking also on behalf of the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions, highlighted the collaborative efforts made by the Liaison Group to ensure that the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework addressed the objectives of the biodiversity-related conventions and complemented the 2030 Agenda and other global agreements. The Bern III Conference on Cooperation among the Biodiversity-related Conventions for the Implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, convened by UNEP in January 2024, had contributed greatly to the development and planning of actions on biodiversity by multiple stakeholders.

125. The representative of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) said that the pledge of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in Colombia in October 2024 – to “make peace with nature” – could be translated into action using existing instruments, and adopting a whole-of-society, integrated approach, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Science-based tools should be the basis of that action, including the IUCN Red Lists and the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions. All voices should be heard, including those of the younger generation and Indigenous People.

126. The representative of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals said that the theme of the current session of the Environment Assembly underscored the fundamental mission of the Convention, namely, to strengthen transboundary, regional and international cooperation for the conservation of migratory species and their habitats across the full range. However, despite success stories, many migratory species had a decreasing population trend due to habitat loss and fragmentation, overexploitation and other negative pressures. A new Global Partnership on Ecological Connectivity had been launched, and further collaboration with other multilateral environmental agreements was essential to address shared challenges.

127. The representative of the World Organization for Animal Health said that action on the triple planetary crisis needed to be taken within a One Health approach that recognized the interconnectivity of the health of humans, animals – both domestic and wild – and the environment itself. In adopting that approach, the World Organization for Animal Health collaborated with UNEP, WHO, FAO and other stakeholders to share expertise and take action on such challenges as illegal trade in wildlife, zoonotic diseases and wildlife-human conflict.

128. Pollution – the third element of the triple planetary crisis – increasingly blighted the planet. The world had recently become aware of the huge scale of plastic pollution in the oceans, including microplastics, threatening marine ecosystems and dependent economic activities such as fishing and tourism. The treatment and disposal of chemicals and wastes, including electronic waste, constituted a mounting challenge.

129. Again, the international community had put in place instruments to combat the threat. The Minamata Convention on Mercury supported national actions and helped build capacity to protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic releases of mercury and its compounds. The newly adopted Global Framework on Chemicals, a comprehensive initiative covering the entire chemical life cycle, offered a promising approach for the responsible management of chemicals, including products and waste. In tackling plastic pollution, many representatives commended the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, pursuant to Environment Assembly resolution 5/14. That instrument should deliver adequate means of implementation that were practical and impactful, taking account of the responsibilities of both the private and public sectors, and recognizing the importance of a full life cycle approach.

130. Many representatives alluded to the complexity of the global environmental challenge. The problems facing the planet and humanity were interwoven and interdependent, requiring multilateral cooperation and multifaceted action. Central to that action was combating poverty through sustainable human development within a climate of respectful cooperation and collaboration between states and societies. War and conflict continued to blight communities and the environment in many locations worldwide. Such crises transcended national borders and could only be resolved in a spirit of multilateralism. The achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the fulfilment of international, regional and national efforts to protect the environment, could only be achieved within a framework of peace and stability. In addition, global action on the triple planetary crisis needed to be implemented in line with the central tenet of the 2030 Agenda, that no one should be left behind. Inclusivity was essential, addressing the needs of vulnerable people and communities.

131. The representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime drew attention to the range of criminal activity that was detrimentally affecting the environment, including illicit logging in tropical rainforests, unauthorized disposal of hazardous waste from illicit mining activities leading to water pollution, adverse human health impacts and increased CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and smuggling and trafficking of endangered species of wildlife. In combating such activities, a multilateral and multisectoral approach was essential, underpinned by evidence-based strategies and the enforcement of commitments. In order to gather that information, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime was undertaking a global analysis on crimes that affect the environment, the early findings of which highlighted the critical need for more data and research on the extent of illegal activities in sectors related to waste, mining, forestry and fisheries. In response, joint action was needed involving international organizations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UNEP.

132. A constant theme of the ministerial statements was the need for financing systems that were properly targeted, effective and based on the principles of equity, common but differentiated responsibility, and respective capabilities. Facing the triple planetary crisis required the recognition of historical responsibilities and climate justice; the establishment of predictable, measurable, accessible, flexible and adequate financial mechanisms; and clear and fair goals and objectives according to respective capacities and human rights. Developing countries needed resources to combat pollution; generate data to inform solutions; develop institutional, technical and regulatory tools for monitoring, control and management; establish robust policies for the recovery and elimination of chemical waste; and strengthen the scientific, technical and political capacity to deal with environmental threats. The special requirements of vulnerable States, such as small island developing States and the least developed countries, needed to be recognized. Effective reform of the international financial system could be achieved by working with development banks to deliver greater impacts for climate, nature and people.

133. Several representatives remarked, with regard to climate change, that the large emitters of greenhouse gases were still not doing enough – emissions continued to rise while the ambition to act urgently and decisively on climate change remained low. The transition away from fossil fuels towards energy-efficient and environmentally friendly systems was still lagging. There was a need for accelerated action to multiply renewable energy capacity and energy efficiency worldwide while providing developing countries with the financial, technological and capacity-building support needed to facilitate a just and equitable energy transition.

134. Increasingly, innovative and targeted funding mechanisms were becoming available. The establishment of a loss and damage fund for developing countries, as decided by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at its twenty-seventh session, assisted those countries in rectifying the consequences of climate change. Countries continued to engage with their nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement. The special programmes financed by GEF had helped many countries to develop and implement environment-related programmes. The enforcing environmental treaties' implementation in African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries (ACP-MEAs) programme had helped participating countries to reap the benefits of improved environmental governance at the national and regional levels. However, the value of such funding could be negated if polluting entities did not change their practices, in which case the socioeconomic and environmental costs could far exceed the amount of funding offered.

135. The representative of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development said that the Bank was fully committed to leveraging resources, expertise and partnerships to advance sustainable development across the regions it served. The Bank invested in climate action in line with the Paris Agreement; supported initiatives to preserve and restore ecosystems, protect endangered species, encourage sustainable land-use practices, and promote economic growth and livelihoods; and was committed to advancing social and economic inclusion.

136. The representative of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) drew attention to the effect of climate change and biodiversity loss on agricultural systems, undermining food security and nutrition worldwide. Small farmers were an important element of food production yet received a very small proportion of climate funding. In response, IFAD had raised its climate finance target, with a particular focus on smallholder farmers, Indigenous communities and rural populations. IFAD also channelled funding from the Green Climate Fund, GEF and the Adaptation Fund to support environmental projects for vulnerable groups.

137. The representative of the International Labour Organization highlighted the fact that climate and environmental change was undermining prospects for growth, poverty reduction, job creation and social justice. On the positive side, the world of work was a key actor and driver of change towards sustainability. Targeted policies and strategies had the potential to create millions of new green jobs in the shift towards circular economies. The newly developed *ILO Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all* provided a framework for the design and implementation of policies that promoted inclusive, sustainable and job-rich economies.

138. The representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights remarked that the current meeting was the first Environment Assembly session to take place since the recognition by the General Assembly of the United Nations that all people had the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. That reflected the growing realization that human rights were critical to effective action to address the multiple planetary crises. Several draft resolutions before the Environment Assembly at the current session referenced human rights, reflecting the fact that operationalizing the right to a healthy environment should be a primary object of environmental action.

139. Many representatives described actions being taken in their countries to combat myriad environmental threats and to fulfil their commitments and responsibilities under multilateral environmental agreements. Such actions included providing an enabling environment for green investment; mainstreaming environmental issues in national strategies, policies and programmes; encouraging the transition to a more resilient, resource-efficient, low-carbon economy; including energy efficiency in urban planning, housing projects and transportation systems; implementing solar, wind and geothermal energy projects; developing national adaptation plans under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; the enhancement of capacity in disaster risk management and preparedness; introducing low-waste technologies into production, and establishing facilities and systems to deal with waste across the life cycle; championing extended producer responsibility to address product life cycle management; enacting legislation to control plastic waste, including the prohibition of single-use plastic bags, as part of the transition towards a circular economy; establishing air quality monitoring stations; introducing biodiversity recovery programmes, including reforestation, wetland regeneration and mangrove, seagrass and coral reef preservation; cooperating with local communities and Indigenous Peoples in protecting the environment, for example the empowerment of local communities in marine protection initiatives; enacting legislation to bolster the enforcement of environmental measures, such as wildlife conservation; the establishment of a national centre of excellence for biodiversity management; and the establishment of protected areas, marine parks and reserves for the protection of biodiversity and wildlife.

140. Regional initiatives were viewed as valuable for supporting national action. For example, the representative of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Centre for Biodiversity said that, since its establishment in 2005, the Centre had been facilitating and strengthening regional action in South-East Asia towards delivering the goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity, while working synergistically with other multilateral environmental agreements to expand partnerships, maximize resources and achieve multiple objectives. The Centre adopted a whole-of-community approach in engaging the private sector, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and women and young people in achieving environmental objectives.

141. Other examples of effective and active regional mechanisms included the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific, the fifth meeting of which, held in Colombo in October 2024, had been focused on success stories and concrete actions to achieve sustainable multilateral actions at national, subregional and regional levels; the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, whose 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent addressed the challenges facing small island developing States in the Pacific region, including marine plastic pollution; the International Conference on Small Island Developing States, the fourth meeting of which would take place in Antigua and Barbuda in May 2024, to review the sustainable development progress of small island developing States and propose a new decade of partnerships and solutions for resilient prosperity; the League of Arab States, whose Arab Environment Forum provided a periodic platform for dialogue between regional stakeholders on environmental matters; and the Economic Cooperation Organization, whose regional initiatives included a high-level dialogue platform on environmental cooperation and the establishment of a clean energy centre.

142. Regarding the way forward as the world continued to struggle with the triple planetary crisis, representatives saw cause for optimism, if certain conditions could be fulfilled. Advancing scientific knowledge, political resolve, and inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions were all described as essential to achieving an improved environmental future. Learning from past lessons, sharing knowledge (including diverse traditional knowledge), ensuring inclusivity, leveraging the necessary resources, and building capacity at all levels of society could all contribute to collective progress. The current session of the Environment Assembly could, through its outcomes, assist in building continued collaboration and effective multilateralism for the well-being of the planet. Only through a proactive, shared and synergistic approach would it be possible to meet current and future challenges and leave a healthier and more liveable planet for future generations.

143. At the 6th plenary meeting, the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea said that the Japanese authorities had systematically discharged over 1 million tons of nuclear pollutants from the Fukushima nuclear power plant into the Pacific Ocean over the last year, which constituted an environmental catastrophe.

144. At the 7th plenary meeting, two representatives spoke in exercise of the right of reply.

145. The representative of Japan, speaking in exercise of the right of reply to the national statement made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, emphasized that the discharge by his country of water treated by the advanced liquid processing system since August 2023 had been performed in compliance with international safety standards, and had negligible radiological impact on people and the environment. In October 2023, an international task force comprised of experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency and various countries had confirmed that the discharge was proceeding as planned. Information on the discharge and its monitoring was available to the public and would continue to be provided to the international community in a transparent manner. His country would continue to engage in discussions based on scientific evidence in the appropriate forums.

146. The representative of the Russian Federation, speaking in exercise of the right of reply to statements made by a number of representatives, including of Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States, and the European Union, recalled that the Environment Assembly was a global forum on the environment that was too important for petty politicking and cheap propaganda.

## C. Summaries of dialogues

147. At the 7th plenary meeting, on the afternoon of Friday, 1 March 2024, the Assembly heard summaries of the key messages of the leadership and multi-stakeholder dialogues. Salina Abraham, Chief of Staff and Advisor to the Chief Executive Officer of the Centre for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry, and moderator of the leadership dialogues, gave a presentation on key aspects of those dialogues; and Andrea Nakova, Project Coordinator for Journalists for Human Rights and a co-moderator of the multi-stakeholder dialogue, gave a presentation on that dialogue.



Summaries of those presentations are set out in annex IV to the present proceedings, without formal editing.

148. The Assembly took note of the summaries.

## **X. Cooperation with multilateral environmental agreements (agenda item 10)**

149. At the 2nd plenary meeting, in the morning of Wednesday, 28 February, the President introduced the item, which was being considered for the first time by the United Nations Environment Assembly. Consideration of the item consisted of a formal opening, at which opening statements were delivered by several high-level speakers, followed by two high-level dialogues on the matter, supported by a note by the secretariat (UNEP/EA.6/INF/6). The first dialogue, on the theme “Strengthening the science policy interface for effective implementation of environmental commitments”, was held in the morning of Wednesday, 28 February, and the second, on the theme “Strengthening cooperation between UNEA, UNEP and MEAs to enhance effective implementation at national level, including through means of implementation” was held in the afternoon of the same day.

150. Opening statements were delivered by Ms. Benali, President of the Environment Assembly; Ms. Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP; Huang Runqiu, President of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity; Cheikh Ndiaye Sylla, President of the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer; Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa; Rolph Payet, Executive Secretary of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, speaking also on behalf of Monika Stankiewicz, Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention on Mercury; Donald Cooper, Director, Transparency Division, Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; and Susan Gardner, Director, Ecosystems Division, UNEP.

151. In her opening remarks, Ms. Benali said that, with less than six years left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the challenges currently faced transcended borders and required global, coordinated action and cooperation. While the common goal was to protect the planet and its ecosystems for current and future generations, the pathways to its achievement were often nuanced and context-specific. Each nation’s circumstances, priorities and approaches in relation to environmental stewardship must be recognized. In a diversity of perspectives lay strengths and expertise that could aid in finding solutions and creating synergies to address global environmental issues.

152. The multilateral environmental agreements were the cornerstone of international cooperation to address shared environmental challenges. They were vital instruments in efforts to achieve a sustainable future and served as platforms to review progress, negotiate solutions and coordinate efforts. The dialogues to be held during the sixth session of the Environment Assembly offered an opportunity to exchange knowledge, share best practices and build partnerships. She urged the Assembly to be guided in its discussions by a spirit of renewed multilateralism and the principles of equity, inclusivity and mutual respect. A new era beckoned of strengthened collaboration and partnerships to address the most pressing environmental challenges of the time and unlock pathways to a more sustainable and resilient future for all.

153. In her statement, Ms. Andersen said that, in the current fragmented and divided world, the Environment Assembly sought to create unity and deliver inclusive multilateral solutions to address the triple planetary crisis. The resolutions and decisions of the Assembly would give impetus to the work of every multilateral environmental agreement. Together, the Assembly and UNEP could serve as a platform to achieve coherence in the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development and the multilateral environmental agreements.

154. The environmental multilateralism family continued to grow, with new instruments, frameworks and initiatives being added to existing agreements. Successes had been achieved, including protecting the ozone layer and slowing climate change. Nevertheless, the triple planetary crisis was accelerating and more must be done, but that could only be achieved by acting as one. Taking action on the climate also entailed taking action on biodiversity, chemicals, pollution and waste. They were interconnected and indivisible, much like the Earth’s systems. The multilateral environmental agreements were akin to threads in a tapestry being woven together to create the picture of a stable climate, healthy nature and a pollution-free planet. Individually, the threads were strong,

albeit somewhat loose, frayed or knotted. Now was the time to knit them together to bring the picture into sharp focus and achieve the dream of a healthy and thriving planet.

155. In his statement, Mr. Huang said that the global environmental challenges currently facing humanity, in particular the triple planetary crisis, were becoming increasingly severe. A comprehensive, collaborative and holistic approach was needed to address them. Multilateral environmental agreements and their synergies had become increasingly important for advancing international environmental governance. He called upon the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to speed up the revision of national biodiversity strategies and action plans, mobilize additional resources and harness the synergies of the multilateral environmental agreements to achieve the goals of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the 30 by 30 target. All stakeholders were encouraged to participate actively in biodiversity governance and promote the implementation of the Framework.

156. The day's discussions would provide an opportunity to deepen exchanges, enhance cooperation and promote full implementation of the multilateral environmental agreements. In the pursuit of those endeavours, he had three suggestions. First, the agreements should synergize their objectives and mandates, establish international coordination and cooperation mechanisms, and enhance communication and collaboration. Second, the implementation of those agreements should be guided by and fully integrated with efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Third, platforms were needed to broaden stakeholder participation, gather wisdom and form synergies in order to address global environment challenges jointly.

157. In his remarks, Mr. Sylla said that the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and its Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer were a point of reference and had long been regarded as among the most successful multilateral environmental agreements. The direct climate benefits of implementing the two ozone treaties could be doubled through a transition to low-global-warming-potential refrigerants. Climate issues were interconnected. The Paris Agreement provided a pathway for reducing pollution, including air pollution, which was often poorly managed at the national level. The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions were a positive example of how to create synergies. At a time when the environment remained the "poor relation" in the budgets of developing countries, there was a growing need for synergies and coordination to respond to the triple planetary crisis.

158. Additional challenges stemmed from the fact that environmental concerns were often subordinated to economic considerations and that the disposal of end-of-life vehicles, equipment and waste by some countries increased the burden on the already fragile economies of others. It was important to mobilize the funds available and ensure that eligibility criteria and underfunding did not stymie countries' efforts to meet their international environmental commitments.

159. Mr. Thiaw said the multilateral environmental agreements must not be implemented in silos, but rather at the national level with the support of the relevant secretariats, international partners and development agencies. As such, UNEP and the Environment Assembly were critical to harmonizing the agreements to tackle the multitude of interconnected crises. The immense land and drought crisis was currently affecting over 3 billion people, causing food insecurity, water scarcity and forced displacements. The health of the land was critical, and the damage inflicted upon it posed serious threats to world peace and the global economy.

160. Efforts to resolve those issues should be addressed in tandem through rapid and transformative actions to build resilience, mitigate climate change, safeguard biodiversity, ensure food security and transform environmental management. Multilateral environmental agreement commitments should also seek to foster synergies with United Nations entities and conventions. For example, aligning land degradation neutrality targets with nationally determined contributions for climate and biodiversity targets could maximize the impact of nature-positive investments and close the gap between commitment and action. Environmental multilateralism remained the best means of tackling interconnected environmental challenges.

161. Mr. Payet said that there was currently an opportunity to find effective, inclusive, mutually reinforcing and sustainable multilateral solutions to address the triple planetary crisis. Evidence of climate change, food waste and poverty, wildlife population decline and air pollution was rife. A paradigm shift was required, through commitments, cooperation and multilateralism. Member States, international organizations, civil society and the private sector all had a role to play in that regard. The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions and the Minamata Convention had carried out numerous initiatives to enhance cooperation with other multilateral environmental agreements, while remaining engaged with their United Nations partners and various regional centres. The current session of the Environment Assembly provided a key platform for collaboration that could translate into impactful

outcomes. Moreover, UNEP and the multilateral environmental agreements were critical to reversing the current dangerous trajectory of the Earth, including through the establishment of sound governance mechanisms and by building capacities that would equip Member States to fulfil their obligations under the various environmental treaties.

162. Mr. Cooper said that effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral action was critical to combating the crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Multilateral environmental agreements were powerful tools in that regard, representing the cornerstone of international cooperation in addressing environmental issues. They served as the framework for collective action in terms of fostering collaboration, sharing responsibilities and safeguarding the planet. Nevertheless, momentous efforts were required to restore progress towards achieving the targets for 2030 and 2050, and they must not be hindered by insufficient climate action or overinvestment in fossil fuels. Fostering synergies and cooperation among the multilateral environmental agreements would be challenging, notably due to divergences in data collection, capacities and goals. However, challenges presented opportunities for innovation and future success. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had demonstrated that, with the social, political and economic will, humankind had the capacity to evolve. Such will must equally be harnessed to address climate-related challenges.

163. In her statement, Ms. Gardner said that there was no more poignant example of the need for cooperation than the oceans and that the regional seas conventions were among the international community's most powerful and long-standing tools. Since the establishment of the Regional Seas Programme in 1974, the conventions had brought together 146 countries with the shared understanding that what happened in one part of the ocean affected everyone. The conventions played an invaluable role as connectors in regional approaches to combating global crises. The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) had contributed to the implementation of regulations on single-use plastic bags in 17 Mediterranean countries, while the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention) had resulted in the designation of over 50,000 square kilometres of marine protected areas since 2010.

164. The conventions and their actions plans were powerful engines for honouring existing global commitments and would support Member States in ratifying the 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 and preparing for its implementation. The conventions had created linkages between those commitments, regional context and local knowledge and were designed to embrace local and regional strengths while promoting a spirit of cooperation. The fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Regional Seas Programme was a time to celebrate their enormous contributions.

165. At the 7th plenary meeting, Patricia Kameri-Mbote, Director of the UNEP Law Division, provided a summary of the high-level dialogues on the multilateral environmental agreements. The summary is set out in annex IV to the present proceedings.

166. The Assembly took note of the summary.

## **XI. Provisional agenda and dates of the seventh session of the Environment Assembly (agenda item 11)**

167. Agenda item 11 and the draft decision related to it were considered by the Committee of the Whole. The report on the work of the Committee of the Whole is set out in annex III to the present proceedings.

168. At its 7th plenary meeting, the Environment Assembly adopted decision 6/7 on the provisional agenda, dates and venue of its seventh session.

## **XII. Adoption of the resolutions, decisions and outcome document of the session (agenda item 12)**

169. At its 7th plenary meeting, on Friday 1 March 2024, the Environment Assembly adopted the ministerial declaration entitled "Effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution" (UNEP/EA.6/HLS.1).

170. Following the adoption, many representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, took the floor to make statements of position on the ministerial declaration.

171. Many of those who spoke expressed the view that the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities should have been mentioned specifically in the declaration. Two of them also said that they would have like to see stronger language on means of implementation.

172. The other concern raised by a number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, was that the declaration failed to specify, in paragraph 12 (f), that the international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution to be developed in accordance with Environment Assembly resolution 5/14 should be based on a comprehensive approach “that addressed the full life cycle of plastics”. Some representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, stressed that Member States should continue to aim for an ambitious outcome of the negotiations on a treaty on plastic pollution. Another representative objected to the reference in paragraph 12 (f) to an “ambitious” instrument, on the grounds that it deviated from the wording in resolution 5/14.

173. Several representatives commented on the text referring to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement. One, expressing concern that the wording in the declaration on climate action being in line with the principles of the Convention might be intended by some Member States to backtracking on achievements under the Paris Agreement, stressed that climate action was now rightly being taken in accordance with the goals of the Paris Agreement, including the 1.5°C goal. His comments were echoed by another representative. Some other representatives said that climate action should reflect the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities, and a third said that it should be rooted in a context of achieving sustainable development and poverty eradication.

174. A representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries said that her constituency would have expected a more ambitious and forward-looking declaration given the general sense of urgency to address the triple planetary crisis, and that the declaration could have better captured the crucial voices of the young people that had participated in the sixth session of the Assembly, including through a reference to the Global Resources Outlook. One representative took issue with the lack of reference to the importance of sand and dust storms, while another noted that the concept of “verifiable” science had been omitted in the version for adoption and he expressed the hope that it would be reinserted into the final version.

175. Also at the 7th plenary meeting, five draft resolutions that had been the subject of informal consultations following the conclusion of the work of the Committee of the Whole were introduced. The representative of Ethiopia introduced a draft resolution on highly hazardous pesticides; the representative of Ukraine introduced a draft resolution on environmental assistance and recovery in areas affected by armed conflicts; the representative of Belgium, speaking on behalf of Sri Lanka and the European Union and its Member States, introduced a draft resolution on effective and inclusive solutions for strengthening water policies to achieve sustainable development in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution; and the representative of Saudi Arabia introduced a draft resolution on 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; and the representative of Costa Rica, speaking also on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, introduced a draft resolution on strengthening ocean efforts to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution. The Assembly agreed to proceed to adopt the draft resolutions introduced by the representatives of Belgium, Saudi Arabia and Costa Rica set out in the advance English versions of the relevant documents.

176. The Environment Assembly then adopted by consensus the resolutions and decisions listed below. The individual resolutions are available in documents UNEP/EA/6/Res.1– UNEP/EA.6/Res.15. They are also available on the website of the Environment Assembly ([www.unep.org/environmentassembly](http://www.unep.org/environmentassembly)), together with decisions 6/1–6/8.

<i>Resolution</i>	<i>Title</i>
6/1	Circularity of a resilient, low-carbon sugar cane agro-industry
6/2	Amendments to the Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environment Facility
6/3	Enhancing the role and viability of regional forums of ministers of the environment and United Nations Environment Programme regional offices in achieving multilateral cooperation in tackling environmental challenges
6/4	Promoting synergies, cooperation or collaboration for national implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and other relevant environmental instruments
6/5	Environmental aspects of minerals and metals

<i>Resolution</i>	<i>Title</i>
6/6	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
6/7	Combating sand and dust storms
6/8	Promoting sustainable lifestyles
6/9	Sound management of chemicals and waste
6/10	Promoting regional cooperation on air pollution to improve air quality globally
6/11	Highly hazardous pesticides
6/12	Environmental assistance and recovery in areas affected by armed conflicts
6/13	Effective and inclusive solutions for strengthening water policies to achieve sustainable development in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution
6/14	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
6/15	Strengthening ocean efforts to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution
<i>Decision</i>	<i>Title</i>
6/1	Adoption of the agenda
6/2	Organization of work
6/3	Accreditation of intergovernmental organizations to the United Nations Environment Assembly
6/4	Credential of representatives
6/5	Contributions of the United Nations Environment Assembly to the meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development
6/6	Management of trust funds and earmarked contributions
6/7	Provisional agenda, date and venue of the seventh session of the Environment Assembly
6/8	Election of the Bureau of the seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

177. Following the adoption of the resolutions and decisions, several representatives expressed their satisfaction at the outcomes of the session and their appreciation to the Presidency and co-facilitators of the contact groups established by the Committee of the Whole for the successful negotiation of the resolutions. One representative summarized the achievements of the session as being its demonstration of environmental stewardship through environmental action; progressive resolutions; inclusive participation; and cooperative action, exemplified by the candid pledge of support and commitment to a successful conduct of business of the Committee of the Whole.

178. Many representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, took the floor to state a position, express reservations or simply give their views on specific resolutions.

179. One representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed in particular the adoption of the resolutions promoting circularity and sustainable lifestyles, which her constituency viewed as indispensable for tackling the triple planetary crisis and achieving a just transition for resilient society. Two representatives said that they were particularly pleased with the adoption of the resolution on the environmental aspects of minerals and metals. One highlighted as especially positive the mandate to establish a digital knowledge hub on minerals and metals and enhance cooperation in the field of minerals and metals among Member States and the request to the Executive Director of UNEP to prepare a report to address lead, cadmium, arsenic and organotins, while the other, acknowledging the work of the Secretary-General's panel on critical minerals, advocated even more rigorous action and called on the international community to work proactively in 2024 towards developing standards for minerals and metals, with a view to adopting a resolution on the matter at the seventh session of the Environment Assembly, in 2025.

180. One representative expressed a reservation with regard to the third preambular paragraph of the resolution on the environmental aspects of minerals and metals, saying that it prejudged the outcome of future dialogue or discussions on the matter.

181. The representatives of El Salvador, Türkiye and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) expressed a reservation with regard to the resolution on strengthening ocean efforts to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution, saying that references therein to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea did not constitute a legal change in the legal position of their individual countries with respect to that Convention, to which their countries were not a party.

182. A number of individual representatives expressed regret that specific draft resolutions had not been adopted.

183. One representative made a statement of position in relation to the resolution on amendments to the Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environment Facility, saying that GEF and its secretariat should be equally responsive to the requests of all developing Member States and facilitate their timely access to financial support in an unhampered and inclusive manner, free from any political considerations, influence and pressures. He also urged the Facility to consider putting in place a mechanism that would enable Member States to track processing of their project proposals at all stages.

### **XIII. Election of officers (agenda item 13)**

184. At its 7th plenary meeting on Friday, 1 March, in accordance with rule 18 of its rules of procedure, the Environment Assembly elected by acclamation the following officers to serve at its seventh session (decision 6/8):

President:	Abdullah Bin Al Amri (Oman)
Vice-Presidents:	Zakia Khattabi (Belgium)
	Fitsum Assefa Adela (Ethiopia)
	Nino Tandilashvili (Georgia)
	Anikó Raisz (Hungary)
	Ali Gholampour (Islamic Republic of Iran)
	Juan Carlos Castro Vargas (Peru)
	Johanna Lissinger Peitz (Sweden)
	Colins Nzovu (Zambia)
Rapporteur:	Joyelle Clarke (Saint Kitts and Nevis)

185. Mr. Amri thanked the outgoing Bureau, the Executive Director, and all the UNEP staff for the trust that they had placed in him. He recognized that such trust came with great responsibility. The monumental environmental challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution could only be addressed through teamwork. As there was no backup plan and no second planet to which humankind could escape, everyone must join with urgency and determination in efforts to safeguard the planet and its natural splendour and to secure a sustainable future for generations to come. He pledged to work diligently to enhance cooperation between UNEP and the multilateral environmental agreements, facilitate fast and easy access to environmental support and financing, address environmental challenges and enhance global environmental protection. He called upon all actors to renounce violence and war, promote constructive dialogue to resolve disputes and direct funding to save ecosystems in order to safeguard the right of future generations to a safe and sustainable planet.

### **XIV. Other matters (agenda item 14)**

186. One representative made a statement condemning Israel for breaching international humanitarian law in Gaza. She announced that her country would sign a memorandum of understanding with the State of Palestine to strengthen the capacity of the Environment Quality Authority to document the environmental situation in the occupied Palestinian territories.

### **XV. Adoption of the report of the session (agenda item 15)**

187. At the 7th plenary meeting, the Environment Assembly adopted the present proceedings on the basis of the draft proceedings that had been circulated, on the understanding that they would be completed and finalized by the Rapporteur, working in conjunction with the secretariat.

### **XVI. Closure of the session (agenda item 16)**

188. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly was declared closed at 6.20 p.m. on Friday, 1 March 2024.

## Annex I

### Outcomes adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its sixth session

<i>Resolution</i>	<i>Title</i>
6/1	Circularity of a resilient, low-carbon sugar cane agro-industry
6/2	Amendments to the Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environment Facility
6/3	Enhancing the role and viability of regional forums of environment ministers and United Nations Environment Programme regional offices in achieving multilateral cooperation in tackling environmental challenges
6/4	Promoting synergies, cooperation or collaboration for national implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and other relevant environmental instruments
6/5	Environmental aspects of minerals and metals
6/6	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
6/7	Combating sand and dust storms
6/8	Promoting sustainable lifestyles
6/9	Sound management of chemicals and waste
6/10	Promoting regional cooperation on air pollution to improve air quality globally
6/11	Highly hazardous pesticides
6/12	Environmental assistance and recovery in areas affected by armed conflicts
6/13	Effective and inclusive solutions for strengthening water policies to achieve sustainable development in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution
6/14	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
6/15	Strengthening ocean efforts to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution
<i>Decision</i>	<i>Title</i>
6/1	Adoption of the agenda
6/2	Organization of work
6/3	Accreditation of intergovernmental organizations to the United Nations Environment Assembly
6/4	Credentials of representatives
6/5	Contributions of the United Nations Environment Assembly to the meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development
6/6	Management of trust funds and earmarked contributions
6/7	Provisional agenda, date and venue of the seventh session of the Environment Assembly
6/8	Election of the Bureau of the seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

## Annex II

### Decisions adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly on 1 March 2024

#### 6/1. Adoption of the agenda

At its 1st plenary meeting, on 26 February 2024, the Environment Assembly adopted the following agenda for the session, on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/EA.6/1):

1. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
2. Credentials of representatives.
3. Report of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.
4. International environmental policy and governance issues.
5. Programme of work and budget and other administrative and budgetary issues.
6. Stakeholder engagement.
7. Contributions to the meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
8. High-level segment.
9. Cooperation with multilateral environmental agreements.
10. Provisional agenda, dates and venue of the seventh session of the Environment Assembly.
11. Adoption of the resolutions, decisions and outcome document of the session.
12. Election of officers.
13. Other matters.
14. Adoption of the report of the session.
15. Closure of the session.

#### 6/2. Organization of work

At its 1st plenary meeting, on 26 February 2024, the Environment Assembly, in accordance with rule 63 of its rules of procedure, established a committee of the whole, open for participation to States Members of the United Nations, members of the specialized agencies and the regional economic integration organizations; allocated agenda item 5, international environmental policy and governance issues, and agenda item 11, provisional agenda, dates and venue of the seventh session of the Environment Assembly to the Committee; and elected by acclamation Norbert Kurilla (Slovakia) as Chair of the Committee and Silvio Albuquerque e Silva (Brazil) as the Rapporteur.

At the same meeting, the Environment Assembly decided that the time limit for statements would be three minutes for statements by representatives of individual delegations, including statements by observers and representatives of major groups and stakeholders; five minutes for statements by representatives speaking on behalf of a group of States; and three minutes for statements in explanation of vote before action and after action on a proposal.

At the same meeting, the Environment Assembly also decided that the right of reply should be exercised at the end of the day whenever two or three meetings had been scheduled for that day and whenever such meetings were devoted to the consideration of the same item or before the conclusion of the consideration of the item, with the number of interventions in the exercise of the right being limited to two per item for any delegation at a given meeting, the first such intervention being limited to three minutes and the second to two minutes.



At the same meeting, the Environment Assembly, further decided that:

- (i) A high-level dialogue on the theme “Strengthening the science policy interface for effective implementation of environmental commitments” would be held on Wednesday, 28 February, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.;
- (ii) A high-level dialogue on the theme “Strengthening cooperation between UNEA, UNEP and MEAs to enhance effective implementation at national level, including through means of implementation” would be held on Wednesday, 28 February, from 3 to 6 p.m.;
- (iii) A leadership dialogue on the theme “Super-highway or still in slow motion: are science, data and digitalization really speeding our transition to a sustainable future?” would be held on Thursday, 29 February, from 3 to 4.30 p.m.;
- (iv) A multi-stakeholder dialogue on the theme “Partnering for the environment: inclusive multilateralism fit for purpose” would be held on Thursday, 29 February, from 4.30 to 6 p.m.;
- (v) A leadership dialogue on the theme “Show me the money: can the global financial system really tackle climate change, nature loss and pollution?” would be held on Friday, 1 March from 10 to 11.30 a.m.;
- (vi) A leadership dialogue on the theme “Alive and kicking: environmental multilateralism is a beacon of hope but is it delivering fast enough?” would be held on Friday, 1 March, from 11.30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

### **6/3. Accreditation of intergovernmental organizations to the United Nations Environment Assembly**

At its 1st plenary meeting, on 26 February 2024, the United Nations Environment Assembly took note of the list of the following intergovernmental organizations that had been accredited to the Environment Assembly pursuant to rule 69 of its rules of procedure:

1. Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Centre for Biodiversity;
2. Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe;
3. Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia;
4. European Bank for Reconstruction and Development;
5. European Space Agency;
6. Gas Exporting Countries Forum;
7. Joint Songwe River Basin Commission;
8. International Plant Protection Convention;
9. International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture;
10. International Whaling Commission;
11. Ministerial Conference on Fisheries Cooperation among African States Bordering the Atlantic Ocean;
12. Organization of Southern Cooperation;
13. Organization of the Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries;
14. Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries;
15. World Organization for Animal Health.

### **6/4. Credentials of representatives**

At its 4th plenary meeting, on 29 February 2024, the Environment Assembly approved the report of the Bureau on credentials and accepted the credentials of Member States.

## 6/5. Contributions of the United Nations Environment Assembly to the meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development

At the 1st plenary meeting, on Monday, 26 February, the Environment Assembly, on the recommendation of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives, decided to request the Committee of Permanent Representatives to consider and approve written contributions to the meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development to be held in 2024 and 2025.

## 6/6. Management of trust funds and earmarked contributions

*The United Nations Environment Assembly,*

*Having considered* the note by the secretariat on the implementation of decision 3/3 of 6 December 2017 on the management of trust funds and earmarked contributions,<sup>2</sup>

*Recalling* that, in decision 3/3, it requested the Executive Director, in consultation with the relevant parties and/or donors, as appropriate and in accordance with the terms of the respective agreement or fund, to decide on reassigning the balances in inactive trust funds when the activities for which they were established had ended, with a view to supporting the implementation of appropriate subprogrammes of the agreed programme of work,

1. *Notes with appreciation* the progress made in the implementation of decision 3/3 through the closure of the inactive trust funds and the reassignment of the balances to the relevant activities;
2. *Notes* that, in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations, the United Nations Environment Programme carries out the function of administering trust funds on the basis of the principle of full cost recovery of administrative costs;
3. *Notes and approves* the establishment of the following trust funds:
  - (a) CBC – General trust fund for the Caribbean Biological Corridor Initiative, with an expiry date of 15 August 2036;
  - (b) CSS – General trust fund for climate stability, with no fixed expiry date;
  - (c) LHN – General trust fund for living in harmony with nature, with no fixed expiry date;
  - (d) MOL – General trust fund for the core activities of the Fifth Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law (Montevideo Programme V), with an expiry date of 31 December 2030;
  - (e) PFP – General trust fund for a pollution-free planet, with no fixed expiry date;
4. *Notes* that the extension of trust funds is an administrative matter that falls under the delegation of the Executive Director and hence will, as of the seventh session of the Environment Assembly, no longer require a decision by Member States, and, to facilitate the transition between sixth and seventh sessions, agrees to extend all existing trust funds to 31 December 2030 unless otherwise requested by the appropriate authorities, in accordance with the following list:

### I

#### **Trust funds in support of the programme of work of the United Nations Environment Programme**

- (a) AFB – Technical cooperation trust fund for United Nations Environment Programme activities as a multilateral implementing entity of the Adaptation Fund Board (AFB);
- (b) AML – General trust fund for the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment;
- (c) BPL – Technical cooperation trust fund for the implementation of the agreement with Belgium (financed by the Government of Belgium);
- (d) CLL – Trust fund to support the activities of the Climate Technology Centre and Network;

<sup>2</sup> UNEP/EA.6/INF/16.

- (e) CML – Trust fund for the special programme to support institutional strengthening at the national level to enhance implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management;
- (f) ECL – Technical cooperation trust fund to support achievement of Contribution Agreement No. 21.0401/2011/608174/SUB/E2, the Strategic Cooperation Agreement between the European Commission Directorate-General for the Environment and the United Nations Environment Programme (covering ENRTP priority 3.1 – Strengthening Environment Governance);
- (g) ESS – Technical cooperation trust fund for the implementation by the United Nations Environment Programme of ecosystem-based adaptation (EBA);
- (h) EUL – Technical cooperation trust fund to support the achievement of Contribution Agreement No. DCI-ENV/2010/258-800, the Strategic Cooperation Agreement between the European Commission Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation and the United Nations Environment Programme (covering environment and sustainable management of natural resources, including energy, ENRTP priorities 1, 2 and 3.3, “Support for mainstreaming”);
- (i) FSL – Technical cooperation trust fund to support the implementation of the Seed Capital Assistance Facility;
- (j) IAL – Technical cooperation trust fund for the Ireland Aid Multilateral Environment Fund for Africa (financed by the Government of Ireland);
- (k) IEL – Technical cooperation trust fund for priority projects to improve the environment in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (financed by the Government of the Republic of Korea);
- (l) MCL – General trust fund in support of the preparation of a global assessment of mercury and its compounds;
- (m) REL – Technical cooperation trust fund for the promotion of renewable energy in the Mediterranean region (financed by the Government of Italy);
- (n) SCP – Technical cooperation trust fund for the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns;
- (o) SML – General trust fund for the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management: Quick Start Programme;<sup>3</sup>
- (p) WPL – General trust fund to provide support to the Global Environment Monitoring System/Water Programme office and to promote its activities;

## II

### **Trust funds in support of the multilateral environmental agreements and action plans**

#### **A. Trust funds administered by the secretariat of the Basel Convention on the Control of 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 and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants**

- (a) BCL – Trust fund for the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal;
- (b) BDL – Trust fund to assist developing countries and other countries in need of technical assistance in the implementation of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal;

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<sup>3</sup> UNEP is revising the terms of reference for the SML trust fund following a request made by the International Conference on Chemicals Management at its fifth session urging UNEP to create a new trust fund. The name of the trust fund will be amended to “Trust fund in support of activities on the Global Framework on Chemicals”. UNEP opted to use the existing trust fund rather than initiating the establishment of an entirely new trust fund.

- (c) ROL – General trust fund for the operational budget of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade;
- (d) RVL – Special trust fund for the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade;
- (e) SCL – General trust fund for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, its subsidiary bodies and the Convention secretariat;
- (f) SVL – Special trust fund for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, its subsidiary bodies and the Convention secretariat;

## **B. Trust funds administered by the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity**

- (a) BBL – General trust fund for the core programme budget for the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing;
- (b) BEL – General trust fund for additional voluntary contributions in support of approved activities under the Convention on Biological Diversity;
- (c) BGL – General trust fund for the core programme budget for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety;
- (d) BYL – General trust fund for the Convention on Biological Diversity;
- (e) BZL – General trust fund for voluntary contributions to facilitate the participation of parties in the process of the Convention on Biological Diversity;
- (f) VBL – General trust fund for voluntary contributions to facilitate the participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the work of the Convention on Biological Diversity;

## **C. Trust funds administered by the secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora**

- (a) CTL – Trust fund for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora;
- (b) QTL – Support of activities related to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora;

## **D. Trust funds administered by the secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals**

- (a) AVL – General trust fund for voluntary contributions in respect of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds;
- (b) AWL – General trust fund for the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds;
- (c) BAL – General trust fund for the conservation of small cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas;
- (d) BTL – General trust fund for the Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats;
- (e) MRL – Technical cooperation trust fund on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia;
- (f) MSL – Trust fund for the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals;
- (g) MVL – General trust fund for voluntary contributions in support of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals;
- (h) QFL – General trust fund for voluntary contributions in respect of the Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats;
- (i) QVL – General trust fund in respect of the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas;

(j) SMU – trust fund to support the activities of the secretariat of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks;

**E. Trust fund administered by the secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury**

(a) MCP – Specific trust fund of the Minamata Convention on Mercury to support capacity-building and technical assistance in accordance with Article 13;

**F. Trust funds administered by the Ozone secretariat**

(a) MPL – Trust fund for the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer;

(b) QOL – Support of the activities of the Ozone Secretariat;

(c) SOL – General trust fund for financing activities on research and systematic observation for the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer;

(d) VCL – Trust fund for the Vienna Convention for the Protection of Ozone Layer;

**G. Trust funds administered by the secretariat of the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa**

(a) BML – General trust fund for the core programme budget of the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa;

(b) BRL – Trust fund for the revolving fund activities of the Bamako Convention;

(c) BWL – Special trust fund for voluntary contributions in support of the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa;

**H. Trust funds administered by the secretariat of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians**

(a) CAP – Trust fund for the core budget of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians and related protocols;

(b) CAR – Trust fund for the core budget of the Carpathian Convention;

**I. Trust funds administered by the secretariat of the Convention for Cooperation in the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern Africa Region (Abidjan Convention)**

(a) QAC – Support of the Convention for Cooperation in the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern Africa Region;

(b) WAL – Trust fund for the protection, management and development of the marine and coastal environment of the Atlantic coast of the West, Central and Southern Africa region;

**J. Trust funds administered by the secretariat of the Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Eastern African Region (Nairobi Convention)**

(a) EAL – Regional seas trust fund for the Eastern African region;

(b) QAW – Support of the action plan for the protection, management and development of the marine and coastal environment of the Eastern African Region;

**K. Trust funds administered by the secretariat of the Caribbean Environment Programme and the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention) and its protocols**

- (a) CRL – Regional trust fund for implementation of the Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme;
- (b) QCL – Trust fund for support of the Cartagena Convention Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme;

**L. Trust funds administered by the coordinating unit for the Action Plan for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Sustainable Development of the Coastal Areas of the Mediterranean**

- (a) CAL – Support of the Mediterranean Action Plan (financed by the Government of Greece);
- (b) MEL – Trust fund for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution;
- (c) QML – Support of the Mediterranean Action Plan;

**M. Trust funds administered by the coordinating body of the Action Plan for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment and Coastal Areas of the East Asian Seas (COBSEA)**

- (a) ESL – Regional trust fund for implementation of the Action Plan for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment and Coastal Areas of the East Asian Seas;
- (b) QEL – Support of the Action Plan for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment and Coastal Areas of the East Asian Seas;

**N. Trust funds administered by the regional coordinating unit for the Action Plan for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment the Northwest Pacific Region (NOWPAP)**

- (a) PNL – General trust fund for the Action Plan for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal environment of the Northwest Pacific Region;
- (b) QNL – Support of the Northwest Pacific Action Plan;

5. *Requests* the Executive Director to regularly brief the Committee of Permanent Representatives on matters related to the management of trust funds, as appropriate.

**6/7. Provisional agenda, dates and venue of the seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly**

*The United Nations Environment Assembly,*

*Recalling* General Assembly resolutions 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972, 66/288 of 27 July 2012, 67/213 of 21 December 2012, 67/251 of 13 March 2013, 68/215 of 20 December 2013, 69/223 of 19 December 2014, 71/231 of 21 December 2016, 73/260 of 22 December 2018, 74/222 of 19 December 2019, 76/208 of 17 December 2021 and 77/168 of 14 December 2022,

*Recalling also* General Assembly resolutions 47/202 A (para. 17) of 22 December 1992, 54/248 of 23 December 1999, 56/242 of 24 December 2001, 57/283 B (paras. 9–11 of section II) of 15 April 2003, 61/236 (para. 9 of section II A) of 22 December 2006, 62/225 (para. 9 of section II A) of 22 December 2007, 63/248 (para. 9 of section II A) of 24 December 2008, 64/230 (para. 9 of section II A) of 22 December 2009, 65/245 (para. 10 of section II A) of 24 December 2010, 67/237 (para. 13 of section II A) of 28 January 2013, 71/262 (para. 27 of section II and para. 102 of section V) of 23 December 2016, 73/270 (para. 29 of section II) of 22 December 2018, 74/252 (para. 29 of section II and para. 117 of section V) of 27 December 2019, 75/244 (para. 31 of section II and para. 121 of section V) of 31 December 2020, 76/237 (para. 31 of section II and para. 120 of section V) of 24 December 2021, 77/255 (para. 30 of section II and para. 118 of section V) of 30 December 2022,

77/263 (para. 4 of section VIII) of 30 December 2022 and 78/245 (para. 33 of section II and para. 120 of section V) of 22 December 2023,

*Taking into account* Governing Council decisions 27/1 and 27/2 of 22 February 2013, as well as United Nations Environment Assembly resolutions 1/2 of 27 June 2014 and 2/22 of 27 May 2016 and decisions 3/2 of 6 December 2017, 4/2 of 15 March 2019 and 5/3 of 23 February 2021,

*Recognizing* the importance of the implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development entitled “The future we want”, and welcoming the progress made, including the establishment of the United Nations Environment Assembly,

*Recognizing also* the political declaration of the special session of the United Nations Environment Assembly to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme and stressing the importance of continued action,

*Welcoming* the progress made in the implementation of the outcome of the stocktaking meeting for the process for review by the Committee of Permanent Representatives of the Environment Assembly and its subsidiary bodies, as endorsed in paragraph 1 of Environment Assembly decision 5/4 of 2 March 2022, with a view to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the governing bodies of the United Nations Environment Programme,

*Recalling* decision 5/2 of 23 February 2021 on the medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025 and the programme of work and budget for the biennium 2022–2023,

*Recalling also* decision 5/4 of 2 March 2022 on the provisional agenda, dates and venue of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly,

*Recalling further* General Assembly resolution 75/233 of 30 December 2020 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system,

1. *Decides*, without prejudice to the provisions of rule 1 of the rules of procedure of the Environment Assembly, to hold the seventh session of the Assembly at the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme, in Nairobi, from 8 to 12 December 2025, and recognizes that those dates have been agreed upon on an exceptional basis as they do not allow for holding the seventh session on a biennial basis and have an impact on the term of the office of its Bureau;

2. *Also decides* that, pursuant to paragraph 10 of Governing Council decision 27/2 of 22 February 2013, the seventh meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives will take place from 1 to 5 December 2025 and requests the Committee of Permanent Representatives to discuss, in consultation with the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and decide on the format and agenda of the seventh session of the Assembly;

3. *Approves* the provisional agenda for the seventh session as follows:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Credentials of representatives.
4. Report of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.
5. International environmental policy and governance issues.
6. Programme of work and budget; other administrative and budgetary issues.
7. Stakeholder engagement.
8. Contributions to the meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
9. High-level segment.
10. Cooperation with multilateral environmental agreements.
11. Provisional agenda, dates and venue of the eighth session of the Environment Assembly.
12. Adoption of the resolutions, decisions and outcome document of the session.
13. Election of officers.

14. Other matters.
15. Adoption of the report.
16. Closure of the session.

4. *Requests* the Committee of Permanent Representatives, in consultation with the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly, to contribute to the preparation of the annotations to the provisional agenda set out in paragraph 3 above;

5. *Requests* the Bureau of the Environment Assembly, in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives, to define a theme for the seventh session of the Environment Assembly no later than 12 months in advance of the seventh session;

6. *Strongly urges* Member States to submit, in line with Environment Assembly decision 5/4, draft resolutions for consideration by the Environment Assembly at its seventh session, and to do so preferably at least 10 weeks in advance of the seventh session, taking into account the theme of the session and the limited time and resources available for the negotiation of the draft resolutions during the seventh meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives and the seventh session of the Assembly, without prejudice to the rules of procedure of the Assembly, in particular rule 44;

7. *Encourages* Member States to seek gender balance in the distribution of the offices of President and members of the Bureau of the Environment Assembly as well as those of the Chair and members of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, where applicable, and to support gender balance in the composition of delegations to the sessions of the Environment Assembly, the meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and other related intergovernmental meetings;

8. *Welcomes* the report of the Executive Director on the implementation of decision 5/2,<sup>4</sup> in which the Environment Assembly requested the Executive Director, in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives, to submit for consideration and approval by the Assembly at its sixth session a prioritized, results-oriented and streamlined programme of work for the biennium 2024–2025, and the report of the Executive Director on the implementation of decision 5/4 of 2 March 2022, in which the Environment Assembly decided to extend the programme of work for the period 2022–2023 by two years, to the end of 2025, with the budget and targets being pro-rated accordingly;<sup>5</sup>

9. *Requests* the Executive Director, through inclusive and regular consultation with Member States and, as appropriate, relevant stakeholders, to prepare a draft programme of work and budget for the period 2026–2027 and a draft medium-term strategy for the period 2026–2029, fully taking into account the views of Member States and making every effort to reflect consensual views, for consideration and approval by the Environment Assembly at its seventh session, following the established processes as set out in paragraph 11 of Governing Council decision 27/2.

## **6/8. Election of the Bureau of the seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly**

At its 7th plenary meeting, on 1 March 2024, the Environment Assembly, in accordance with rule 18 of its rules of procedure, elected Abdullah Bin Al Amri (Oman) as President of the Environment Assembly; Fitsum Assefa Adela (Ethiopia), Ali Gholampour (Islamic Republic of Iran), Zakia Khattabi (Belgium), Colins Nzovu (Zambia), Johanna Lissinger Peitz (Sweden), Anikó Raisz (Hungary), Nino Tandilashvili (Georgia) and Juan Carlos Castro Vargas (Peru) as Vice-Presidents; and Joyelle Clarke (Saint Kitts and Nevis) as Rapporteur; all for a term beginning at the closure of the sixth session and expiring at the closure of the seventh session.

<sup>4</sup> UNEP/EA.6/INF/15.

<sup>5</sup> UNEP/EA.6/13.



## Annex III

# Report of the Committee of the Whole at the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

## Report of the Committee of the Whole

**Rapporteur: Silvio Albuquerque e Silva (Brazil)**

### Introduction

1. At the 1st plenary meeting of its sixth session, in the morning of Monday, 26 February 2024, the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme established a committee of the whole to consider the draft resolutions and draft decisions prepared by the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) at its sixth meeting under items 5 and 11 that remained to be finalized for consideration and possible adoption by the Environment Assembly.

2. In accordance with the decision of the Environment Assembly, the Committee of the Whole held 3 meetings between Monday, 26 February, and Wednesday, 28 February 2024. As decided by the Environment Assembly, the Committee was chaired by Norbert Kurilla (Slovakia) and Silvio Jose Albuquerque e Silva (Brazil) served as Rapporteur.

### I. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

3. The Chair of the Committee of the Whole opened the meeting at 1.15 p.m. on Monday, 26 February 2024.

4. The Committee adopted its agenda, on the basis of the draft provisional agenda (UNEP/EA.6/CW/1).

### II. Organization of work

5. At its 1st plenary meeting, in the afternoon of Monday, 26 February 2024, the Committee agreed to establish two contact groups with a view to finalizing, by Wednesday, 28 February 2024, the outstanding draft decisions and draft resolutions for consideration and possible adoption by the Environment Assembly at its sixth session.

6. The Chair proposed a general approach to the Committee's work, summarized in eight guiding principles that were aimed at harmonizing and streamlining the negotiation process during the work of the Committee and maximizing the conditions for a successful outcome to its work.

7. Statements were made by the representatives of the Russian Federation, Switzerland and the United States of America.

8. The Committee agreed to conduct its work in accordance with the following eight guiding principles:

(a) For each draft resolution or decision, the contact group in the cluster was to agree on which document would form the basis of the negotiations at the outset of its meeting, based on the recommendation of the Co-Chair of the contact group;

(b) In the absence of an agreement, negotiations were to resume based on the most recent version of the draft document, as introduced by the co-facilitators of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives before the close of its sixth meeting, on Friday, 24 February 2024, with the content of the non-paper integrated where available;

(c) Delegations were encouraged to respect the time allocation proposed by the Co-Chairs for each draft resolution;

(d) Delegations were encouraged to give particular priority to discussing operative paragraphs and to avoid spending more time on preambular parts;

(e) Delegations were encouraged to refrain from proposing that any new ideas or concepts be added to the draft documents at the current late and advanced stage of negotiations;

(f) Delegations should be given sufficient time to review new versions of the drafts, as made available on the portal;

(g) Given the large number of draft documents under consideration, it was proposed that additional informal-informal consultations take place in parallel with the meetings of the two contact groups, on the condition that the results of such consultations were duly and fully reported to the contact groups or to the Committee for further consideration before any possible action or decision was taken;

(h) The Co-Chairs of the contact groups were encouraged to coordinate with each other and, with the help of the Secretariat, as far as possible to ensure consistency with regard to the use of agreed legal concepts and definitions.

### III. International environmental policy and governance

9. At its 1st plenary meeting, on Monday, 26 February 2024, the Committee agreed to establish two contact groups with a view to finalizing, by the afternoon of Wednesday, 28 February 2024, the 2 outstanding draft decisions and 19 outstanding draft resolutions for consideration and possible adoption by the Environment Assembly at its sixth session.

10. It was agreed that the Co-Chairs and the work of the contact groups would be as follows:

(a) Contact group 1, to be co-chaired by Nana Ama Owusuaa Afriyie Kankam (Ghana), Rohit Vadhvana (India), Yume Yorita (Japan) and Gudi Alkemade (Kingdom of the Netherlands), would address the draft resolutions entitled “Highly hazardous pesticides”; “Sound management of chemicals and waste”; “Promoting regional cooperation on air pollution to improve air quality globally”; “Combating sand and dust storms”; “Solar radiation modification”; “Strengthening international efforts to halt land degradation, restore degraded lands and increase ecosystem and communities drought resilience”; “Development of criteria, norms, standards and guidelines for nature-based solutions to support sustainable development”; “Strengthening ocean and seas governance to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution”; and “Effective and inclusive solutions for strengthening water policies to achieve sustainable development in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution”.

(b) Contact group 2, to be co-chaired by Robert Bunbury (Canada), Alejandro Montero (Chile), Nader Radi Abd-alkareem Al-Tarawneh (Jordan), Tobias Ogweno (Kenya), Karin Snellman (Sweden) and Felista Rugambwa (United Republic of Tanzania), would address the draft resolutions entitled “Fostering national action to address global environmental challenges through increased cooperation between UNEA, UNEP and MEAs”; “Enhancing the role and viability of regional environment ministerial forums and regional offices in achieving multilateral cooperation in tackling environmental challenges”; “Promoting synergistic approaches to address the interlinked global crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution and support sustainable development”; “Effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions towards climate justice”; “Stepping up efforts to accelerate transitioning domestically, regionally and globally to circular economies”; “Environmental aspects of metals and minerals”; “Environmental assistance and recovery in areas affected by armed conflicts”; “Behavioural changes towards sustainable lifestyles”; “Circularity of a resilient, low-carbon sugar cane agro-industry; and amendments to the Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environment Facility”. It would also address the draft decision on the management of trust funds and earmarked contributions.

11. At the 2nd plenary meeting, in the evening of Tuesday, 27 February 2024, the Co-Chairs of the contact groups delivered oral reports on the progress made by the contact groups.

12. Statements were made by the representatives of the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

13. The Senior Legal Advisor delivered a statement in response to a request for information.

14. Additional statements were made by the representatives of Brazil, Cameroon, Kenya and Portugal.

15. The Committee endorsed two finalized draft resolutions on the circularity of a resilient, low-carbon sugar cane agro-industry and on amendments to the Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environment Facility, as well as the finalized draft decision on the management of trust funds and earmarked contributions, for consideration and possible adoption by the Environment Assembly.

16. At the 3rd plenary meeting, in the evening of Wednesday, 28 February 2024, the Committee approved eight finalized draft resolutions on enhancing the role and viability of regional forums of environment ministers and United Nations Environment Programme regional offices in achieving multilateral cooperation in tackling environmental challenges, on promoting synergies through collaboration and coordination, to address the interlinked global crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution and supporting sustainable development, environmental aspects of metals and minerals, 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, combating sand and dust storms, behavioural changes towards sustainable lifestyles, promoting regional cooperation on air pollution to improve air quality globally and the sound management of chemicals and waste for consideration and possible adoption by the Environment Assembly.

17. The representative of Switzerland, the proponent of the resolution on solar radiation modification, withdrew the resolution from consideration owing to a lack of consensus.

18. The Senior Legal Advisor provided information on possible ways forward for draft resolutions for which no consensus had been reached.

19. It was agreed that further consideration of the remaining draft resolutions, on highly hazardous pesticides; strengthening international efforts to halt land degradation, restore degraded lands and increase ecosystem and communities' resilience to drought; development of criteria, norms, standards and guidelines for nature-based solutions to support sustainable development; strengthening ocean and seas governance to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution; effective and inclusive solutions for strengthening water policies to achieve sustainable development in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution; promoting synergistic approaches to addressing the interlinked global crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution and supporting sustainable development; effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions towards climate justice; stepping up efforts to accelerate transitioning domestically, regionally and globally to circular economies; and environmental assistance and recovery in areas affected by armed conflicts, should continue on an informal basis with a view to presenting consensual text for consideration and possible adoption by the Environment Assembly.

#### **IV. Provisional agenda, dates and venue of the seventh session of the Environment Assembly**

20. At the 1st plenary meeting, in the afternoon of Monday, 26 February, the Committee decided that the draft decision on the provisional agenda, date and venue of the seventh session of the Environment Assembly would be addressed by contact group 2.

21. At the 2nd plenary meeting, in the evening of Tuesday, 27 February, the Committee endorsed the finalized draft decision on the provisional agenda, dates and venue of the seventh session of the Environment Assembly for consideration and possible adoption by the Environment Assembly.

#### **V. Adoption of the report**

22. At the 3rd plenary meeting, on the evening of Wednesday, 28 February, the Committee adopted the report of the Rapporteur and entrusted the Rapporteur and the secretariat with its completion.

#### **VI. Closure of the meeting**

23. The Chair closed the meeting at 12.45 a.m. on 29 February 2024.

## Annex IV

### Summaries of the multi-stakeholder and leadership dialogues held during the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly\*

#### A. Summary of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) Day – High-Level Dialogues, held on Wednesday, 28 February 2024 at the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

##### Introduction

At the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6), the first-ever Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) Day was held on Wednesday 28 February 2024. The MEAs Day started with an Opening Ceremony followed by two consecutive High-Level Dialogues related to the theme of UNEA-6 which was “Effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution”. The first Dialogue entitled “Strengthening the science policy interface for effective implementation of environmental commitments” was held from 10 am to 1 pm and the second entitled “Strengthening cooperation between UNEA, UNEP and MEAs to enhance effective implementation at the national level including through means of implementation” was held from 3 pm to 6 pm. Both dialogues included panel discussions and brought together Member States, representatives of MEAs, Presidents of governing bodies of various MEAs and major groups in an open and honest exchange of views. This note provides key points from each dialogue.

#### 1. Strengthening the science policy interface for effective implementation of environmental commitments

The dialogue was moderated by Mr. Axel Threlfall, Editor-at-large, of Reuters.

##### Key Points and call to action

- (a) **Increased cooperation amongst MEAs, UNEP and science-policy panels and platforms is essential:** Science is evolving rapidly, as evidenced by assessments and reports, and securing political visibility and coherence of messaging remains a challenge. Science-policy-society links are iterative and continue to evolve with changing socio-political, economic, and environmental changes. Increased cooperation amongst MEAs, UNEP and science-policy panels and platforms is imperative to pave the way for integrated approaches and strengthened decision-making to address environmental challenges at large. Strengthened consultations are needed amongst chairs of UNEA and MEA governing bodies and MEA scientific and technical subsidiary bodies as well as other UN scientific advisory bodies, both within and across thematic clusters at regional and global levels.
- (b) **Policy making related to uptake of science for effective implementation of MEAs and UNEA resolutions is to be strengthened:** It is critical that the timing and outreach of outcomes of the scientific work transmitted to policymakers are responsive to the needs of countries. The communication on scientific outcomes should be tailored to the different target groups to ensure effective uptake. More focus should be put on the ways in which science-policy interface findings are communicated, including sharing findings and mechanisms to promote cross-fertilization between science-policy interfaces and among multiple stakeholders and processes.
- (c) **UNEA, UNEP and MEAs are to work together more effectively to strengthen science policy interfaces at the national level:** For national action to be effective, scientific information serving various processes need to be connected. Opportunities for better exchange of outcomes, implementation experiences, and impacts are sometimes beyond the mandates of individual panels and MEAs. However, more coordination is needed on that front. National political structures, election cycles, and political periods play a role and may affect the timing and political will to uptake of scientific knowledge and information.

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\* The summaries of the dialogues are presented without formal editing.

- (d) **The role of traditional knowledge and science is key** to strengthening science policy interfaces at local and national levels.

## 2. **Strengthening cooperation between UNEA, UNEP and MEAs to enhance effective implementation at the national level including through means of implementation**

The dialogue was moderated by Ibrahim Thiaw, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The discussion focused on two main topics:

- (i) Enhancing cooperation for effective implementation at the national level and  
 (ii) Strengthening means of implementation for effective implementation at national level.

### **Key Points and call to action**

- (a) **Strengthening cooperation and coordination among the MEAs as well as between UNEP and the MEAs accelerates implementation at national level.** Coordination between MEA national focal points and other relevant authorities needs to be strengthened to address the environmental challenges coherently at the national level where the implementation of the environmental commitments takes place. Cooperation between UNEP, MEAs and the UN system facilitates the work of national governments in coordinating among themselves. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework is an important tool in bringing various partners together. Leadership, communication, and coordination are pivotal factors in driving collaborative efforts at the national and regional levels. Monitoring and collection of data at national level is important for feeding back to the next cycle of UNEA, COPs and other international decision-making bodies.
- (b) **New sources of financing and innovative funding mechanisms are required as the foundation for skyrocketing implementation,** such as incentivizing central banks and private sector, in addition to traditional international funding sources. The collaboration between UNEP, multilateral development banks and international financial institutions is key. There is a continued need to mobilize financial resources and explore innovative financing mechanisms to support environmental initiatives with reduced bureaucracy. Strategies to enhance capacity-building and resource mobilization are crucial for effective environmental management and conservation efforts, for example enhancing carbon sinks and markets or utilizing non-traditional funding sources such as the private sector or start-ups. The central banks and the private sector should get involved more in multilateral funds and invest in ecosystem preservation. Coordination among the various financing and funding mechanisms would facilitate effective implementation of environmental projects.
- (c) **Inclusive dialogue and engagement of diverse stakeholders is essential for developing holistic and sustainable environmental solutions.** In addition to broad involvement of stakeholders in national planning and implementation, indigenous knowledge should be considered when translating environmental and development agreements into policies and national laws.
- (d) **UNEA, with its universal membership, and UNEP have a unique convening role of joining efforts** to achieve the common objectives on climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. UNEA and UNEP have the opportunity to take a leadership role to support coherent and effective implementation of MEAs at the national level and facilitate the diverse use of means of implementation to foster implementation.

## **B. Summaries of the multi-stakeholder and leadership dialogues held at the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly**

As part of the UNEA6 High-Level Segment 3, Leadership Dialogues took place on the theme of “Effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution”, as follows:

### **1. Leadership Dialogue 1: “Super-highway or still in slow-motion: Are science, data and digitalization really speeding our transition to a sustainable future?” - Thursday 29 February 2024, 15:00 to 16:30 EAT**

The moderator, Ms. Salina Abraham, welcomed participants and opened the Leadership Dialogue with a short introduction to its theme: are science, data and digitalization really speeding our transition to a sustainable future? She encouraged participants to have an honest discussion about how

to improve the use of data and digital services to speed up the identification and implementation of solutions we so urgently need to solve the triple planetary crisis.

During the keynote address, H.E. Dr. Yasmine Fouad, Minister of Environment, Arab Republic of Egypt, shared experiences from Egypt, underscoring the urgent need to close the gap between sustainability and socioeconomic development. She shared key policy shifts that can be actualized by leveraging science, data, and digitalization to this end, including projecting investment opportunities that can be tapped from sustainability, prioritizing to address the interconnectedness and cascading nature of the triple planetary crises, where priority is given to solutions that create synergy and amplify impact across different commitments; building on the success of flagships, where tools and technologies applied in the Early Warning For All initiative (EW4All) are leveraged to monitor nature/biodiversity loss, pollution, and the cascading risk of the triple crises, and also monitor solutions and their investment enablers to enhance uptake; and enhancing the role of indigenous communities through targeted incentives. There is, therefore, an urgent need for early warnings to cover against nature/biodiversity loss & pollution and the need to translate early warning data into early action to protect, restore, and conserve environmental resources, which calls for the Early Warning for the Environment (EWE) approach.

She emphasized the role of digitalization in bridging the gap between science, policy, and investments. The technologies and tools applied for the EW4All should also be enhanced to cover early warning that forestalls and minimizes both rapid and slow-onset risks arising from nature/biodiversity loss, pollution, and the cascading risk of the triple crises. They should also be leveraged to analyse solutions to risks and the investment enablers needed to enhance uptake of the solutions, so we ensure we furnish decision makers at all levels with integrated information packs that cover risk, solution, and investment uptake to enhance implementation. We need to embrace This Early Warning for Environment Approach, building on EW4All.

Dr. Jim Skea, Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), delved into the current state of climate change science and its challenges of translating this knowledge into actionable policies. He highlighted the pivotal role of the IPCC in raising awareness and driving global climate action. Dr. Skea pointed out that while the world is listening, there is a need to better understand and internalize the implications of the messages being communicated.

Dr. Skea emphasized the urgency of the climate crisis, noting that the IPCC has been sounding the alarm for years. He mentioned that the IPCC's Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C from 2018 introduced the concept of net-zero emissions, which has since gained traction globally. Despite some progress, global emissions are still on the rise, underscoring the gap between aspiration and action. He acknowledged the IPCC's efforts to provide actionable information to policymakers and highlighted the importance of effective communication of science for policy action. Overall, Dr. Skea's talk underscored the importance of translating scientific knowledge into tangible actions to address the climate crisis effectively.

During both keynote addresses, the moderator raised important questions about moving from science to action and the narratives that must be conveyed to high-level policymakers. The discussion also touched on the need for more data sharing and collaboration among environmental leaders to address challenges like biodiversity loss and pollution.

1. UNDP supported the EWE by highlighting the necessity of integrating biodiversity loss and pollution risks into early warning systems. They stress the importance of community involvement and the use of citizen science and digital technologies to ensure these warnings lead to practical actions for environmental protection, restoration, and conservation, aligning with the Global Biodiversity Framework and enhancing the EW4All initiative.

UNDP also spoke about the need to have socioeconomic and environmental data and link environmental crises that link to their impact on people. This data can come from, i.e. citizen science and responsible use of technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), to unlock the answers to the most pressing challenges and the scale not previously possible. UNDP also highlighted the element of risk in that these technologies are coming at a very fast pace of change and UNDP's commitment to support countries build readiness for AI systems that promote the equitable use of nature.

2. Japan stressed the importance of integrating citizen science with digital advancements to strengthen EWE, aiming to create more resilient communities against the backdrop of its own experiences with natural disasters. Japan also places great importance on finance for realizing a sustainable future and spoke about the importance of cooperation between public and private systems; the use of satellites to monitor carbon dioxide and methane emissions as cutting-edge technology that can help countries report their emissions and finally the importance of Science-Policy panels which

are important to raise awareness of the interlinked nature of environmental crises Science, data, digitalization – but important element of IPLCs and community knowledge.

3. Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, President of the Indigenous Women and Peoples Association of Chad and co-chair of the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change, spoke about the need for governments to heed scientific evidence and prioritize equitable access to technology to effectively address climate change and reduce biodiversity loss, in addition to fostering multilateralism. She spoke about how citizen science can empower communities to contribute to decision-making processes and determine our collective direction. To safeguard our biodiversity and mitigate pollution impacts, we must advance our EWE systems. By integrating community insights and traditional knowledge with digital innovations, we can create resilient solutions that not only warn us of imminent environmental threats but also empower us to take proactive measures in harmony with the Global Biodiversity Framework

4. The United Kingdom underscored the critical need for EWE in safeguarding biodiversity, proposing the incorporation of cutting-edge technology to forecast environmental threats and ensure effective conservation strategies to complement the EW4ALL initiative. The UK also spoke about how the emphasis on science and technology is crucial for achieving sustainable goals, exemplified by the UK's utilization of AI and machine learning to restore ecosystems like peatlands. Investing in science, inclusive of facilitating access to this science and data for developing countries, is paramount, alongside ensuring community engagement and translating scientific findings into effective global, regional, and national policies. Robust processes are needed so that scientific results can be used to strengthen the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) that they are designed to inform.

5. Kenya spoke about the focus on building an innovation ecosystem supported by policies like the National Commission for Research and the National Research Fund, with particular emphasis on sectors such as energy, agriculture, biotechnology, and the digital economy, while also addressing challenges and opportunities in human capital development, technology transfer, and intellectual property policies at national and country levels, aiming to leverage diverse knowledge sources beyond ICT to foster innovation.

6. Switzerland highlighted its commitment to leveraging EWE for better pollution control, focusing on the role of community engagement in enhancing environmental protection measures. Switzerland also emphasized the need for policymakers to utilize science for informed decision-making, facilitated by regular and relevant inputs from transdisciplinary science panels such as IPCC, IPBES, and GEO, who work at the interface between science and policy. Building trust in scientific information, combating misinformation, and fostering transdisciplinary cooperation between science and policy is crucial for timely decision-making to address global challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Switzerland called on country leaders to engage in these intergovernmental science-policy processes for climate change, biodiversity loss, and the new one established for chemicals, waste and pollution to support reaching SDGs.

7. The European Commission underlined the importance of the EWE approach for strengthening the resilience of ecosystems and societies to environmental risks, including biodiversity loss and pollution. The EU advocates for enhancing early warning systems with a focus on community engagement and the application of citizen science and digital technologies. This, they argue, will translate early warnings into effective solutions for environmental protection, aiding in the achievement of the Global Biodiversity Framework goals and the EW4All initiative.

EC also flagged that addressing interdependent emergencies and slow-onset threats requires an integrated approach that considers both co-benefits and potential trade-offs of actions while also leveraging inputs from bodies like the IPCC, IRP, and the upcoming science-policy panel on water, chemicals, and pollution, as well as citizen science and indigenous knowledge. The European Commission called on these science panels to suggest what should be addressed in negotiations and noted the need for UNEP's WESR and related data strategy and early warning initiatives and encouraged fostering an open-source network approach to influence policymakers with science, describing the example of the EU's centres of excellence in the ACP region that can facilitate digital opportunities and early warning systems through integrated reporting, foresight and risk assessment.

8. The Society of Entrepreneurs and Ecology represents a collective of entrepreneurs and business leaders who advocate for expanding early warning to counter pollution and biodiversity risks that stresses the public's role in promoting compliance. The Society for Ecological Economics emphasizes the Early Warning for the Environment (EWE) approach's role in highlighting the economic implications of biodiversity loss and pollution. They advocate for the integration of these risks into early warning systems as a means to mobilize communities and leverage digital innovation

for sustainable resource management, contributing to the objectives of the Global Biodiversity Framework and supporting the EW4All initiative.

For instance, past campaigns combatting PM2.5 air pollution led to the implementation of real-time air quality indices in cities in China, highlighting the potential for a robust digital infrastructure to disclose information on biodiversity and climate change. Additionally, citizen science initiatives using intuitive user apps offer user-friendly tools for accessing environmental information, facilitating companies' conducting sustainable activities by integrating environmental and ecological data with business operations to pursue low-carbon pathways.

9. The representative of Major groups and Stakeholders emphasized that while digital solutions offer opportunities, they also carry risks that need to be unpacked and understood. This requires the involvement of a diversity of actors from across major groups and stakeholders to ensure digital solutions are used and designed in a way that is equitable and safe for all; the closing of the digital divide by de-complexification of digital solutions; and finally by addressing data sovereignty and stewardship issues. There is a potential for digital innovation to address environmental crises, but it needs to be employed in a way that leaves no one behind and is equitable and accessible for all.

10. Singapore described the efforts to obtain data through a digital twin that can holistically simulate SG's digital climate so that policymakers are better equipped and efforts based on effective action. Singapore also emphasized the role of EWE in urban settings, advocating for smart technology applications to monitor environmental health and mitigate the impacts of urban pollution and climate change.

11. St Kitts and Nevis pointed out the significance of EWE in small island developing states, emphasizing the necessity of community-driven approaches to combat the adverse effects of climate change and protect marine biodiversity. They also recognized that the availability of science and data does not translate into action and that there is a need to close the gap between available science and actionable measures, leveraging digitalization, AI, and blockchain for real-time monitoring and robotics, drawing on an example from St Lucia.

12. Italy recognized the pivotal importance of joining forces in the context of opportunities to use digital solutions and integration of EWE within its rich cultural and natural heritage conservation efforts, advocating for the fusion of traditional knowledge and modern technology in safeguarding its biodiversity. Italy is willing to support UNEP in this important initiative. Italy welcomed UNEP's new global data strategy initiative from UNEP and emphasizes the importance of open science principles and practices as key points in leveraging development, interoperability as a democratic concept, increased cooperation with the private sector, and the importance of stakeholder consultations, including the important role and contribution of citizens in filling the gaps in data sources and the need to integrate citizen-science activities with official data to bring institutions closer to citizens and to democratization data processes.

13. Indonesia called for the enhancement of EWE systems to address the dual threats of biodiversity loss and climate change in its vast archipelago, stressing the importance of local community involvement and digital innovations in creating effective early warning mechanisms. Indonesia also noted the need for collaboration among stakeholders, socialization and capacity building to enhance all stakeholders' awareness of climate-related disasters and how building resilience in communities to improve environmental conditions through integrated data and information systems contributing to an early warning system needs to be supported by leadership, understanding and commitment to building integrated data and information system that can support a functional early warning system.

Following the contributions from the floor, the moderator, Ms Salina Abraham, emphasized the role of social mobilization and businesses in building campaigns to help make policy change happen, and it is crucial that a whole of society movement is employed, empowering young people to use technologies and mobilize communities. She noted there is a potential for digital innovation to address environmental crises, but they need to be employed in a way that leaves no one behind and is equitable and accessible for all. Improvements in policies are another tool to enable solutions, and for this end, how can we make science more accessible to feed into an adequate early warning system that pulls together the data?



## 2. Multi-stakeholder dialogue: “Partnering for the Environment: Inclusive multilateralism fit for purpose”, held on Thursday, 29 February 2024

Introduction	<p>In accordance with the established practice of previous United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) sessions, a multistakeholder dialogue was held as part of the high-level segment of UNEA-6. The multi-stakeholder dialogue under the sub-theme “Partnering for the Environment: Inclusive Multilateralism Fit for Purpose”, brought together representatives from Major Groups and Stakeholders, Member States, the United Nations system and international organizations to explore concrete solutions for inspiring transformative action to achieve effective, inclusive, and sustainable multilateral actions.</p> <p>The event provided an opportunity for an interactive high-level dialogue on how the multilateral system can help ensure a more inclusive approach for decision-making at all levels. It also included an analysis by the representatives of major groups, member states and other stakeholders on challenges and opportunities, and how innovative partnerships and collaboration can contribute to actionable strategies to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. The multi-stakeholder dialogue was moderated by Mr. Ayman Cherkaoui (regional co-facilitator of the Africa region) and Ms. Andrea Nakova (Women’s Major Group).</p>
“Fireside Chat”	<p>H.E. Leila Benali, President of UNEA-6, and Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP, set the stage for the dialogue through brief introductory interventions in the form of a “Fireside chat”:</p> <p>The UNEA-6 President highlighted that effective engagement of stakeholders was part of the spirit of the UN Environment Assembly. She stressed that major groups and stakeholders are knowledge holders bringing expertise to solve the triple planetary crisis. To deliver solutions stakeholders need space in “do” tanks and “think” tanks, where all voices are heard and valued, and one must stop lecturing and start listening. She underscored the efforts to foster synergies among MEAs for enhanced collaboration and coherence, and to exchange practices, knowledge and data between MEA governing bodies, UNEP and UNEA. She highlighted that UNEA-6 should be the UNEA of inclusion and synergies.</p> <p>The UNEP Executive Director reminded participants of the environmental “must do” list recognizing the urgent actions needed to address climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution and that governments need to step up their commitments to deliver on the outcomes of the climate change Conference of the Parties (COPs), on the Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework and on the Global Framework on Chemicals. She highlighted major environmental improvements throughout the years such as the healing of the ozone layer, decreasing mercury pollution, ban of trade in endangered species, and called upon Member States to adopt the international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment that is being negotiated. She urged major groups and stakeholders to hold decision-makers accountable and to bring decisions to their homes and constituencies, concluding that “power is not given, but taken”.</p>
Mentimeter Quiz/ Survey	<p>Before the panel discussion, there was a brief mentimeter quiz/survey where the participants were requested to respond to several questions including which aspects of environmental action they considered most urgent, how they would rate the current level of inclusivity in global environmental decision-making, and what they considered to be the most significant barrier to implementing sustainable environmental solutions. The responses contributed towards shaping the discussions during the dialogue.</p>
Panel discussion	<p>Ms. Sherika Whitelocke-Ballingsingh (Women Major Group) highlighted the need to empower women through education and provision of opportunities to take leadership positions to ensure that their voices are heard. The representative of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group, Ms. Mrinalini Rai called to incorporate Indigenous Peoples’ knowledge and stressed the need to give indigenous peoples and all stakeholders a place in the negotiations space, identify opportunities and build partnerships, and to put decisions into practice. Mr. Christopher Chin (NGO Major Group) called on member states to recognize the important role of NGOs highlighting that NGOs are key players in policy making and implementation and can fill knowledge gaps in negotiations, through data collection and analysis. Mr. Dominic Waughray (Business &amp; Industry Major Group) reminded participants that enterprises are not only important for employment but also the network of businesses is an innovative thrive to understand and solve the triple planetary crisis and are important for scaling up and innovating. Mr. Yunus Arikian (Local Authorities Major Group) highlighted the importance of local authorities for disaster and risk management, since they are responsible for effective management and implementation, and they stand between the civil society and governments. He added that local authorities continue to bring nature back into the cities by encouraging green urbanization.</p> <p>The representatives of major groups emphasized the importance of acknowledging the unique strengths inherent in each major group, highlighting their diverse contributions to effective environmental action.</p>
Interventions by Member States	<p>The representative of Belgium stressed the need for a just and equitable ecological transition, including a social transition by ensuring the inclusive and meaningful participation of all</p>

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	<p>stakeholders. She gave an example of Belgium’s ongoing multistakeholder process and the inclusion of stakeholders in the government’s delegations.</p> <p>The representative of Fiji informed about the country’s actions in the Pacific region and highlighted the importance of traditional knowledge. He stressed the need for strong multilateral collaboration and recognized the importance of including all stakeholders in decision-making processes.</p> <p>The representative of Germany called for an inclusive engagement of stakeholders as non-inclusion could cause hardships in the needed sustainability transition. She gave an example of the country’s initiative to bring the needs and offers of stakeholders together to implement the biodiversity framework.</p> <p>The representative of Netherlands highlighted that governments cannot and should not bear the burden of environmental challenges alone and acknowledged the expertise of stakeholders and their crucial role to inform decision-making.</p> <p>The representative of Madagascar highlighted the important role of major groups to make use of scientific knowledge and techniques, stressed the need for financial mechanisms and the need to accelerate the process to agree on a legally binding instrument against plastic pollution.</p> <p>The representative of the European Union highlighted that the triple planetary crisis cannot be addressed without proper stakeholder engagement, acknowledging the role of stakeholders to inform decision making and provide capacity building. She encouraged the strong inclusion of stakeholders in the UNEA process, to guide the work of UNEP and to implement the resolutions.</p> <p>The representative of Nepal highlighted that isolated solution approaches cannot be successful and that inclusive multilateral approaches are needed to achieve the SDGs. He stressed the roles of different sectors and actors in highlighting the problems and proposing concrete solutions.</p>
Other interventions	<p>A representative from the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues called for a full and effective inclusion of Indigenous Peoples as rightsholders as they can contribute to decision-making.</p> <p>A representative of the Farmers Major Group highlighted the need for an agricultural renaissance in order to find new ways forward and to collaborate and innovate together.</p> <p>A representative from the Wildlife Crime, Interpol, shared about the work of Interpol in law enforcement focusing on environmental crimes, highlighting the need to include major groups and stakeholders as they hold knowledge critical for law enforcement.</p> <p>Ms. Dia Mirza, UNEP Goodwill Ambassador, observed that individual actions wield significant influence, asserting that everyone possesses the power to make sustainable choices in their daily lives, thereby contributing to the overarching environmental cause.</p>
Summary	<p>The moderators summarized key take-aways from the dialogue noting that true progress requires effective solidarity, where all voices are heard and valued. The dialogue highlighted the need to combine listening with providing avenues for active participation, such as direct involvement in decision-making, as major groups and stakeholders are not just participants but also rights-holders. The dialogue emphasized the importance of adopting a whole-of-society approach. It also highlighted the fact that there is a need to find new ways of collaborating and fostering innovative partnerships that transcend traditional boundaries. Many participants at the dialogue echoed the call for adequate financing, underscoring the pivotal role of financial commitments in implementing effective environmental solutions. Additionally, they emphasized the need to prioritize environmental action in every decision. The significance of major groups and stakeholders having access to crucial information for transparency was underscored as a key factor in fostering trust.</p>
Closing	<p>In a concluding statement, Mr. Alphonse Muya from the Children and Youth Major Group advocated for more transparent and inclusive multilateral systems that incorporate intergenerational equity and address the needs of marginalized communities. He added that the time to act was now and that a united front against environmental challenges is needed, calling on Member States to fully embrace stakeholder engagement.</p>

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### 3. **Leadership Dialogue 2: “Show me the money: Can the global financial system really tackle climate change, nature loss and pollution?” - Friday 1 March 2024, 10:00 to 11:30 EAT.**

This dialogue brought together stakeholders from across governments, multilateral development banks, civil society, the UN system and other international organizations to discuss how to align public and private finance with global goals for climate change, nature loss, pollution and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The stakes are high: analyses show that USD 7 trillion in direct and indirect costs stem from fiscal subsidies affecting climate, nature, and pollution; that global financial assets of over USD 400 trillion are driving unsustainable economic activities; and that over half of global Gross Domestic Product is dependent on nature. This Dialogue highlighted the macroeconomic, fiscal, and regulatory tools and financial instruments that governments can use to align public and private

financial flows with environmental goals, and ways to redirect capital towards the transition to sustainable economies.

Ministers highlighted national policy, regulatory, and budgetary measures to mobilise public and private finance for sustainable development, and several called for changes to the global financial architecture and incentives to unlock finance for climate mitigation and adaptation, nature, pollution and waste in developing countries and emerging markets.

Given the short timeframe to transform economies, the key issue is transition planning to stimulate sustainable and resilient economies. Through measures including ambitious targets, government support for the transition, financial support programmes and packages, incentives and subsidies, clear signalling and guidance such as sustainable finance taxonomies, major economies are speeding up the shift to a green future. The main question for investors is not whether, but how and at what speed?

This multilateral dialogue centred around navigating the economic transition and moving fast to have the rules of the game match the reality and the urgency of tackling the very real triple planetary crisis.

Keynote speaker Minister of Environment for Colombia, Maria Susana Muhamad Gonzalez, called for a multilateral political pact to reform the global financial system to address the crises of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This could address challenges that many developing countries face of high debt service payments relative to annual budgets; fiscal constraints exacerbated by climate change impacts; and limited government capacity, the high cost of capital and macroeconomic risks associated with transitioning energy and economic systems to phase out fossil fuels and fulfil international commitments through Nationally Determined Contributions and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans. The financial system needs to step up to help countries implement environmental commitments. The Minister warned that the crisis will not be solved by the market alone or only by the Bretton Woods Institutions – the International Monetary Fund and World Bank Group and the World Trade Organisations – and called for a pact to address debt, risk, climate change and access to capital in a fair way to open new investment and productivity opportunities.

There was a call to rethink the financial system, “turning it on its head” so that it is working for society. Reforms could be guided by an expert review on debt, climate and nature launched by Colombia, Kenya, France and Germany at the COP 28. This will address strategic questions such as national and international reforms to ensure the debt sustainability of developing countries seeking to increase investment to achieve a climate-resilient, low-carbon and nature positive structural economic transformation that allows for economic and social development. The review aims to inform the fostering of a more equitable and purposeful global financial system that effectively promotes sustainable development and climate-resilient growth, building on the Paris Pact for People and Planet agreed at the Summit for a New Global Financing Pact in Paris in June 2023.

Extraordinary measures such as Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) used during the Covid-19 crisis could be used for the scale and speed of change needed to address the emergency of climate change, biodiversity and nature loss and pollution. Measures can be adjusted to countries’ different situations so that part of annual debt payments can instead be invested in the transition for the next 10 years. This is not debt forgiveness just for the sake of it: it opens fiscal space for governments to invest in the transition and a new cycle of productivity, the Minister from Colombia underlined.

Solutions need to contribute to sharing and reducing risks to make green investment more attractive for private investors and link the agenda to the broader UN reform and framework of Agenda 2030. Several countries expressed willingness to participate in an inclusive debate and collaboration across countries and businesses to identify effective policies, pacts and partnerships to address the triple planetary crises. Collaboration to reform the financial architecture will require trust, transparency, inclusiveness and a focus on vulnerable countries.

Thirteen countries are negotiating a fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty, with the goal to reach 20 countries working on the economic treaty to phase out fossil fuels in a fair manner. Several ministers referred to this initiative as a necessary step forward in fighting a changing climate.

**Comments and observations from the floor were as follows:**

(a) Two elements are important - transformative changes in the market and global standards that value the environment. Gabon called for transformative changes in the market to unlock existing resources that would enable investment in climate, biodiversity and nature-positive activities, and global environmental standards to incentivize businesses. Multilateralism is key to collectively define, adopt, and implement the same standards for sectors around the world.

(b) Countries were urged to recognize and act on human rights and help achieve a sustainable and just transition. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights called for action to address inequalities and change the priorities and objectives for the economy to reorient it around the fulfilment of human rights, including the right to a healthy environment. The current socio-economic paradigm escalates multiple planetary crises that impose human rights costs on the people least responsible for them. Policy interventions to internalize environmental costs and make polluters pay are needed, as are accountability for environmental harm and policies and frameworks to reduce and eradicate negative environmental externalities, incentives for business practices that prioritize sustainability and mitigate negative operational impacts on the environment and human health and wellbeing.

(c) Several countries called for countries to reform and reduce harmful subsidies, including to support the phase-out of fossil fuels. As the world's fourth largest oil and gas producer, Canada was the first G20 country to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies as per its G20 commitment and said that countries need to agree a new plastics treaty and discuss harmful subsidies for climate, nature and plastics linked to the fossil fuel complex. UN Secretary General Special Envoy for Oceans cautioned that subsidies of over USD 20 bn of public money are put towards industrial fishing fleets chasing diminishing fish stocks every year, despite the FAO saying global fish stocks are overfished by 34%. Governments need to put a cap on fisheries subsidies, or they will have failed to put in place an essential part of the jigsaw for human survival. SDG14 is the least funded of the SDGs, despite a healthy planet being dependent on a healthy ocean. Finance is essential to stop the decline of ocean health.

(d) Several countries called for sufficient financial resources and the right framework conditions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Countries should not consider finance gaps in silos, but instead identify synergies in dealing with climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

(e) Countries were urged to integrate financial frameworks that support mobilizing finance from all sources - public and private - for climate, as was agreed for nature at the CBD COP 15. The environmental finance gap cannot be closed by public finance alone, countries need to mobilize finance from the private sector to manage the crisis.

(f) There was a call for standards, policies and regulations to interlink properly, and for the mobilization of resources to support the sound global management of chemicals and waste with an integrated approach to address environmental pollution.

(g) Useful and important government measures include taxonomies that provide clear guidance to financial markets to guide investment in a country to the sectors that will tackle environmental and biodiversity issues. Over 50 countries around the world have or are developing taxonomies for sustainable finance. Some countries are also mandating corporate transition plans.

(h) There was a call for better environmental and labour standards. Colombia is renegotiating investment protective clauses in trade agreements so that companies have to comply with national environmental and labour regulations to fulfil commitments.

(i) Change requires government capacity to plan and send signals. Planning and collaboration over the next 18 months will be important ensure a smooth transition to a low-carbon, resilient economy. NDCs need to be strengthened and provide climate economic opportunity transition plans. Planning for the transition should be informed by dialogue between institutional, investors, banks, corporates and governments.

(j) Governments can marshal incentives and support including from development finance institutions. Guarantee instruments are becoming the norm for green investments and wealthy countries were urged to channel the science to tilt economies to green and provide risk capital for poor countries. Strong state action is driving down the price of renewables and capital has started moving. This is an extraordinary opportunity to match the needs of emerging markets with the return requirements of pension funds.

#### State Interventions:

(e) Several state representatives spoke of their country's efforts including but not limited to the United Kingdom, which committed USD 11.6 billion to international climate finance, supported a Task Force on Nature-Related Financial Disclosures, is working on a green taxonomy, contributed funding to help implement the new Global Framework on Chemicals, since 'it is pointless restoring nature if we are pouring pollution onto it'.

(f) Indonesia is focusing on scaling up sustainable finance including from business and financial institutions by enabling business to reduce negative and increase positive impacts on the environment, reducing emissions and promoting action to ensure sustainable consumption and production. The country has taken steps including implementing a national public budget tagging system, developing innovative financing instruments such as Green Sukuk Framework to accelerate progress towards achievement of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and SDGs, and establishing an Environmental Fund Management Agency.

(g) Bangladesh has a climate prosperity plan to plot a trajectory from vulnerability to resilience and prosperity, which involves an investment of almost USD 80 billion for projects including offshore wind power and nature-based solutions, and efforts to secure private financing. Challenges include motivating and incentivizing the private sector to invest in adaptation and delivering on commitments and pledges.

(h) Japan said that to close an annual gap of USD 4.3 trillion in financing to achieve the SDGs, it is important to effectively utilize public and private finance. Japan pledged USD638 million for the replenishment of the Global Environment Facility and Yen 650 million for the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund, will contribute to the global achievement of the Kunming-Montreal GBF, and has placed up to Yen 165 billion for the Green Climate Fund to support developing countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change. It is important to expand integrated solutions to climate change and biodiversity conservation such as nature-based solutions. For example, blue carbon initiatives in Japan contribute to climate change mitigation and have value in multiple areas such as marine environment, fishery resource preservation and local economic development. Japan joined the International Partnership for Blue Carbon led by Australia and is actively promoting blue carbon initiatives.

(i) Germany provided Euros 6 billion in annual international climate finance in 2022 and will increase biodiversity funding to Euros 1.5 billion annually by 2025. Multilateral development banks play a key role in financing international climate action and biodiversity targets. Germany called for appropriate national framework conditions and incentive systems to ensure limited public funds are used as effectively as possible and fully leveraged.

(j) Norway said in a decentralized world where most decisions are taken by people as part of households, the public sector and business around the world, governments are responsible for deciding the course of development for their societies and designing the structure under which people make their decisions. However, it is currently too cheap to emit given the externalities involved and the cost of pollution covered by the whole of society and future generations, not by polluters. In most places it is grates to build down nature, difficult to reutilize grey areas and too expensive to choose green solutions. For finance solutions, governments need to put structures in place to make the right decisions profitable and necessary by all economic actors. Norway is therefore increasing emissions cost, developing new green technologies, deploying fossil free alternatives, strengthening regulations and shifting public procurement. Under an emissions trading scheme, oil and gas production in Norway is expected to fall by 70% or more in the coming decades, which will affect many people but also create new opportunities. The question is one of tackling risks in a way that is equitable and allows the entire world to be part of the change needed, for example through guaranteed schemes and making green energy available for the developing world. The biggest risk is not tackling these risks together, not aligning all financial flows with common goals of becoming low-emission, nature-positive, circular economies.

(k) Cuba called for changes to avoid environmental disaster, with a focus on public and private financing for the environment to allow countries to fulfil their obligations. The private sector has a role to play, and its contribution is essential for countries to work towards same environment goal. There is a need for all countries to fulfil commitments and contribute to the funds for global biodiversity, the environment, climate and the fight against chemical substances. Cuba will commit to combatting plastics and for this will require an additional financial mechanism. To overcome challenges, countries will need to come up with innovative financial solutions and build up capacity, bolster existing mechanisms, and replenish funds to ensure that investors acquire the trust to commit to the struggle.

#### Financing change

(a) Green and sustainable bonds, a 'starter, signalling tool' for government and corporates, have grown 100-fold in 10 years to more than US\$4 trillion, according to the Climate Bonds Initiative. More than 52 countries are issuing green and sustainable sovereign bonds with around USD550 billion outstanding. The main barrier is supply rather than demand. Investors believe the future will be green, the only question is the speed – and who will be a winner and who will be a loser.

(b) Ecuador said it is essential to diversify sources of financing, including sustainable financial instruments such as thematic bonds or green credits designed to incentivize achievement of sustainability objectives. Active participation of the private sector is crucial to reduce the financial deficit in environmental and climate management. Climate-resilient public private partnerships emerge as a valuable tool to effectively address these challenges. Ecuador is integrating environmental criteria to access resources and has established a sovereign green bond framework and identified opportunities to swap debt for environmental benefits. Ecuador made a debt for nature swap extending the marine reserve of the Galapagos islands. Its investment portfolio provides a vehicle for social and economic development, and includes green and blue bonds, as well as a technical forum for the carbon bonds market. The portfolio includes financing for the waste management and green energy and electricity generation, with the production of renewable energy for better water management. Ecuador invested USD1.4 million in these activities for the environment, for the generation of renewable energy and for a reduction of carbon emissions. These tools benefit the population. The necessary funds must be made available to fulfil commitments undertaken.

(c) Coral is linked to 30% of biodiversity in the oceans, and the Global Fund for Coral Reefs administered by UNDP is an example of blended finance able to allocate capital to projects. Banks, investors and project developers need to understand how to talk to each other to ensure capital can be allocated to bankable projects.

(d) Canada's first green bond of USD 5 billion in 2022 was over 2.5 times over-subscribed. Demand is there for greener financial products to help tackle climate change and nature loss.

(e) Gabon launched its first blue bond for USD 500 million to invest in marine protection last year.

(f) The European Investment Banks said that Multilateral Development Banks reached USD 100 billion in climate finance last year and are working collectively to be more innovative, relating to de-risking to bring leverage, debt relief for disaster-hit poor countries and debt-for-nature swap in countries such as Barbados, and getting the metrics right to track nature-positive investment and measure circular economy investment with partnerships, private sector mobilization and the right incentives.

As one speaker so aptly put it, "*the world's super tanker of an economy is starting to turn.*" Every major economy is shifting, the task is to seize the opportunities arising in the epochal change to benefit citizens, to invest, to make their lives sustainable, to create jobs, education, improve wellbeing and create a world with greater quality and sharing of resources.

As one minister reiterated, it is up to countries and their legislators to create appropriate guidelines and incentives and to do everything in their power to ensure everyday investment decisions that will shape economic and ecological development for decades to come are taken in line with climate, pollution and biodiversity targets. Finance is available and never as before; but getting the money to flow to the right investments in the right sectors will require unparalleled focus, concentration, and cooperation across countries and disciplines.

#### 4. **Leadership Dialogue 3: "Alive and kicking: Environmental multilateralism is a beacon of hope but is it delivering fast enough?" - Friday 1 March 2024, 11:30 to 13:00 EAT**

The dialogue encouraged debate and explored ideas on how to bolster the effectiveness of environmental multilateralism, leading to more tangible and long-term results for people and the planet.

After a brief introduction by the moderator, Salina Abraham, the dialogue was officially opened by UNEP's Executive Director Inger Andersen. She stated that environmental multilateralism is indeed alive, as evidenced by recent and inspiring achievements of the international community including, *inter alia*, the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement, the recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment by the General Assembly, the establishment and operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund for Developing Countries, and the adoption of UNEA Resolution 5/14 establishing an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

The UNEP Executive Director acknowledged, however, that progress is not fast enough and suggested that broader inclusivity of public and private stakeholders would lead to more widely accepted and thus future-proof frameworks. She referred to other inclusive and innovative models to draw inspiration from, such as the triumvirate structure of the International Labor Organization, the

special procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Marrakesh Partnership for Global Climate Action, the UN Common Principles on Future Generations, and the recently established Global Chemicals Framework. Lastly, she emphasized the importance of multilateral environmental agreements and described the UN Environment Assembly as a “big tent and tapestry” that can advance and weave together a more effective, inclusive, dynamic and transparent environmental multilateralism capable of defending the needs and rights of future generations.

Grace Catapang, Global Fund for Coral Reefs Frontline Youth Ambassador then gave a powerful, authentic, and emotional keynote speech. She brought testimony of the devastating impacts of an oil spill on the coral reefs of her island community in the Philippines. She appealed for the protection of ecosystems worldwide, using her story to reiterate that current models are not delivering the concrete and tangible results that the world needs. She concluded by urging the international community to mobilize more resources and develop a new form of multilateralism based on equity, inclusivity, solidarity and empathy, capable of transcending borders and national interests.

Comments and observations from the floor were as follows:

1. Most participants called for strengthened and enhanced collaboration, especially through the identification of synergies and the exchange of technologies and knowledge. Participants agreed on the importance of stronger environmental multilateralism and the central role of multilateral environmental agreements in addressing the triple planetary crisis. Some questioned whether the current structure and functioning of the United Nations and its entities are still fit-for-purpose to tackle environmental challenges or whether they would benefit from reform (Bangladesh), especially with an eye toward avoiding silo thinking and the duplication of costs (United Nations Office for Disaster Risks Reduction (UNDRR)). Others questioned the effectiveness of the consensus rule and called for a reconsideration of the mechanisms governing international negotiations (Bangladesh, Sierra Leone).

2. Several participants called for greater global empathy and solidarity between countries (Bangladesh, China, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Sierra Leone), while two entities appealed for more inclusivity and effective dialogue in environmental decision-making (Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH)).

3. Numerous participants placed focus on the role of financial mechanisms (Belgium, China, Denmark, Honduras and FAO) and the need for stronger cooperation between the public and private sectors. It was also suggested that traditional metrics of countries’ wealth – such as GDP per capita – do not accurately capture their effective capacity to address environmental issues (Saint Kitts and Nevis) and that current financial and economic systems should be redesigned to achieve long-term sustainability (Denmark).

4. Specific instruments and innovative approaches were mentioned as examples to accelerate environmental action and reinvigorate environmental multilateralism, which included circular economy (Denmark), the phasing-out of fossil fuel subsidies (Belgium), nature-based solutions (UNDRR), loss and damage mechanisms (UNDRR), the One Health Approach (WOAH), and the recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (Slovenia). Accountability regarding long-term commitments – to be monitored through the setting of goals and targets, as well as oversight and peer-review mechanisms – was also identified as a key element for sustained progress (Bangladesh, Oman and Slovenia).

5. Throughout the panel discussion, the moderator reflected on people’s increasing lack of faith in environmental multilateralism. She went on to suggest that a stronger political will and the filling of existing financial gaps between developed and developing countries might lead to more tangible results and revert this alarming trend. She then stressed the need to open negotiation tables to new key actors, including major groups and civil society organizations, and to find ways to give nature proper representation.

After closing reflections by Grace Catapang – who reiterated her appeal to participants to put their words into action – the dialogue concluded with rap artists Dex McBean and Baba Brinkman summarizing the contributions of participants. Their performance, based on the motto “One Ocean, One Planet, One Path Forward”, highlighted that decision-making should go beyond meetings and conferences and emphasized the need to future-proof multilateralism by ensuring climate change resilience and voicing the concerns of children and youth.