

NGO interventions Wednesday 22 July

Block 2) Means of Implementations (Rec: 7-13-15-16),

SLOT 1: Speaker : Alessandra Lehman

Madam Co-Chair, Mr. Co-Chair, I am Alessandra Lehman, an environmental lawyer from Brazil. In this process, I represent CIDCE, the International Center of Comparative Environmental Law, and I speak as a representative of the NGO Major Group. Resolution 73/333 recognizes the need to improve coordination among environmental regimes, as well as to strengthen scientific research, innovation and cooperation across relevant MEAs. Climate change is an important part of the equation, given that it is a high-profile matter that is transversal to all other environmental regimes. This holds especially true in the post-pandemic world, as the correlation among environmental protection, climate change, and epidemiological outbreaks becomes more evident. A shift in public opinion can already be felt, and is very likely to entail a reassessment of the urgency to tackle climate change, as well as the need for a steady transition to a low-carbon economy and innovative food systems. Indeed, Madam Co-Chair, Mr. Co-Chair, the world in 2020 is not the same as it was in 2019.

Paragraphs 36 and 37 of the June 2020 Information Note recognize the synergies between the climate and biodiversity regimes, which of course is essential but still not enough. Climate change is a central issue, and this centrality must be adequately reflected in any political declaration leading to Stockholm+50. It is essential that sufficient action is taken to reverse global warming and stabilize the climate so as to address multiple environmental issues and challenges, and that ecosystem restoration and nature-based solutions are undertaken to address the climate crisis. It is also noteworthy that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) played a significant role in consolidating the relevance of International Environmental Law (IEL) principles, and that sound science is essential to the climate regime. We should learn from that, with regard to all environmental challenges.

The calls of Resolution 73/333 to recognize the relevance of IEL principles, to enhance scientific cooperation, as well as to incentivize coordination among regimes are all highly dependent on adequately addressing the element of climate change. Also significantly, a political declaration also encompassing the climate crisis would provide conceptual clarity and some degree of homogeneity as to the grounds upon which access to climate justice could unfold, possibly creating a Ripple effect in domestic jurisdictions and enabling parties and courts with an expanded set of legal tools to deal more adequately, locally and internationally, with the challenges of environmental protection. Thank you.

SLOT 2: Speaker: Sabine Lennkh

Thank Mr(s) chair, dear delegates, I'm Sabine Lennkh from World Animal Net, and I'm speaking on behalf of a group of NGOs:

“Building Forward Looking and Better” post-Covid-19 should be used to focus recovery funding on key environmental objectives (like climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution) and prevention of future pandemics. Member States could bring UNEP into this picture, for technical assistance and capacity building - with funding. At the same time countries should discontinue the practice of providing harmful subsidies and incentives, and force multinationals to pay their taxes and ban tax havens. In many cases sufficient funds are available but it is a matter of political will. As they say - “where there is a will, there is a way”. Take the case of Costa Rica, which does a sterling job on environmental protection - rather than spending millions on the military.

UNEP should be mandated to work with and support Member States and members of Specialized Agencies in ratifying MEAs and supporting their effective implementation building on, for example, the UNEP Guidelines on Compliance with and Enforcement of MEAs. This would provide an important means for helping to achieve the SDGs.

Member States should also be encouraged to ratify and implement the MEAs as a part of the proceedings during the opening sessions of the UNGA, the UNEA, the HLPF and in particular for the Stockholm Commemoration.

Member states and the specialized agencies should work together and not in competition in the search for international financing for strengthening environmental law and governance.

Innovative taxation policies should be applied at both the national (in South and North) and international level including the use of taxes, fees and surcharges on the use and abuse of nature and natural resources, and land value taxation. The focus on the use of such policies should be on prevention, the polluter pays principle and ensuring that humanity lives within the carrying capacity of the earth and its planetary boundaries.

An assessment system for member states on the status of their environmental policies, laws and implementation is needed. This can be linked and integrated into national development plans and international development assistance, with UNEP being funded to both assess, and to capacity build.

UNEP's development as a centre of scientific excellence could help and support many countries and policy bodies, including the MEAs. Member States should support joint scientific assessment, uncluttered by MEA's ingrained “cultures” and objectives. Regional and national centres of scientific excellence could be linked into UNEP's research networks to strengthen regional and cultural perspectives.

In order to improve effective stakeholder participation UNEP should be asked and encouraged to develop a set of guidelines and recommendations for promoting and ensuring access to information and engagement with all relevant stakeholders in all relevant fora in consultation with civil society, supportive governments, and the Environmental Management Group. A review should be undertaken, in consultation with Stakeholders and the Major Groups, in order to determine which practices and processes have been the most productive and effective in various sustainable development processes. The Member States should again reaffirm and commit themselves to independently and collectively review the extent to which they are fulfilling Principle 10 from the Rio Declaration on Access to Information.