

UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa Zero Draft Ministerial Declaration Written Inputs

UNEA-7 Theme: Advancing Sustainable Solutions for A Resilient Planet

1. What would the Ministers for the Environment propose as the most important elements and or key messages that would enable the ministerial declaration to take forward the UNEA theme in the most impactful manner?

A recognition that advancing sustainable solutions is necessary to move our planet on the path of resilience and ultimately to the vision set out in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Agenda 2063.

A commitment to strengthen international collaboration and political will to advance sustainable solutions for a resilient planet including through addressing existing and emerging environmental problems at the seventh session of the United Nations Environmental Assembly.

A commitment to invest in and promote economically sound, socially desirable, and environmentally healthy initiatives that promotes human rights and sustainable development.

A commitment to promote sustainable agriculture, including among vulnerable smallholder farmers in rural communities and to increase investment in development of proper assessment of the nature and extent of land and soil degradation utilizing advanced and innovative methods such as remote sensing.

A commitment to integrating indigenous knowledge, local expertise and practice in assessment and cataloguing of existing and emerging sustainable solutions including novel solutions

A commitment to advancing sustainable solutions in the transport sector including the development and promotion of a cost-effective, less polluting, and safer transportation systems without increasing additional debt burdens in developing countries.

A commitment to advance the circular economy approach including increasing investment in environmental education and awareness raising.

A commitment to promote regulation of new technological solutions using a rights and sustainability lens.

A commitment to promote policies and practices that can empower decision-makers to withstand and recover from environmental shocks and stressors including through upscaling renewable energy sources, green technology, sustainable land management, agricultural practices, green infrastructure and early warning systems.

A commitment to promote and strengthen legal and policy frameworks and enacting regulatory reforms that promote the rule of law, reduces possible environmental injustices from production, consumption and use of existing and emerging solutions and markets.

A commitment to promote green and decent jobs and more responsible, rights based business engagements that respects those who defend nature and environmental rights.

A commitment to ending open burning of waste and adopting a lifecycle approach to plastics as highlighted in the recent fifth Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-5) to develop an international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution including in the marine environment. Open burning of waste releases toxic emissions which are very harmful to human health and the environment. The practice of open burning in landfills, including at household levels, where plastic waste and microplastics comprise a large percentage of the waste, is still common in many parts of the world including the Africa region and is caused by insufficient waste management practices such as lack of collection and sorting of waste.

A commitment to enhance participatory mechanisms, strategic foresight, predictive analytics and horizon scanning capacities for environmental decision-making to deliver the MEAs and foster resilience and adaptive capacity, with emphasis on engagement of all citizens including women, youths, indigenous peoples and their communities and persons in vulnerable situations while leveraging citizen science, traditional knowledge, including from indigenous peoples

Commitment to the development of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, is crucial to addressing the adverse impacts of plastic and associated chemicals on human health and the environment. A comprehensive and ambitious global agreement, fortified in the principles of the Rio Declaration and aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, will strengthen international cooperation, promote sustainable [production] and consumption of plastics, and ensure a lifecycle approach to prevent and remediate pollution. To recognize the importance of integrating improved waste management zero-waste waste and circular economy strategies. This includes the support of Public Private Partnerships and international

certifications that take into consideration the payments for recycling in the developing countries.

A call on the global plastics producers to close the tap and ministers to commit to taking urgent actions by defining policies that protect the consumers that are mostly affected by the pollution.

Commitment to sustainable tourism policies that align with the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, ensuring responsible tourism that benefits local communities and protects ecosystems. Additionally, the UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme advocates for community-based tourism that respects local cultures while supporting conservation. To address climate resilience, tourism initiatives should integrate commitments from the Paris Agreement (2015) by promoting low-carbon travel, green infrastructure, and climate adaptation strategies in tourism destinations.

2. What key messages or conclusions from recent scientific reports would the ministers for the Environment recommend for consideration in the ministerial declaration?

Implementing sound management practices for chemicals and waste is crucial to mitigate these risks. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) reports that pollution, particularly from chemicals and waste, poses significant risks to human health and ecosystems. The [Global Waste Management Outlook 2024](#) underlines that without a shift towards circular economy and zero-waste approaches, the global waste burden could increase substantially by 2050.

Establish robust mechanisms that strengthen the science-policy interface, ensuring that decision-making is informed by the best available scientific evidence. Recalling UNEA Resolution 5/8, which mandates the establishment of a new science-policy panel to contribute to the sound management of chemicals and waste and the prevention of pollution, this panel will play a vital role in supporting Member States in implementing multilateral environmental agreements and other relevant international instruments. By providing policy-relevant scientific advice, fostering knowledge-sharing, and strengthening the science-policy interface, the panel will enhance global efforts to address pollution in all its forms. As UNEA-7 seeks to advance action towards a pollution-free planet, the panel's work will be instrumental in guiding evidence-based decision-making and reinforcing international cooperation for the sound management of chemicals and waste. This includes fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, enhancing data accessibility and transparency, promoting capacity-building in developing countries, increasing the exchange programmes and scholarships for knowledge and experience sharing and development at the global universities with high reputations, strengthening the partnerships with the universities from global south with the north and western

universities and integrating indigenous and local knowledge. Strengthening institutional frameworks and multilateral cooperation will enable the effective translation of scientific findings into policy actions, supporting evidence-based governance and accelerating the implementation of international commitments to address pollution in all its forms.

Call for integrated approaches to conservation, sustainable use of biodiversity, and the restoration of degraded ecosystems to halt and reverse biodiversity loss consistent with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES); Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, (<https://www.ipbes.net/global-assessment>) highlights over a million species are at risk of extinction due to human activities.

3. What proposed collective actions and policy solutions should the Ministers for the Environment adopt to advance the UNEA theme and promote effective and inclusive environmental governance?

- a. In alignment with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) General Comment No. 26, we, the Ministers for the Environment, emphasize the urgent need to address the adverse effects of environmental degradation and climate change on children's rights. We recognize that children have the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment and commit to embedding a child rights-based approach in all multilateral environmental policies and actions. We call upon all stakeholders, including the Committee of Permanent Representatives, to prioritize the protection of children's environmental rights, ensuring their voices are heard and needs are met in the fight against environmental degradation and climate change. Additionally, we urge the inclusion of environment-friendly education programs that empower children and youth with knowledge and skills to advocate for their environmental rights and contribute to sustainable development.
- b. To address gaps in existing resolutions, there is a need to integrate gender-responsive language, including the gender person, conducting gender analysis, and ensure commitments to gender equality in agreements on climate, pollution, and biodiversity. Include gender-dimension and recognize the role of women and youth in advancing sustainable solutions for a resilient planet. Women are in the front lines as environmental defenders, and disproportionately affected by the climate crisis, pollution, loss of biodiversity and desertification. The environmental crisis increases the gender gaps so we look for a stronger inclusion of the gender dimension.
- c. Harnessing and incorporating indigenous and traditional knowledge, including from the Africa region, so as to sufficiently tackle biodiversity loss, pollution and climate change issues.

4. Any other message(s) would the Ministers for the Environment wish to be considered or included in the ministerial declaration?

Show the importance of strengthening international cooperation to address pollution and, particularly, plastic pollution including in the marine environment and sound management of chemicals and waste. Recalling **UNEA Resolution 4/6 on Marine Plastic Litter and Microplastics; and UNEA Resolution 5/7 on Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste, the ratification of the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships on 25 June 2025** marks a significant milestone in multilateralism to facilitate the recovery and reuse of valuable materials from end-of-life ships, reducing environmental footprint of the maritime industry. Adopted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 2009, the Convention establishes legally binding requirements to ensure that ships, when recycled, do not pose unnecessary risks to human health, safety, or the environment.

Establishing a separate dedicated and accessible Global Fund mechanism for sound management of chemicals and waste, similar to climate and biodiversity fund mechanism and Fostering the equity in terms of access to the available Funds.

Emphatically commit to regional cooperation requiring member states to work cooperatively on air pollution and air quality with linkages to implement strong air quality monitoring and implement tried and tested methods that help cut pollution, creating cleaner communities for us all. Recalling the [UNEA Resolution 6/10](#) on, “Promoting regional cooperation on air pollution to improve air quality globally, we need to be clear on the scope of the challenge we face when it comes to the impact of air pollution on our communities. Almost all of us, over 99% of the world, are exposed to unsafe air. This is not simply a problem that affects a far-off corner of the world; it is in our neighborhoods, our backyards, and frankly all around us. And with this pollution quickly come devastating consequences, prematurely killing nearly 7 million people around the globe, in addition to the millions of individuals who seek health treatments due to toxic air or miss work and school days – shaving off a good part of GDP globally. It’s abundantly clear that the cost of inaction is far too high. Air pollution knows no border. Tackling this challenge cannot be done in silos; it requires countries around the world to cooperate and work together. Short-lived climate pollutants have already left their mark on our continent, impacting air quality, affecting rain patterns, and contributing to drought across Africa. Air pollution and climate change are a particularly deadly duo for Africa, disproportionately harming women, children, the elderly, and the poor. Across our continent alone, approximately 1 million people die prematurely per year due to health impacts of poor air quality. If we are to create a cleaner future for our children, and keep 1.5°C within reach, we need to act fast.

A commitment to concrete, actionable and time bound proposals to enhance cooperation in promoting participatory mechanisms, strategic foresight, predictive analytics and horizon scanning capacities for environmental decision-making to deliver the MEAs and foster resilience and adaptive capacity, with emphasis on engagement of women, youths, indigenous peoples, local communities and persons in vulnerable situations while leveraging citizen science, traditional science and knowledge, including from indigenous peoples to forge a sustainable solutions for present and future generations.

A commitment to promoting policies and practices that can empower decision-makers to withstand and recover from environmental shocks and stressors including through upscaling renewable energy sources, green technology, sustainable land management, sustainable agricultural practices, green infrastructure and early warning systems adapted to target.

A commitment to horizon scanning and strengthening of legal and policy frameworks and enacting regulatory reforms that promote green and decent jobs and more responsible, rights based business engagements that respects the rule of law and reduces environmental injustices including providing effective protection for those who defend nature and environmental rights.

A commitment to accelerating net-zero, nature-positive and pollution-free policies and decisions, with consideration for the most vulnerable; and promoting environmental justice and equity through deploying financial resources and capacities towards strengthening those most affected by climate change.

A commitment to promoting practices that can reduce the environmental impacts of resource use, reduces over reliance on market mechanisms, increases social well-being, promotes sustainable lifestyle and institutionalizes resource governance in the implementation of the MEAs, embedding sustainable resource use at all governance levels while also promoting sustainable production and consumption.

A commitment to shape financing and investment policies to align with circularity, sustainable development, effectiveness of development aid and human rights approaches that decrease climate, nature and pollution footprints of high impact sectors by among others expanding new financial sources ad ecosystem, accelerating finance flows, capacity building, and technology transfer to help countries set sustainable economic incentives while also developing enforceable standards to enable the private sector to expand investments on low impact solutions and business models that drive market transformations and also help manage risks sustainably while ensuring financial protection and recovery from environmental damages.

A commitment to promote innovations in digitalization, improve access to disaggregated data, best science and information that enable evidence-based and inclusive policy making, including through artificial intelligence.

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