

Comments on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

On the Draft concept note for the theme of the 4th United Nations Environment Assembly

- The EU and its Member States (EU+MS) thank the Secretariat for providing the Draft concept note on the theme of the 4th United Nations Environment Assembly.
- We reiterate the importance to have an attractive theme to strengthen the visibility, communication and political role of UNEA.
- The EU + MS support the broad approach that the concept note takes to innovations. The agreement reached on the UNEA-4 theme was that both theme components innovative solutions and SCP would be presented on an equal footing. In the current note the component of SCP seems to be weakly presented and we therefore believe the note needs to be more balanced.
- We would like to support the proposal from UNEP to use the framework “3D’s and E” (*de-carbonize, de-toxify, decouple resource use and change lifestyles, and enhance ecosystem resilience and protection of the planet’s natural systems*) that captures well the core of the complex relationship between environment and health and makes direct link to previous UNEAs. But we would like the note to explain how this framework would contribute specifically to the theme components of the Assembly (SCP and innovation).
- With this framework in mind, we would like to see the part on SCP strengthened including chemicals and wastes issues, relating to health and environment, to marine litter and micro-plastics, to production and products, and not limited only to the 10-YFP.
- The concept note could highlight more prominently the positive opportunities that SCP brings for innovation and green growth. It could link it more to the industrial, technological and societal opportunities and its positive impact on resource use and environmental stress.
- The text on SCP should be introduced earlier, at least as para 2, before the GEO-6 para, as it is being also an integral part of the theme.
- We would like also to suggest referring to TFWW (Rio+20) and 2030 Agenda language, especially TFWW para 224: "We recognize that fundamental changes in the way societies consume and produce are indispensable for achieving global sustainable development."
- We would like a specific reference to goal 12, target 8.4, quoting especially the first part: "8.4 Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavor to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation...". This reference would connect the SCP to the “3Ds and an E” framework, too.

- The concept note could also recognize the strong links the theme has to the SDG target 12.4 on the 2020 goal on the sound management of chemicals and waste and the need to come back substantively to this matter at UNEA4, including in particular on the “sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020” which is entering its decisive phase.
- We would welcome a greater emphasis to be put on the role of private sector in bringing about the shift to SCP. The role of private sector should be explained in more detail as it is not only about "enhancing partnerships" but about concrete steps the private sector needs to take (e.g. sustainable purchasing and waste processing etc.)
- The note would benefit from clearer focus. The list of themes (under the section "possible outline") could be presented in a more coherent way and making clearer the link to the SCP and innovation themes. For example, the theme “Define the key environmental challenges based on...” is neither related neither to SCP nor to innovation specifically. The theme “Focus on barriers, challenges and opportunities for, by identifying innovative solutions to enable actions/scale up actions” seems too vague. A possible way to focus could be to look at the SDG 12 targets and focus on the themes they cover.
- We would like also to see a point added under the “Possible Outline” chapter that is dedicated to SCP and explaining its possibilities comprehensively.
- We are happy to see that UNEP has taken a broad approach to tackle “innovation” (i.e. not limited it to only technological innovation). We support the notion of innovation as encompassing both science and technology and knowledge-based assets. Innovative education and awareness-raising approaches, aimed at changing mentalities and behaviors, must also be considered. By using this comprehensive definition, innovative solutions are applicable to a wide range of stakeholders.
- However, as we pointed out earlier, the innovative solutions cannot be presented as the only solution to environment degradation. It is also very important to implement existing solutions. Hence, a focus on innovative solutions should not de-prioritise solutions which are already known, and just need fuller and scaled-up implementation. This would be regrettable, since in many fields better application of methods and solutions which have already been tried and tested have huge potential benefits.
- We support the linkage between innovative solutions and the results of UNEA-3, e.g. in relation to the voluntary commitments. At the same time, the follow-up to these voluntary commitments may not depend on the availability of innovative solutions and the UNEA-4 should not limit the execution of these commitments.
- It is important to see and present the UNEA-4 theme on SCP as a logical continuum from previous UNEA meetings, where the themes were directly relevant to SCP and the other way around (UNEA2: Healthy Environment, Healthy People; UNEA3: Towards a Pollution-Free Planet) as well as key resolutions (e.g. UNEA 2/8 on SCP; UNEP GC 27/12, UNEA 1/5 and UNEA 2/7 on chemicals and waste; UNEA 3/4 on Environment and Health; UNEA 1/6, 2/11 and 3/7 on marine litter; etc.). The draft Concept Note already makes some of these links, but it could be stressed further.
 - The EU+MS are open to discuss further as the concept note develops.