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**United Nations
Environment Assembly of the
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Programme**

**United Nations Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment Programme
Fifth session**
Nairobi (online), 22–26 February 2021

**Proceedings of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its
fifth session**

1. Owing to the exceptional circumstances associated with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the bureaux of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme and of the Committee of Permanent Representatives decided, at their joint meeting held on 1 December 2020, that the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly would be held in two parts, comprising an online meeting, to be held on 22 and 23 February 2021, and a resumed in-person meeting, to be held in February 2022.
2. Accordingly, the online meeting of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly was convened on 22 and 23 February 2021.

I. Opening of the session (agenda item 1)

3. The online meeting of the fifth session was opened at 11 a.m. (Nairobi time (UTC+3)) on Monday, 22 February 2021, by Mr. Sveinung Rotevatn, President of the Environment Assembly.
4. Opening statements were delivered by Mr. Keriako Tobiko, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Kenya; Mr. Rotevatn; Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); Ms. Hera Ali and Mr. Gyubin Hwang, representatives of the children and youth major group; Mr. Volkan Bozkir, President of the General Assembly of the United Nations; Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations.
5. In his capacity as representative of the host country, Mr. Tobiko welcomed representatives to the online meeting of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly, noting that it was being held against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and its serious consequences for economies, communities and livelihoods around the world. Speaking from a green space in Nairobi, the site of UNEP headquarters and the global capital of environmental matters, he stressed the importance of green spaces, most recently in helping people to relate and relax during the lockdowns necessitated by the pandemic. Given that the current meeting was being held online, it would focus on administrative and budgetary matters and include a leadership dialogue that would enable ministers of environment and other high-level representatives to discuss salient issues relevant to the theme of the session, “Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”. It was to be hoped that the substantive agenda items could be discussed at a resumed in-person meeting to be held in 2022.
6. In his statement, Mr. Rotevatn said that owing to the unprecedented times, the world was adapting to new ways of doing things, including the convening of the current meeting online. The participation of 151 Member States in the meeting was a testament to the importance attached to environmental issues. With 2022 marking 50 years since the creation of UNEP, the Environment

Assembly at its current meeting would launch the celebration of “UNEP@50”, which provided an opportunity to look back with pride at what had been achieved as inspiration for the global environmental agenda for the future. The real challenge ahead was to get back on track after the pandemic to fulfil the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That called for a transformed relationship with the planet and a higher scale of impact, potentially achievable through the co-benefits of action to address climate change in a way that also protected biodiversity or reduced pollution. Member States had to respond together, each doing its part. The United Nations was built on hope and solidarity, as was the Environment Assembly, and it was to be hoped that the fifth session would inspire real action. In closing, he acknowledged the hard work and cooperation of the Bureau, the Committee of Permanent Representatives and the secretariat in preparing for the session, which, he said, exemplified the spirit of the United Nations.

7. In her opening statement, Ms. Andersen highlighted the inextricable linkages between the COVID-19 pandemic and the three continuing planetary crises: the climate crisis, the nature and biodiversity crisis, and the pollution and waste crisis, which, she noted, were of humankind’s own making. Drawing attention to the UNEP report, *Making Peace with Nature: A scientific blueprint to tackle the climate, biodiversity and pollution emergencies*, recently launched by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, which provided a comprehensive breakdown of the immediate peril facing planet Earth and the scientific underpinnings for the UNEP medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025, she said that much had been achieved in the 50 years since the creation of UNEP in understanding the causes of and solutions to the environmental crises. The issues were widely known, and much effective action had been taken to remedy them, including through the multilateral environmental agreements. Nevertheless, the situation was continuing to worsen, requiring a drastic change in response, namely a radical transformation of behaviour by the whole of society in order to create the environmental conditions that were needed to enable present and future generations of humankind to thrive. As the world’s leading environmental authority, the United Nations Environment Assembly was responsible for driving that change towards an era of action. Thanking Member States for supporting UNEP through increased contributions to its core fund, she said that the adoption of the medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025 and the programme of work and budget for the biennium 2022–2023 at the present online meeting of the fifth session would ensure that the organization could work harder, faster and with greater impact. She urged representatives to continue their fight for the environment, addressing the existential challenge that was facing humanity.

8. In her statement, Ms. Ali said that the present online meeting set an example across the United Nations system, showing that intergovernmental work could take place in a virtual format, but also made the meeting accessible to more people around the world. Considering the unprecedented times, she urged the Bureau and the Secretariat to prepare a sound alternative plan for an online second part of the fifth session of the Assembly planned for 2022, in case it were needed. She urged Member States and the secretariat to ensure that intergovernmental processes become more resilient so that real progress could be achieved independent of circumstances.

9. She drew attention to a five-day virtual Youth Environment Assembly that had been held in February 2021, bringing together young people from over 170 countries, representatives of several United Nations entities, Member States and other institutions on the topic of co-leadership by young people. She stressed that meaningful youth engagement had to be rights-based and equitable. It was necessary to provide designated spaces for young people to self-organize and engage in the United Nations. During the Youth Environment Assembly, chemicals and waste youth platforms had been launched in cooperation with the secretariat of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions and the Minamata Convention on Mercury, and work had begun on the science, policy and business forum youth working group. More needed to be done, however, to ensure the involvement of children and youth and to cater to their needs of additional capacity building and new open forms of working and cooperation.

10. Mr. Hwang congratulated the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Executive Director of UNEP on the launch of the synthesis report, *Making Peace with Nature: A scientific blueprint to tackle the climate, biodiversity and pollution emergencies*, which showed that the solution to the three environmental crises had to be a collective one. The children and youth major group also considered that the solution needed to be intergenerational. Highlighting a key message from the report, Mr. Hwang said that the economic and financial systems that were relied upon to shape policy were no longer fit for purpose, and conventional analyses of economic development did not take into account the loss to future generations that would be caused by climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. He called for that to be rectified and that loss to be included in communications by UNEP. Another key message was that advanced science-policy processes were essential for meeting climate-related targets. In closing, he called on Member States to establish a trust fund on youth

engagement to be administered together with the youth constituency and to adopt a resolution on youth engagement at the resumed in-person meeting of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly.

11. Expressing his appreciation to the Government of Kenya for hosting the fifth session of the Environment Assembly and for serving as the host country of UNEP headquarters, Mr. Bozkir drew attention to the tragic irony of the linkage between a scaled-down fifth session of the Environment Assembly and humanity's continued encroachment on the natural world. It was to be hoped that the emergency linked to the COVID-19 pandemic would be brought under control, but further such crises, including those linked to highly contagious zoonotic diseases, were quite possible in the years to come. The warnings on the threat of environmental challenges abounded: at the present level of use and exploitation, humankind would require 1.6 Earths to maintain current living standards; extinction rates were around 100 to 1,000 times higher than the baseline rate and were increasing; the average temperature had risen 1.18 degrees Celsius, with 2016 and 2020 tied as the warmest years on record; and land degradation had reached 24 per cent of global land. As the recovery from the pandemic unlocked unparalleled resources, and with public and political will at an all-time high, the time was ripe to pursue true, transformational change in responding to the existential threat posed by the many pressing demands on a planet whose capacity could not meet the needs of its citizens. In that regard, the General Assembly would support each of the upcoming three Conference of the Parties-level environmental events relating to biodiversity, land degradation and drought, and climate, including by building political support through a series of high-level meetings. Emphasizing the urgency of action and the importance of building global consensus on environmental issues, he urged Member States, using the Sustainable Development Goals as a compass, to turn the tragedy of the pandemic into an opportunity to build a world that was more resilient, more equitable and more sustainable.

12. In his opening remarks, the Secretary-General of the United Nations noted that the Environment Assembly was meeting at a time of global crisis and fragility as the COVID-19 pandemic continued to cause turmoil worldwide, with millions of people being pushed into poverty, and with women bearing the heaviest burden. Inequalities among people and countries continued to grow in the face of a triple environmental emergency – climate disruption, appalling biodiversity decline and a pollution epidemic that was cutting short some 9 million lives a year. Emphasizing the importance of a healthy planet for sustainable development and of nature-based solutions for improving human well-being and prosperity, and noting that 2021 was a critical year to reset humankind's relationship with nature, he said that the important intergovernmental meetings to be held over the coming months all presented opportunities to increase ambition and action. Drawing attention to the ozone treaties as examples of the potential of concerted multilateral action, he highlighted commitments required in the coming months that would be key in transforming humankind's relationship with nature, including agreement on more ambitious nationally determined contributions and 2030 targets that were consistent with carbon neutrality by 2050; clarity by countries on how to reverse species and ecosystem loss, with concrete targets and means of implementation; a strong post-2020 framework for the sound management of chemicals and waste; intense efforts to prevent the decline of the oceans by ending unsustainable fishing practices, expanding marine protected areas and drastically reducing maritime pollution, including plastic. Those commitments must be underpinned with clear and credible plans. In closing, he pledged to facilitate participation by all countries in online negotiations, noting that he had directed United Nations officials around the world to make offices and venues available to that end. Wishing representatives a productive meeting, he stressed that, to a large degree, the viability of humanity depended on the efforts of the Environment Assembly, urging that with leadership, determination and commitment to future generations, a healthy planet could be provided for all of humanity not just to survive, but to thrive.

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

A. Adoption of the agenda

13. The Environment Assembly adopted the following agenda for the session, on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/EA.5/1/Rev.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. Commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm from 5 to 16 June 1972.
10. High-level segment.
11. Provisional agenda and dates of the sixth 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. The Environment Assembly agreed that, in the light of the exceptional circumstances associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Environment Assembly at the online meeting of its fifth session would undertake initial consideration of agenda items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 12 and 15. The Environment Assembly would consider the remaining items on the agenda at the resumed in-person meeting of the fifth session, to be held in February 2022.

15. The Assembly further agreed that two identical sessions of a leadership dialogue would be held on the afternoon of Monday, 22 February, and the morning of Tuesday, 23 February, respectively, on the theme of “Contribution of the environmental dimension of sustainable development to building a resilient and inclusive post-pandemic world”, in order to facilitate the participation of representatives from different time zones. A summary of the leadership dialogue is set out in annex III to the present proceedings.

C. Attendance

16. The following Member States were represented at the online meeting of the fifth session: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

17. The following non-Member States were represented: Holy See, League of Arab States and State of Palestine.

18. The following United Nations convention and related secretariats were represented: the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal; the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider

Caribbean Region Secretariat; the Convention on Biological Diversity; the International Institute for Sustainable Development; the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals; the Convention on Biological Diversity; the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat; the Ozone Secretariat; the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel of the Global Environment Facility; the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa; the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

19. The following United Nations specialized agencies and related organizations were represented: the Action Plan for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Southwest; Action Plan for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Northwest Pacific Region; the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations of the Economic and Social Council; the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia; the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); United Nations Population Fund; the International Telecommunication Union; the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; the Ozone Secretariat; the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel of the Global Environment Facility; the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; Department for General Assembly and Conference Management; the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); UNEP; the United Nations Institute for Training and Research; the United Nations Human Settlements Programme; the United Nations Office at Vienna; the United Nations Office for Project Services; the United Nations System Staff College; the United Nations University; United Nations Volunteers; the World Food Programme.

20. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented: the African Union Commission; the Common Fund for Commodities; the European Commission; the International Development Law Organization; the International Organization for Migration; the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme; the Southern African Development Community; the Union for the Mediterranean.

21. In addition, a number of non-governmental and civil society organizations were represented as observers.

D. General statements

22. Following the opening of the online meeting of the fifth session, representatives of regional groups of Member States and representatives of Member States made general statements on the items on the agenda for the current session.

1. General statements by regional groups

(a) African States

23. The representative of South Africa, introduced by the representative of Eritrea, made a statement on behalf of the African States. She reported on the outcome of the eighth special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), on the theme “Enhancing environmental action for effective post-COVID-19 recovery in Africa”, at which ministers had discussed Africa’s engagement in the current session of the Environment Assembly. At the eighth special session of AMCEN, ministers had reaffirmed their commitment to conserving, protecting and enhancing the resilience of Africa’s environment and natural resources as part of the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. They had also considered, and since adopted, the African Green Stimulus Programme, aimed at addressing the devastating socioeconomic and environmental impacts of the pandemic in a sustainable manner, harnessing opportunities for Africa and mobilizing financial and technical resources to upscale and enhance the implementation of green economy and climate change initiatives.

24. She welcomed the proposed mid-term strategy and programme of work and budget, while stressing the need for more coordinated and coherent regional delivery of the programme of work, including through the strengthening of UNEP in Nairobi. She expressed support for the decision to limit the online meeting of the fifth session to consideration of administrative and procedural matters, emphasizing that online negotiations of substantive matters should be avoided, given the challenges that some countries faced with the virtual meeting format. She acknowledged the importance of commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of UNEP and pledged the cooperation of the African States in the necessary preparations. Lastly, she said that the African States looked forward to a possible consensual message or statement integrating the key messages highlighted by ministers as an outcome of the fifth session.

(b) Asia-Pacific States

25. Speaking on behalf of the Asia-Pacific States, the representative of Oman reported on the outcomes of recent regional meetings. At the third session of the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia and the Pacific, held in 2019, member States had emphasized the urgency of taking action on integrated and innovative solutions that would transform Asia and the Pacific, making it resource efficient and environmentally friendly through the adoption of sustainable consumption and production patterns. More recently, environment ministers from West Asia had met in August 2020 and agreed that the pandemic called for “build back better” policies and strategies supporting more innovative, more inclusive and greener socioeconomic development. The COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted the need for international cooperation and multilateralism in building back better, such as in the sharing by Governments across the world of the Osaka Blue Ocean Vision to reduce additional pollution by marine plastic litter to zero by 2050.

26. Healthy and diverse ecosystems provided a natural defence against climate change and acted as carbon sinks. In the Asia-Pacific region, Bhutan, Fiji, Japan, Korea, the Marshall Islands, New Zealand and Singapore were aiming for carbon neutrality by 2050, and China, by 2060. During the Saudi Arabia presidency of the Group of 20, three initiatives had been launched to accelerate coral reef conservation, land restoration and economic carbon circularity. Sand and dust storms were also of concern, and the countries of the region were calling for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 70/195 on combating sand and dust storms and requesting UNEP to take coordinated and prompt action to address the challenge. It was to be hoped that the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration would inspire collaboration and support the implementation of restoration initiatives, and that an ambitious, realistic and balanced post-2020 global biodiversity framework would be adopted. The fourth session of the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia and the Pacific and the first meeting of the West Asia Environment Forum, both planned for late 2021, would provide opportunities to discuss options for accelerated action and transformative pathways, and formulate regional input to the in-person resumed meeting of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly.

(c) Latin American and Caribbean States

27. The representative of Argentina, speaking on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States, said that the COVID-19 pandemic had challenged the entire United Nations multilateral system, but that UNEP had risen to the occasion, keeping up its work and delivering on its objectives. By participating in the online meeting of the fifth session, Member States were reaffirming their commitment to multilateralism and sustainable development, and confirming the role of UNEP as the leading global environmental authority, even though they acknowledged that a virtual meeting format created new imbalances. Under such circumstances, it was particularly important to respect the objectives, goals and principles set out in agreed language in the multilateral environmental agreements.

28. Reporting on the twenty-second meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, held in early February 2021, he drew attention to the outcome document of that meeting, the Bridgetown Declaration, in which ministers had stressed the importance of multilateralism and strengthened international cooperation in developing pandemic recovery strategies centred on the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainability, while also reiterating the principles of the Rio Declaration, including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. In closing, he said that the countries of the region considered it important to strengthen UNEP in Nairobi and to advance the review process, and hoped that good use would be made of the intersessional period prior to the resumed in-person meeting of the fifth session, with the transparent, inclusive and democratic participation of Member States, to prepare the substantive issues to be discussed.

(d) Group of 77 and China

29. The representative of Malawi, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the online meeting of the fifth session was taking place as the world attempted to overcome a pandemic that had reversed much of the development gains of the past decades. The Group of 77 and China Ministerial Declaration, adopted in November 2020, stated that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, remained the greatest global challenge and a prerequisite for sustainable development. Harmony with nature was required to achieve that goal, as well as all the other Sustainable Development Goals. The fifth session of the Environment Assembly was an opportunity to reflect on how to build back better and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The challenges of online meetings in terms of participation, inclusivity, transparency, effectiveness and multilingualism were of concern, however, and digital tools should remain a

complement to, rather than a substitute for, in-person meetings. She reiterated the importance of international cooperation and multilateral institutions, as well as the principal of common but differentiated responsibilities, in dealing with environmental challenges and building back better in the post-pandemic world. The Group of 77 and China were committed to strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and supported the three decisions proposed for adoption at the online meeting of the fifth session and the development of a consensual outcome message for the session.

(e) European Union and its member States

30. The representative of Portugal, speaking on behalf of the European Union and its member States, made a statement with which Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine were also aligned. He stressed the urgency for decisive action to address the pressing challenges faced by humankind, whose strength and resilience had been put to a test by the ongoing pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic had also presented an opportunity to revisit the fundamental role of nature and the environment. The theme of the current session was timely, as nature and the pressing environmental and socioeconomic challenges, could not wait, with 2030 just around the corner. He welcomed the decisions proposed for adoption at the online meeting of the fifth session, notably on the medium-term strategy and the programme of work and budget, and expressed appreciation and support for the efforts of the President of the Environment Assembly to preserve a level of ambition that met the urgent need to address specific global challenges for the environment and human health, such as waste, chemicals, marine litter and plastics. While the upcoming meetings of the parties to the three Rio Conventions would provide opportunities for accelerated action, a global agreement on plastics was needed, and the hope was that the relevant negotiations could begin at the resumed in-person meeting of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly. The European Union's determination and commitment was reflected in the European Green Deal and strategies on circular economy, climate neutrality, biodiversity, food systems and chemicals, but everyone had to join in a global transition to a climate-neutral, resource-efficient and circular economy, with a view to continued engagement in enhanced international cooperation and strengthened global environmental governance. The European Union and its member States looked forward to collaborating in the intersessional period leading up to the resumed in-person meeting of the fifth session, as well as a successful commemoration in 2022 of the achievements of UNEP over the past 50 years.

(f) Arab States

31. The representative of Oman began his statement on behalf of the Arab States by stressing his region's commitment to multilateral action, with the pandemic highlighting the need for mutual support between countries on important topics that had immediate repercussions for humanity and future generations, such as the environment. The need for an online meeting limited to procedural issues such as the medium-term strategy due to the pandemic underscored the need to activate environmental agreements and the provisions for their implementation, including in terms of financing and technical empowerment. It was also necessary to emphasize the centrality of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and take into account different capabilities and different national circumstances, all within the framework of the right of States to achieve sustainable development and combat poverty. The proposed UNEP medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025 addressed the special needs of developing countries and countries exposed to or affected by disasters and conflicts.

32. The online meeting format, while valuable, should not be considered a substitute for in-person meetings; it presented significant technological challenges and highlighted the "digital divide" that could hamper the achievement of the digital transformation goal of the medium-term strategy. Finally, he expressed support for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of UNEP in Nairobi and the emphasis on the organization's pioneering role and its centrality in dealing with environmental issues. In the context of the United Nations reform, it would be important to allocate the resources needed for UNEP to fulfil its assigned tasks and provide Member States with the required support within the framework of regional and bilateral cooperation.

2. General statements by representatives

33. Following the regional group statements, various representatives took the floor. Several representatives highlighted the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic had posed to the continuation of progress towards halting environmental degradation and achieving sustainable development, including owing to its economic consequences. They nevertheless stressed the importance of forging ahead with such initiatives in the face of ongoing degradation. In that regard, several representatives described the steps that their Governments had taken at the national, regional and international levels.

34. Two representatives said that sustainable development or the protection of natural resources and the environment had been enshrined in the constitution of their countries, one of which had used the Sustainable Development Goals as the framework for its national development strategy. Several representatives highlighted efforts related to the preservation of biodiversity and the restoration of ecosystems, such as the enactment of related domestic legislation and the development of a post-2020 global biological diversity framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

35. Several representatives said that their countries had made great strides in combating climate change through the adoption of initiatives to reduce greenhouse emissions, including through greater efficiency in the transportation and energy sectors, or to achieve a climate-neutral economy. One representative said that her country had established a national carbon monitoring centre as part of carbon sequestration efforts.

36. Other national efforts described by representatives included the development of strategies related to persistent organic pollutants, mercury and hazardous wastes, including a ban on plastic carrier bags, and to the achievement of a green economy, focusing on waste management, the tourism sector and optimized use of energy resources.

37. It was pointed out that the pandemic had forced into the spotlight the relationship between humans and the environment and the inadequacies of current approaches to consumption and production, but it had also provided an opportunity to change current development models. Although a great deal had been achieved by, and through, UNEP over the past 50 years, much more needed to be done. Looking ahead, two representatives underscored the need for ambitious goals to drive action. One also advocated the development of governance tools that set targets, the launch of negotiations on a global instrument on plastics, the establishment of a scientific panel on chemical waste and the drawing up of guidance to halt the harm caused by the exploitation of raw materials.

38. Several representatives stressed the need for concerted efforts, at different levels, across sectors and among developed and developing countries, to address the environmental challenges facing humanity. Several representatives called for greater financial, technical and capacity-building support for developing countries, both in implementing environment-related programmes and to enable them to build more resilient, inclusive economies in the post-COVID era.

39. Acknowledging the critical role of UNEP as the global environmental authority during the pandemic, one representative encouraged UNEP to continue to improve its platform for holding online meetings and to look into both online and hybrid meeting formats to advance work ahead of the resumed in-person meeting of the fifth session of the Assembly planned in 2022.

III. Credentials of representatives (agenda item 3)

40. At the first plenary session of the online meeting of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly, the Chair of the Credentials Committee, Mr. Ado Lohmus (Estonia), 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 22 February 2021, a total of 151 Member States had submitted copies of formal credentials issued by the Head of State or Government or the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Executive Director of UNEP. A total of 42 Member States had not submitted any information regarding their representatives to the fifth session of the Environment Assembly. The Bureau recommended that the Assembly accept the credentials of the Member States.

41. The Environment Assembly took note of the report of the Bureau on credentials.

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

42. Mr. Fernando Coimbra, Permanent Representative of Brazil and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives presented the report of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, including the outcomes of the fifth session of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives, held from 15 to 17 February 2021 (UNEP/EA.5/INF/2).

43. Since the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, the Committee had convened eight regular meetings, dealing with a wide range of topics, such as follow-up to the outcomes of the fourth session, the process mandated by General Assembly resolution 73/333, preparations for an action plan to implement paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development entitled “The future we want”, preparations

for the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of UNEP, and presentations of UNEP flagship reports.

44. The Committee had also convened one or twice a month, in the format of its subcommittee, and had twice held the annual subcommittee meeting, in October 2019 and October 2020, to undertake, review and oversee the implementation of the UNEP programme of work for the biennium 2020–2021 and engage in consultations on the preparation of a new medium-term strategy for 2022–2025 and a programme of work and budget for the biennium 2022–2023. The subcommittee had also discussed the review of its internal structures and working methods.

45. At its fifth session, the Open-ended Committee had taken note of the official reports of the Executive Director of UNEP to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fifth session and had agreed to recommend the adoption by the Assembly of three draft decisions: on the management of trust funds and earmarked contributions; the medium-term strategy for 2022–2025 and the programme of work and budget for the biennium 2022–2023; and the adjournment and resumption of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

46. Following a briefing by the President of the fifth session of the Assembly, the Open-ended Committee had also taken note with appreciation of his intention to present a proposal for a consensual message to be endorsed by the Assembly at the online meeting of its fifth session, on the understanding that it would not constitute a negotiated outcome of the fifth session and would not set a precedent for future sessions.

47. The Committee had held all its meetings online since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and none had been postponed or delayed. The holding of meetings online, however, had not been without its challenges, ranging from those stemming from the digital divide to those associated with ensuring multilingualism. That was why the bureaux of the Environment Assembly and of the Committee of Permanent Representatives had decided that the present online meeting of the fifth session should focus solely on urgent and administrative decisions and to postpone the preparation of substantive negotiated outcomes until in-person meetings were able to resume.

48. Further information about the fifth session of the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives was available in the draft Chair's summary (UNEP/OECPR/5/3).

49. In closing, he thanked his fellow members of the Committee for their work, the secretariat for its support and the former Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, Ms. Francisca Ashietey-Odunton, Permanent Representative of Ghana to UNEP, who had led the Committee until June 2019 for her diligent leadership.

50. The Environment Assembly took note of the report of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

V. Commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm from 5 to 16 June 1972 (agenda item 9)

51. Participants viewed a short video showcasing the achievements of UNEP over its 50-year history, following which statements were made by Mr. Stephen Stec, the lead of the major groups and stakeholders task force on UNEP at 50 (UNEP@50); the Executive Director; the President of the Environment Assembly; and Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, President of Kenya.

52. Speaking on behalf of the science and technology major group, Mr. Stec described the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of UNEP as an opportunity to both celebrate the organization's accomplishments over the last half-century and look forward to its future. It had always been understood that the work of UNEP would be impossible without major group and stakeholder involvement in agenda-setting and policy development and implementation. That had been evidenced in 1972 at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, the first meeting at which civil society organizations had been permitted to address States Members of the United Nations directly, and had been confirmed in 1987 by the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development entitled "Our Common Future", which had introduced the concept of sustainable development and had declared that it would require the widespread support and involvement of an informed public, non-governmental organizations, the scientific community and industry.

53. While engaged with UNEP in the preparations for the fiftieth anniversary celebrations, major groups and stakeholders had also embarked on their own commemorative process, starting with a snapshot survey of Member States. The survey had revealed deep appreciation for the achievements of UNEP and high expectations of an enhanced future role for the organization, including a stronger mandate and a voice in coordinating the environmental programmes of other United Nations entities to enhance efficiency. The process would continue in 2021 with four global consultations and a more substantive survey, culminating in a report, “The UNEP we want”, to be presented at the in-person resumed meeting of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly. The major groups and stakeholders invited everyone to join them in shaping the UNEP they wanted and determining the future role of UNEP in inclusiveness, environmental justice and giving purpose to the world’s restless and impatient youth.

54. The Executive Director, welcoming Mr. Kenyatta, said that it was fitting for UNEP and the Government of Kenya to come together to launch the commemoration of UNEP at 50, given the deep and unique bond between UNEP and Kenya and their shared history of action on environmental issues such as decarbonization, plastic pollution, biodiversity loss and governance. UNEP had made significant progress since its creation in 1972, expanding the environmental rule of law in countries, consistently shepherding scientific knowledge as an important policymaking tool, playing a critical role in environmental governance and helping to propel the environmental conversation into classrooms, the media, homes, voting booths and the financial and economic sectors. None of that would have been possible without the men and women that had shaped UNEP or the many visionaries that had brought the Programme to life. The coming year would provide an opportunity to learn from those visionaries and reflect on lessons from the past to chart a path for strengthening UNEP. There was much to consider, such as how to make UNEP “the” authority rather than “an” authority on the environment; craft meaningful relationships among UNEP-hosted multilateral agreements; reinvigorate multilateralism; carve a space for the voices of the youth; use digital technologies for faster delivery of real-time solutions to environmental crises; deepen environmental engagement in every step taken by the United Nations system; and keep scanning the horizon for environmental change. The UNEP medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025, which sounded the alarm on the three planetary crises of climate change, nature loss and pollution and waste, represented a first step in making UNEP stronger and fit for purpose. Ultimately, the strength and mandate of UNEP was rooted in the fact that it was the only institution in the world that could provide the “30,000-foot view of the 3,000-piece puzzle”, as Ms. Maria Ivanova had put it in *The Untold Story of the World’s Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty*.

55. Echoing the two previous speakers, the President of the Environment Assembly reiterated that UNEP had marked important milestones over its 50-year history that functioned as places to pause and look back, but also as pit-stops for refuelling and finding inspiration for informed, strategic choices in going forward. With the significant knowledge gained over the past 50 years of how environmental issues were interlinked, the time had come to reflect on how UNEP could help Member States to increase impact and how institutions and actors who stood ready to do their part could be better used to make peace with nature. The UNEP@50 celebration would ideally contribute to that, marking the start of a process of transforming UNEP into the catalyst needed to achieve a resilient, sustainable world for all.

56. In his address, Mr. Kenyatta said that it was an honour to launch the commemoration of fifty years of UNEP, established at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972. Noting that the anniversary provided an opportunity to honour the foresight of pioneer leaders who had realized that every action taken by humankind altered the Earth that future generations would inherit, he said that the Conference had marked a turning point in how the international community viewed sustainable development. The fiftieth anniversary of that Conference and of the creation of UNEP came at a time when the world was striving to find ways to address record levels of environmental degradation, food insecurity, poverty and unemployment. It offered an opportunity for introspection and correction, for States to take transformative remedial action, make the right financial and social decisions and change their course where necessary. The role that UNEP played in offering global leadership in the management of international environmental affairs was fundamental; the strides made towards safeguarding the environment were testament to its work.

57. Kenya was proud to host the headquarters of UNEP and of UN-Habitat at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the only United Nations headquarter duty station in the global South. He expressed his gratitude to all the States Members of the United Nations, the President of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly and the Executive Director of UNEP and her staff for their commitment and determination to ensure the continued success of the Programme. Assuring UNEP and the United Nations family in Nairobi of the country’s enduring support, he pledged to continue to improve the local infrastructure and general services to that end. In closing, he called upon all the people and

nations of the world to increase their commitment to, and actions aimed at, safeguarding the environment.

58. In the ensuing discussion, several representatives welcomed the decision to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of UNEP in Nairobi in March 2022 in conjunction with the in-person resumed meeting of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly. It was important to celebrate the achievements of UNEP, which had been instrumental in the development of the current system of international environmental governance, and to show that its role was more relevant than ever.

59. Two representatives, each speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed the hope that activities linked to the commemoration would increase the visibility of UNEP and raise awareness of its added value and fundamental role in driving the international environmental agenda and sustainable governance. Both representatives, however, underscored the need for substantive issues to be tackled as part of the events. One representative referred to the ongoing process to strengthen the role of UNEP as the leading global environmental authority in accordance with paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled “The future we want”. Another representative said that the commemoration of the creation of UNEP and the in-person resumed meeting of the fifth session offered an excellent opportunity to communicate the outcomes of the road map for the implementation of relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 73/333 in the form of a high-level ministerial declaration.

60. Several individual representatives expressed views with regard to the future role of UNEP, including that UNEP should step up efforts to strengthen processes in its decentralized offices to ensure that no one was left behind; support countries in drawing up national plans and policies in line with national priorities; do more to uphold the rights of the defenders of environmental rights, indigenous peoples and women; hold polluters accountable for environmental degradation and develop new strategies in relation to protected areas.

61. The representative of Sweden, host of the high-level meeting planned for June 2022 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, said that his Government would collaborate with the Government of Kenya, host of the event to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of UNEP, to ensure that the two events complemented each other and were mutually reinforcing.

62. The representative of Germany, speaking also on behalf of Ecuador and Ghana, said that the three countries had decided to join forces to keep the topic of marine litter and plastic pollution high on the political agenda in the run-up to the in-person resumed meeting of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly. They planned to host an international ministerial conference towards the end of the third quarter of 2021 to explore the next steps towards the development of a new global agreement on marine litter and plastic pollution. A representative of a major group urged UNEP to help make such an agreement a reality.

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

63. At the first plenary session of the online meeting of the fifth session, the Environment Assembly adopted by consensus the following decisions, which are set out in annex I to the present proceedings:

<i>Decision</i>	<i>Title</i>
5/1	Management of trust funds and earmarked contributions
5/2	Medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025 and programme of work and budget for the biennium 2022–2023
5/3	Adjournment and resumption of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

64. The Environment Assembly had before it a conference room paper containing a draft outcome message of the online meeting of the fifth session, prepared by the President. Introducing the draft outcome message, the President stressed that it did not constitute a negotiated outcome of the online meeting and would not set a precedent for the in-person resumed meeting of the fifth session or for any subsequent sessions.

65. The Assembly endorsed the outcome message of the online meeting of the fifth session, which is set out in annex II to the present proceedings, without formal editing.

66. In the ensuing discussion, several representatives, including a number speaking on behalf of groups of countries, thanked the President for his leadership, in particular in the light of the exceptional circumstances against the backdrop of the pandemic. Nevertheless, some representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said out that the format of the meeting had not been conducive to transparent and inclusive decision-making and that all participants should be involved in the outcomes of the in-person resumed meeting of the session, with their views reflected in an equitable manner.
67. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, reiterated the urgent need for action. Climate change, the loss of biodiversity, land degradation and pollution continued apace and the deadline for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals was fast approaching. A number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the response plan should be ambitious. One representative proposed areas of focus, including climate-change adaptation; ecological corridors to minimize the negative impact of fragmentation in infrastructure development planning and the creation of a circular economy in the construction sector.
68. Several representatives, including a number speaking on behalf of groups of countries, welcomed the adoption of the decision on the medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025 and the programme of work and budget for the biennium 2022–2023, which would guide UNEP work in the coming years and demonstrated the Programme’s commitment and ability to continue work despite the pandemic. A number of representatives highlighted the importance of predictable, adequate and timely financing and capacity-building as well as other kinds of support to aid implementation. One representative expressed the hope that future efforts would be facilitated by wider geographical representation and an improved gender balance among UNEP staff.
69. Many representatives emphasized the importance of cooperation and enhanced multilateral efforts, and stressed their readiness to work with other Member States, the regional groups, the Bureau and the secretariat in the lead up to the in-person resumed meeting of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly. One representative underscored the need for Governments to work with the private sector, civil society, indigenous peoples and academia, with another advocating that cooperation be based on the principles of transparency, accountability and common but differentiated responsibilities.
70. Several representatives described efforts undertaken by individual countries or groups of countries to resolve the ongoing environmental crises, including the adoption of a set of policy initiatives that aimed for climate-neutrality by 2050; the enactment of domestic legislation to implement the Paris Agreement; the development of a national climate-change adaptation plan; research and development on climate-change adaptation technologies; and the creation of a global alliance on the circular economy and resource efficiency.

VII. Other matters (agenda item 14)

71. During the closing session, a statement was delivered by Mr. Munir Akram, President of the Economic and Social Council, which was followed by presentations on various events held in connection with the online meeting of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly.
72. Following Mr. Akram’s remarks, the President of the fifth session noted that many international organizations and treaty bodies had sent special video messages to the Environment Assembly at its fifth session, including the United Nations Industrial Development Organization; the United Nations Development Programme; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; the secretariats of various multilateral agreements and of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa; the Special Rapporteur for human rights and the environment and the World Bank. Those messages were available on the webpage of the Environment Assembly.
73. The Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, Ms. Joyce Msuya, reported on the leadership dialogue, which had been held on the afternoon of Monday, 22 February, and the morning of Tuesday, 23 February. A summary of the leadership dialogue is set out in annex III to the present proceedings.
74. Representatives also heard reports on the key outcomes of the nineteenth session of the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum, the third session of the United Nations Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment and the Youth Environment Assembly, which had taken place in the weeks leading up to the present online meeting.

75. Characterizing the Earth as hospitable and biodiverse when the human species had first emerged, Mr. Akram described how humans had assaulted nature and significantly altered the planet over time. Nature was now fighting back, resulting in the visible impacts of global warming and climate change and less visible but equally devastating impacts of biodiversity loss. It was time to discard the economic models driving States to fight nature and each other, and to transition to a new economic and social paradigm that valued nature conservation over gross national product and enshrined sustainability as an integral part of the development paradigm. Member States were urged to ensure that the achievement of environmental targets was incorporated into their national Sustainable Development Goal strategies and reflected in their voluntary national reviews. For its part, the Economic and Social Council would endeavour to align the United Nations development system more closely with the sustainability targets in its Development Cooperation Forum and to mobilize the energy of young people to fight for nature at its Youth Forum.

76. For 2021, the Council had identified finance, sustainable infrastructure and science and technology as its three areas of focus, all three of which were vital to achieving environmental goals. Developing countries needed an estimated \$4.3 trillion to recover from the COVID-19 crisis and achieve the Sustainable Development Goal targets. Access to adequate finance was essential for the post-pandemic recovery, let alone for a green recovery. The promise of \$100 billion annually in climate finance also had to be fulfilled. Developing countries needed a further \$1.5 trillion in sustainable infrastructure investment annually; such investment would have an impact on 92 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goal targets and form the heart of the transition to a green economy. Science and technology offered answers to the challenges of post-pandemic recovery and the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and climate and environmental goals. As the rapid production of vaccines had shown, when requirements were clearly identified, innovation was possible. Member States were urged to identify the scientific breakthroughs needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to deploy the needed financial and human capital, marshal the power of digitalization to accelerate equitable and green growth and mobilize the political will to take the decisions needed to prevent humanity from destroying the hospitality of the planet.

77. Ms. Fatima Frutan, representing the major groups and stakeholders, said that science had shown that the triple environmental crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution were an existential threat for nature, animals and humankind. The pandemic was a wake-up call highlighting the need for faster global environmental decision-making, higher ambition for transformative action and an increased pace and scale of implementation. She drew attention to the core messages of the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum at its nineteenth session, which are available at: <https://www.unep.org/events/global-major-groups-stakeholders-forum-gmgsgf/online-global-major-groups-and-stakeholder>.

78. The outcomes of the third session of the United Nations Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment were presented by digital spokesperson Sam and his colleague, Bella. The third session of the Forum, on the theme “Integrated Solutions for Nature”, had been attended by 5,000 people, including 126 expert speakers from key sectors. A youth and children United Nations-Science-Policy-Business Forum working group had been launched to focus on green entrepreneurship and green jobs. At its third session, the Forum had emphasized the need for united, multisectoral, multilateral action supported by science as well as policies that empowered the equitable and fair deployment of new technologies for the environment as a prerequisite to the implementation of the UNEP medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025. The specific recommendations of the Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment are available at: <http://www.un-spbf.org/>. Ms. Judy Njenga, speaking on behalf of the children and youth major group, drew attention to the flagship report, “The UNEP we want”, which was being prepared by the children and youth and the science and technology major groups for launch in 2021. Children and the youth were calling on Member States to table a resolution on youth engagement in the Environment Assembly and its subcommittees, and would share a road map to youth engagement in the lead-up to the in-person resumed meeting of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly. The messages formulated by children and youth attending the Second Global Youth Environment Assembly are available at: <https://www.youthenvironment.org/yea>.

VIII. Adoption of the report of the session (agenda item 15)

79. 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.

IX. Closure of the session (agenda item 16)

80. The online meeting of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP was declared closed at 6.50 p.m. on 23 February 2021 and the fifth session was thus adjourned pending the resumed in-person meeting to be held in 2022.

ADVANCE

Annex I**Decisions adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme at its fifth session**

<i>Decision</i>	<i>Title</i>
5/1	Management of trust funds and earmarked contributions
5/2	Medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025 and programme of work and budget for the biennium 2022–2023
5/3	Adjournment and resumption of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

ADVANCE

Decision 5/1. Management of trust funds and earmarked contributions

The United Nations Environment Assembly,

Having considered the report of the Executive Director entitled “Information on implementation of decision 4/3 on the management of trust funds and earmarked contributions,”¹

Recalling its decision 3/3, in which 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/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 line with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations, agreements for which the United Nations Environment Programme carries out the functions of the secretariat must be based on the principle of cost recovery when it comes to administrative matters;

I

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

3. *Notes and approves* the establishment of the following trust funds:
 - (a) BRL – Trust Fund for the Revolving Fund Activities of the Bamako Convention, with an expiry date of 31 December 2023;
 - (b) FEC – Trust Fund for the Core Activities of the “Faith for Earth Coalition” of the United Nations Environment Programme, with no fixed expiry date;
 - (c) FIL – General Trust Fund to support the activities of the UNEP Financial Services Initiative on the Environment with no fixed expiry date;²
4. *Approves* the extension of the following trust funds upon receiving requests to do so from the appropriate authorities:
 - (a) AFB – Technical Cooperation Trust Fund for United Nations Environment Programme Activities as Multilateral Implementing Entity of the Adaptation Fund Board (AFB), which is extended up to 31 December 2025;
 - (b) AML – General Trust Fund for the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), which is extended up to 31 December 2025;
 - (c) BPL – Technical Cooperation Trust Fund for the Implementation of the Agreement with Belgium (financed by the Government of Belgium), which is extended up to 31 December 2025;
 - (d) CLL – Trust Fund to Support the Activities of the Climate Technology Centre and Network, which is extended up to 31 December 2025;
 - (e) CML – Trust fund for the special programme in support to 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, which is extended up to 31 December 2025;
 - (f) ECL – Technical Cooperation Trust Fund to Support Achievement of Contribution Agreement N° 21.0401/2011/608174/SUB/E2 – Strategic Cooperation Agreement between the European Commission – Directorate General of the Environment and – and the United Nations

¹ UNEP/EA.5/INF/5.

² Change of trust fund type to manage contributions in a pooled fund rather than in the grant fund that was originally established. This is a technical change to reduce workload in the enterprise resource planning system (Umoja).

Environment Programme (covering ENRTP Priority 3.1 – Strengthening Environment Governance), which is extended up to 31 December 2025;

(g) ESS – Technical Cooperation Trust Fund for the Implementation by the United Nations Environment Programme of Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EBA), which is extended up to 31 December 2025;

(h) EUL – Technical Cooperation Trust Fund to Support the Achievement of Contribution Agreement No. DCI-ENV/2010/258-800, 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”), which is extended up to 31 December 2025;

(i) GPP – Trust fund for assisting the delegates from the developing countries, the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States in attending the sessions of the ad hoc open-ended working group for the Global Pact for the Environment, which is extended up to 31 December 2025;

(j) GPS – Trust fund in support of the secretariat functions and the organization of meetings and consultations for the Global Pact for the Environment, which is extended up to 31 December 2025;

(k) IAL – Technical Cooperation Trust Fund for the Ireland Aid Multilateral Environment Fund for Africa (financed by the Government of Ireland), which is extended up to 31 December 2025;

(l) IEL – Technical Cooperation Trust Fund for Priority Projects to Improve the Environment in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (financed by the Republic of Korea), which is extended up to 31 December 2025;

(m) MCL – General Trust Fund in support of Activities on Mercury and Other Metals, which is extended up to 31 December 2025;

(n) MDL – Technical Cooperation Trust Fund for UNEP Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund, which is extended up to 31 December 2025;

(o) REL – Technical Cooperation Trust Fund for the Promotion of Renewable Energy in the Mediterranean Region (financed by the Government of Italy), which is extended up to 31 December 2025;

(p) SLP – Trust fund to Support the Activities of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short-lived Climate Pollutants, which is extended up to 31 December 2030;

(q) SML – General Trust Fund for the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management Quick Start Programme, which is extended up to 31 December 2025;

(r) WPL – General Trust Fund to Provide Support to the Global Environment Monitoring System/Water Programme Office and to Promote its Activities, which is extended up to 31 December 2025;

II

Trust funds in support of regional seas programmes, conventions, protocols and special funds

5. *Notes and approves* the extension of the following trust funds as requested by the Ninth Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas, the Signatory States to the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia at their eighth meeting, and the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals at its thirteenth meeting, respectively:

(a) BAL – General Trust Fund for the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas, which is extended up to 31 December 2024;

(b) MRL – Technical Cooperation Trust Fund on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia (IOSEA), which is extended up to 31 December 2023;

(c) MSL – Trust Fund for the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, which is extended up to 31 December 2023;

6. *Approves* the extension of the following trust funds, upon receiving requests to do so from the appropriate authorities:

A. 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), which is extended up to 31 December 2023;

(b) MEL – Trust Fund for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution, which is extended up to 31 December 2023;

(c) QML – Support of the Mediterranean Action Plan, which is extended up to 31 December 2023;

B. 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, which is extended up to 31 December 2023;

(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, which is extended up to 31 December 2023;

(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, which is extended up to 31 December 2023;

(d) RVL – Special Trust Fund for the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, which is extended up to 31 December 2023;

(e) SCL – General Trust Fund for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, its subsidiary bodies and the Convention secretariat, which is extended up to 31 December 2023;

(f) SVL – Special Trust Fund for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, its subsidiary bodies and the Convention secretariat, which is extended up to 31 December 2023;

C. 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

(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, which is extended up to 31 December 2023;

(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 African Region, which is extended up to 31 December 2023;

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

(a) CAR – Trust Fund for the Core Budget of the Carpathian Convention, which is extended up to 31 December 2023;

(b) CAP – Trust Fund for the Core Budget of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians and related protocols, which is extended up to 31 December 2023;

-
- E. 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, which is extended up to 31 December 2024;
 - (b) AWL – General Trust Fund for the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds, which is extended up to 31 December 2024;
 - (c) BTL – General Trust Fund for the Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats, which is extended up to 31 December 2023;
 - (d) QFL – General Trust Fund for Voluntary Contributions in respect of the Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats, which is extended up to 31 December 2023;
 - (e) 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, which is extended up to 31 December 2024;
 - (f) SMU – Trust Fund to Support the Activities of the Secretariat of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks, which is extended up to 31 December 2024;
 - (g) MVL – General Trust Fund for Voluntary Contributions in Support of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, which is extended up to 31 December 2023;
- F. 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**
- (a) EAL – Regional Seas Trust Fund for the Eastern African region, which is extended up to 31 December 2025;
 - (b) QAW – Support of the Action Plan for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Eastern African Region, which is extended up to 31 December 2025;
- G. Trust funds administered by the secretariat of the Action Plan for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment and Coastal Areas of the East Asian Seas**
- (a) ESL – Regional Trust Fund for the Implementation of the Action Plan for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment and Coastal Areas of East Asian Seas, which is extended up to 31 December 2024;
 - (b) QEL – Support of the Eastern Asian Seas Action Plan, which is extended up to 31 December 2024;
- H. Trust funds administered by the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity**
- (a) BBL – Trust Fund for the Core Programme Budget for the Nagoya Protocol, which is extended up to 31 December 2023;
 - (b) BEL – General Trust Fund for Additional Voluntary Contributions in Support of Approved Activities under the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Protocols, which is extended up to 31 December 2025;
 - (c) BGL – General Trust Fund for the Core Programme Budget for the Biosafety Protocol, which is extended up to 31 December 2023;
 - (d) BYL – General Trust Fund for the Convention on Biological Diversity, which is extended up to 31 December 2023;
 - (e) BZL – General Trust Fund for Voluntary Contributions to Facilitate the Participation of Parties in the Process of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which is extended up to 31 December 2025;
 - (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, which is extended up to 31 December 2025;

I. 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, which is extended up to 31 December 2023;

(b) 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, which is extended up to 31 December 2023;

J. 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 and its Protocols

(a) CRL – Regional Trust Fund for Implementation of the Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme, which is extended up 31 December 2023;

(b) QCL – Trust Fund for Support of the Cartagena Convention Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme, which is extended up 31 December 2023.

ADVANCED

Decision 5/2. Medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025 and programme of work and budget for the biennium 2022–2023

The United Nations Environment Assembly,

Recalling its commitment to contributing to the effective implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in an integrated manner, and highlighting that the time frame of the proposed medium-term strategy and the proposed programme of work and budget coincide with the beginning of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development,

Recalling also its encouragement to the Executive Director to take action, within the mandate, programme of work and budget of the United Nations Environment Programme, to enhance coordinated, coherent and integrated delivery within the United Nations system on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda,

Recalling further the coordinating mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme within the United Nations system and respecting the mandates and competences established by the multilateral environmental agreements,

Recalling the relevant provisions of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, and welcoming the activities of the United Nations Environment Programme, within its mandate, that are in line with nationally determined contributions and priorities,

Noting that further action should be undertaken by the United Nations Environment Programme in its recruitment strategy with due regard to the principle of equitable geographical distribution, in accordance with paragraph 3 of Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations,

Welcoming the progress made by the United Nations Environment Programme in ensuring gender balance and parity in its recruitment strategy in line with the United Nations system-wide strategy on gender parity, and underlining that further action in that regard should be undertaken by the Programme,

Having considered the proposed medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025 and the programme of work and budget for the biennium 2022–2023, as prepared by the Executive Director following consultations with the Committee of Permanent Representatives, while recalling that some definitions and terminologies used therein have not been agreed intergovernmentally and should therefore not prejudice any future negotiations or agreements,

1. *Approves* the medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025 and the programme of work and budget for the biennium 2022–2023;
2. *Also approves* appropriations for the Environment Fund in the amount of 200 million United States dollars for the biennium for the purposes indicated in the following table:

Environment Fund programme of work and budget for the biennium 2022–2023

(thousands of United States dollars)

A. Policymaking organs	4 000
B. Executive direction and management	8 000
C. Programme of work	164 000
Climate action	24 000
Digital transformation	14 000
Nature action	24 000
Environmental governance	26 000
Chemicals and pollution action	24 000
Finance and economic transformation	26 000
Science policy	26 000
D. Fund programme reserve	10 000
E. Programme management support	14 000
Total	200 000

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3. *Stresses* the importance of early, extensive and transparent consultations between the Executive Director, Member States and the Committee of Permanent Representatives on the preparation of the draft medium-term strategy and programme of work and budget;
 4. *Also stresses* the need for the programme of work and budget to be based on results-based management;
 5. *Authorizes* the Executive Director to reallocate resources between subprogramme budget lines up to a maximum of ten per cent of the subprogramme appropriations and to inform the Committee of Permanent Representatives thereof, and in duly justified exceptional circumstances to reallocate in excess of ten per cent and up to 20 per cent of the appropriations from which resources are reallocated after prior consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives;
 6. *Also authorizes* the Executive Director to adjust, in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives, the level of Environment Fund allocations to subprogrammes, bringing them into line with possible variations in income compared to the approved level of appropriations, while taking into account expected income from other sources;
 7. *Further authorizes* the Executive Director to enter into forward commitments not exceeding 20 million United States dollars for Environment Fund activities, to implement the programme of work for the biennium 2022–2023;
 8. *Requests* the Executive Director to continue to apply a prudent approach to the management of resources from all sources, including the Environment Fund, including through the careful management of contractual arrangements;
 9. *Welcomes* the progress made in increasing allocations from the Environment Fund to activities and operations in the programme of work for the biennium 2020–2021;
 10. *Requests* the Executive Director to continue to monitor and manage the share of the Environment Fund devoted, respectively, to post costs and non-post costs, while clearly prioritizing the application of the resources of the Environment Fund to programme activities;
 11. *Emphasizes* the need for comprehensive information and full justification regarding proposed expenditures and contributions from all sources of funding, including staffing information, to be provided to the Committee of Permanent Representatives well in advance of its consideration of the proposed programme of work and budget;
 12. *Requests* the Executive Director to continue to improve the achievement of programme objectives and the efficient and transparent use of resources to that end, subject to United Nations processes of oversight, review and independent evaluation;
 13. *Also requests* the Executive Director to continue to report to Member States through the meeting of the annual subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and to the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme at its sessions, on evaluation findings and the progress made in respect of the performance of each subprogramme and its expected accomplishments, and on the execution of the budget of the Environment Fund, including voluntary contributions, expenditures and reallocations of appropriations or adjustments of allocations;
 14. *Further requests* the Executive Director to ensure that trust funds and earmarked contributions to the United Nations Environment Programme are used to fund activities that are in line with the programme of work, apart from those funds administered by the United Nations Environment Programme on behalf of other intergovernmental bodies;
 15. *Urges* all Member States and others in a position to do so to increase voluntary contributions to the United Nations Environment Programme, notably the Environment Fund, encouraged by the universal membership of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and also requests the Executive Director, in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations, to mobilize increased voluntary funding, including softly earmarked funding, to the Programme from all Member States and others in a position to do so and to continue to broaden the contributor base;
 16. *Notes* the positive effect of the voluntary indicative scale of contributions to broaden the base of contributions to, and enhance predictability in the voluntary financing of, the Environment Fund, and requests the Executive Director to continue to adapt the voluntary indicative scale of contributions, inter alia, in accordance with Governing Council decision SS.VII/1 and any relevant subsequent decisions;

17. *Welcomes* the efforts made by the Executive Director, in close consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives, to design a resource mobilization strategy that improves the adequacy and predictability of resources and encourages the Executive Director, in close consultation with the Committee, to implement the strategy with a priority of broadening the contributor base from Member States and other partners;

18. *Requests* the Executive Director to pay due regard to the principle of equitable geographical distribution, in accordance with paragraph 3 of Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations, in the recruitment strategy of the United Nations Environment Programme, and to submit a comprehensive report on human resources for consideration at the resumed meeting of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly;

19. *Also requests* the Executive Director to undertake further action to ensure gender balance and parity in its recruitment strategy in line with the United Nations system-wide strategy on gender parity;

20. *Further requests* the Executive Director, in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives, to submit for consideration and approval by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its sixth session, a prioritized, results-oriented and streamlined programme of work for the biennium 2024–2025.

ADVANCED

Decision 5/3. Adjournment and resumption of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

The United Nations Environment Assembly,

Recalling decision 4/2 of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme, entitled “Provisional agenda, date and venue of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly”, by which the Environment Assembly decided to hold the fifth session of the Assembly at its headquarters in Nairobi from 22 to 26 February 2021,

Recalling also the theme of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly, namely “Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”,

Conscious of the fact that the restrictions related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic have not allowed for representatives of Member States and stakeholders to meet in person at the online meeting of its fifth session, in February 2021,

Deeply committed to fulfilling the mandate of the Environment Assembly as the highest-level decision-making body of the United Nations on the environment,

Reaffirming that the Committee of Permanent Representatives is the subsidiary, intersessional and open-ended body of the governing body of the United Nations Environment Programme, and also reaffirming its mandate and functions as set out in Governing Council decisions 19/32 and 27/2,

1. *Decides* to adjourn the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and to resume the session by convening at its headquarters in Nairobi from 28 February to 2 March 2022 to conclude the consideration of its agenda;
2. *Decides* that the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives will resume its fifth session from 21 to 25 February 2022, and requests the Committee of Permanent Representatives to decide on the format and agenda of that meeting;
3. *Calls upon* Member States, with the support of the secretariat as appropriate, to continue joint efforts to strengthen actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and to follow up on relevant mandates emanating from the outcomes of previous sessions of the United Nations Environment Assembly;
4. *Takes note* of the reports of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme submitted to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fifth session on progress achieved in the implementation of resolutions of the Assembly, as listed in the annex to the present decision, and decides to review those reports at the eighth annual subcommittee meeting in 2021 and defer taking action thereon until the resumed meeting of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly in February and March 2022;
5. *Decides* that the United Nations Environment Assembly shall, at the resumed meeting of its fifth session, finalize implementation of the mandate entrusted to it by General Assembly resolution 73/333 of 30 August 2019 to prepare a political declaration for a United Nations high-level meeting and invites the General Assembly to consider the appropriate event for the adoption of such a declaration, including the option of adopting it as one of the outcomes of the special session of the Environment Assembly to be held to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme, taking into account the result of further consultations on the follow-up to General Assembly resolution 73/333;
6. *Also decides* that the Committee of Permanent Representatives, in accordance with its mandate, shall continue to review the implementation of resolutions adopted by the Environment Assembly;
7. *Recommends* that the Committee of Permanent Representatives, at its 154th meeting, consider, in view of systemic problems and in a comprehensive manner, the cycle of the term of office of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives in relation to that of the Bureau of the Environment Assembly;
8. *Decides* that the resumed meeting of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly shall consist of plenary meetings, a sessional committee of the whole and a high-level segment, including leadership dialogues and a multi-stakeholder dialogue;

9. *Strongly encourages* Member States, without prejudice to the rules of procedure, in particular rule 44, to submit draft resolutions for consideration by the Environment Assembly at the resumed meeting of the fifth session at an early stage, preferably at least eight weeks in advance of the resumed meeting of the fifth session of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives, to allow for a productive period between the online and resumed meetings of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly, taking into account the limited time and resources available for the negotiation of such draft resolutions;

Commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm from 5 to 16 June 1972

10. *Decides* to convene a special session of the United Nations Environment Assembly to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme, to be held in Nairobi for two days, on 3 and 4 March 2022, in conjunction with the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly, under the leadership of the Presidency and the Bureau of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly.

ADVANCE

Annex to decision 5/3: Reports of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme submitted United Nations Environment Assembly at its fifth session on progress achieved in the implementation of resolutions of the Assembly

UNEP/EA.5/4: Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/1 on innovative pathways to achieve sustainable consumption and production

UNEP/EA.5/5: Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/2 on promotion of sustainable and innovative solutions for curbing food loss and waste

UNEP/EA.5/6: Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/4 on addressing environmental challenges through sustainable business practices

UNEP/EA.5/7: Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/5 on sustainable infrastructure

UNEP/EA.5/8: Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/6 on marine litter and microplastics

UNEP/EA.5/9: Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/8 on sound management of chemicals and waste

UNEP/EA.5/10: Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/10 on innovation on biodiversity and land degradation

UNEP/EA.5/11: Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/15 on innovations in sustainable rangelands and pastoralism

UNEP/EA.5/12: Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/17 on the promotion of gender equality and the human rights and empowerment of women and girls in environmental governance

UNEP/EA.5/13: Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/18 on the poverty-environment nexus

UNEP/EA.5/14: Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/19 on mineral resource governance

UNEP/EA.5/15: Availability of adequate funding to support implementation of the fifth Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law pursuant to resolution 4/20

UNEP/EA.5/16: Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/22 on implementation and follow-up of United Nations Environment Assembly resolutions

UNEP/EA.5/17: Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/23 on keeping the world environment under review: enhancing the United Nations Environment Programme science-policy interface and endorsement of the Global Environment Outlook

UNEP/EA.5/18: Progress in the implementation of resolution 3/3 on contributions of the United Nations Environment Assembly to the high-level political forum on sustainable development

UNEP/EA.5/19: Progress in the implementation of resolution 3/6 on managing soil pollution to achieve sustainable development

UNEP/EA.5/20: Progress in the implementation of resolution 3/10 on addressing water pollution to protect and restore water-related ecosystems

UNEP/EA.5/21: Progress in the implementation of resolution 2/14 on illegal trade in wildlife and wild products

UNEP/EA.5/22: Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/1 on the programme of work and budget for the biennium 2020–2021, resolution 2/20 on the proposed medium-term strategy for 2018–2021 and programme of work and budget for 2018–2019, and resolution 1/15 on the proposed programme of work and budget for the biennium 2016–2017

UNEP/EA.5/23: Action plan for the implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

UNEP/EA.5/24: Providing options for the future of the Global Environment Outlook

Annex II

Outcome message of the online meeting of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly

Looking ahead to the resumed UN Environment Assembly in 2022 – Message from online UNEA-5, Nairobi 22 – 23 February 2021^{1, 2}

The Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly in Nairobi,

Meeting online for the first part of the fifth session of the Assembly 22-23 February 2021, under exceptional circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic,

Acknowledge the urgency to continue our efforts to protect our planet also in this time of crisis,

Wish to strengthen our support for the United Nations and for multilateral cooperation and remain convinced that collective action is essential to successfully address global challenges,

Is deeply concerned about the devastating global effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, creating new and serious health, socio-economic and environmental challenges, compounding existing ones especially in developing countries, undermining our common efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

Realize more than ever that human health and wellbeing are dependent upon nature and the solutions it provides, and we are aware that we shall face recurring risks of future pandemics if we maintain our current unsustainable patterns in our interactions with nature,

Is deeply concerned by the continuing loss of biodiversity, especially through the degradation and fragmentation of ecosystems and habitats for wildlife; the threats to lives and livelihoods from climate change, as well as from pollution and poorly managed waste and chemicals, jeopardizing our environment and our overarching objective of sustainable development,

Reaffirms the mandate of the UN Environment Programme as the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment,

Welcomes the Medium-Term Strategy for UNEP for 2022-2025, as well as a work programme and budget for 2022-2023. We commend UNEP for its swift contribution to the environmental dimension of the socio-economic response to COVID-19,

Is dedicated to supporting a sustainable and inclusive recovery that protects the planet, stimulates sustainable consumption and production, revitalizes our economies and creates decent and sustainable jobs, and makes real progress in eradicating poverty, while enhancing our future resilience to similar crises,

Will enhance our efforts to implement the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and reaffirm that urgent actions are required to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

Underscores the crucial importance of making further progress in all multilateral fora for the environment, in particular the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the negotiations on a post-2020 global biodiversity framework, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and the negotiations on the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020,

¹ The message contained in this document does not constitute a negotiated outcome of the 5th session of the United Nations Environment Assembly and shall not set a precedent for either its resumed 5th session or any of the Environment Assembly's subsequent sessions.

² The present message is presented without formal editing.

Will reconvene in person for the resumed fifth session of UNEA5 in Nairobi in early 2022 to continue our joint efforts, to strengthen actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and to make further progress in the implementation of resolutions and decisions from previous sessions of the Environment Assembly, including on the future of the Global Environment Outlook, and on marine litter and micro plastics,

Is dedicated to commemorating the 50th anniversary of the creation of UNEP through General Assembly resolution 2997 of 1972, and to contribute to its impactful celebration in Nairobi in early 2022,

Urgently calls for collective, science-based and holistic action through our work and decisions in the fifth UN Environment Assembly, in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

ADVANCE

Annex III

Summary of the leadership dialogue

Introduction

1. The leadership dialogue took place on the afternoon of 22 February and the morning of 23 February. The overarching theme for the dialogue was “Contribution of the environmental dimension of sustainable development to building a resilient and inclusive post-pandemic world”. During the dialogue, ministers and other high-level representatives exchanged views on three topics: the nature of the concrete measures they had taken or were planning to take to ensure that the environmental dimension of sustainable development was fully taken into consideration in a balanced and holistic manner when building a resilient and inclusive post-pandemic world; the ways in which the global community could best work together to build a stronger political momentum towards achieving that aim; and the role that the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations should play in supporting that aim in the light of the new UNEP medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025 and programme of work and budget for the biennium 2022–2023.

2. The discussion was moderated by Ms. Joyce Msuya, Deputy Executive Director of UNEP. A short video entitled “Towards a resilient and inclusive post-pandemic world” was shown at the opening of each session, highlighting the challenges facing a post-pandemic world.

Opening remarks

3. At the first session, introductory remarks were delivered by Ms. Andrea Meza Murillo, Minister of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica, and Vice-President of the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP. At the second session, introductory remarks were delivered by Ms. Béangère Abba, Secretary of State for Biodiversity of France, and Vice-President of the Bureau of the Environment Assembly; Ms. Andersen; and Mr. Afroz Shah, lawyer, India.

4. In her opening remarks at the first session, Ms. Meza Murillo said that environmental considerations should be central to national recovery plans. It was time to abandon traditional ways of working and adopt holistic approaches within national Governments, whereby ministers for the environment would play an active role in ensuring the building of resilient societies and contributed to national economic recovery processes. The various high-level meetings taking place in 2021 and 2022 provided a unique opportunity to generate momentum, enhance coordination and seek ways to increase ambition to achieve transformational change and avoid tipping points in ecosystem destruction. The High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, co-chaired by Costa Rica, France and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, was committed to seeking synergies between international conventions. The protection of nature required public and private funds to be mobilized and the global financial system now needed to be transformed so that investment could be aligned more closely with that aim. Costa Rica’s own long-term socioeconomic plan, which had been launched in 2019, was closely aligned with the country’s environmental goals and recent analysis had confirmed the substantial future financial benefits of the plan. It was the responsibility of all ministers of the environment to focus on nature-based solutions, such as green job resilience, and to turn challenges into opportunities.

5. In her opening remarks at the second session, Ms. Abba said that the international community was working together to ensure that humanity took measures to combat the threats to the planet. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had highlighted human vulnerability due to the disconnect between nature and humanity, and that environmental, animal and welfare policies were all inextricably linked and affected the whole global community. It was now time to shoulder responsibility by changing global patterns of consumption and production and adopt a more cross-cutting approach to policymaking. The United Nations Environment Assembly enabled the coordination required to ensure that multilateral action was effective, created synergies and was built on existing governmental arrangements.

6. In her opening remarks at both sessions, Ms. Andersen, noting that the UNEP report *Making Peace with Nature: A scientific blueprint to tackle the climate, biodiversity and pollution emergencies* highlighted that the earth’s environmental emergencies must be addressed together to achieve sustainability, said that it was now time to tackle the unsustainable consumption and production that were the common factors in all the current global crises. Leadership for the planet required trust in

science; immediate action; living up to global agreements; reinventing multilateralism; involving all stakeholders in decision-making; leaving no-one behind; protecting the poor and the vulnerable; and making peace with nature. By highlighting the environmental dimension of sustainable development, providing policies based on science and supporting the capacity-building of Member States, UNEP had an important role to play in ending poverty and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. It was still possible to stabilize the planet, live in harmony with nature and ensure a pollution-free planet if sustainable pathways were adopted and if, in the spirit of international solidarity, no-one was left behind.

7. In his opening remarks at the second session, Mr. Afroz Shah, a lawyer from Mumbai, India, who was best known for orchestrating the world's largest beach clean-up operation, made four assertions: that there were too many people on the planet, that those people consumed more than the planet could provide, that many people engaged in discussion but not in action, and that there were too many followers and not enough leaders.

8. Clean beaches had not in themselves been the ultimate goal of the beach clean-up initiative; it was more important to ensure that corporations, policymakers and legislators were made aware of what was happening on the ground. Pollution had reached unprecedented levels, as shown by the plastic-choked mangroves and beaches of Mumbai. It was vital not only for legislation to be enacted but for it to be implemented effectively and respected by civil society. All citizens of the world were polluters and, although humans had rights, these should not be achieved at the cost of other species, meaning that a delicate balance needed to be struck. It was time for people to stop simply talking about what needed to be done to protect the planet and to start collaborating and acting, thereby moving from being polluters to being protectors. Collaboration needed to be achieved on a massive scale, aiming to involve every single citizen of the world at ground level, and needed to take place immediately to avoid further irreversible damage to the environment. A precedent had already been set, as every citizen of the world was aware of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated civil responsibilities, so the same communication strategies could be applied to ensure that policymakers, corporations and citizens worked together to combat the environmental crisis.

9. Ms. Msuya, introducing the interactive sessions, said that the UNEP report *Making Peace with Nature: A scientific blueprint to tackle the climate, biodiversity and pollution emergencies* presented compelling scientific data showing that the challenges of the crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution could be met through renewable energy, sustainable food systems and nature-based solutions, proving that nature could be used as an ally to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Discussion

10. During the online leadership dialogue, ministers and other high-level representatives, as well as representatives of intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and major groups and stakeholders, delivered statements addressing the theme of the dialogue: "Contribution of the environmental dimension of sustainable development to building a resilient and inclusive post-pandemic world".

11. A number of representatives expressed appreciation to the Secretariat and all those who had worked hard to prepare for and organize the online meeting of the fifth session in the current exceptional circumstances, with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic still severely felt throughout the world. There was also appreciation of the two-phase arrangements for the fifth session of the Environment Assembly, with a resumed in-person meeting planned for February 2022 in Nairobi. The theme of the fifth session – "Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals" – was viewed as appropriate, given that the COVID-19 pandemic had significantly stalled progress towards sustainable development.

12. The wide-ranging impacts of the pandemic featured heavily in the dialogue. In addition to the millions of deaths and illnesses globally, economic, environmental and social vulnerability had worsened, and the pandemic had exposed the fragility of the links between humanity and nature and the perils of consumerism. Throughout the world, national economic progress has been significantly compromised, and the precariousness and disjointed nature of current efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development had been highlighted. COVID-19 had revealed the severe consequences that could result if humanity crossed the thresholds of nature in such areas as climate change, biodiversity loss and habitat destruction. In addition, the effects had been felt most deeply by the poorest and most vulnerable members of society. The outcome had been an unprecedented social, economic and environmental global crisis.

13. Despite these overwhelming challenges, the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic presented a unique opportunity to apply lessons learned in building back better and fashioning a more sustainable

and inclusive future. Old structures and a business-as-usual approach had been revealed as ineffective, and there was a need to pursue a more coordinated and environmentally aware approach that was firmly based on the interconnectedness enshrined in the 2030 Agenda. The health of humanity was intrinsically linked with the health of the planet, and efforts to combat the loss of biodiversity and ecosystems would have the added benefit of greatly reducing the risk of future pandemics of zoonotic diseases. Ambitious targets were needed, supported by political will, new governance structures, strong implementing mechanisms and targeted funding. Development models and production and consumption patterns should be redesigned for resilience and sustainability. An integrated, coordinated approach was crucial. Biodiversity and climate change targets were interlinked, and needed to be tackled concurrently. Success could only be achieved if environmental principles were an integral component of recovery plans.

14. While the challenges faced were daunting, there were reasons for optimism. The Sustainable Development Goals offered a framework for action that was already in place and on which there was international agreement. The pandemic had resulted in global awareness of the problems faced by the planet and the need to do things differently. The new spirit of solidarity and mutual accountability offered a springboard to turn intention into action. The voices of young people were being strongly heard in the global debate on the future of the planet. There was growing recognition of humanity's collective obligation to live within the limits of the planet and to move to an innovative, inclusive, sustainable and low-carbon global economy.

15. The protection of biodiversity and ecological systems was viewed as an essential component of the process of recovery, given the strong association between health security and environmental security. Many human activities were resulting in a concerning imbalance with nature, including accelerated deforestation, air and water pollution, illegal wildlife trade, degradation of wetlands, habitat destruction and unsustainable agricultural practices leading to desertification. A number of representatives alluded to actions their countries were taking to combat biodiversity loss, including reforestation and tree planting programmes, working with indigenous partners to increase the area of marine and coastal protected areas, the restoration of wetlands to support community livelihoods, wildlife and habitat recovery in the aftermath of devastating bush fires, and the establishment of national parks and other protected locations.

16. It was essential that all parties and actors demonstrate continued commitment to ambitious environmental action at every opportunity, integrating efforts in the context of multilateral environmental agreements, while eradicating the myth that environmental protection and economic growth were mutually exclusive. Many studies had demonstrated the positive economic returns that could emanate from the preservation of biodiversity and ecosystems and the productive utilization of natural capital. Strong national, regional and international plans and strategies were needed to increase response and recovery measures in the wake of the pandemic, with a focus on vulnerable communities that were most exposed to the impacts of natural hazards and environmental stressors. The United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030 and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity were highlighted as examples of global initiatives that could galvanize action towards ecosystem and biodiversity preservation.

17. The topic of climate change also featured prominently in the dialogue. Several representatives from low-lying, small island developing States stressed the crucial importance of the issue to their very existence. Climate change adaptation and mitigation measures recognized the overarching impact of climate change on many aspects of global life, including water resources, agriculture, forestry, energy, transport, infrastructure, biodiversity and human health. An increasing incidence of extreme weather events was inequitably affecting the most vulnerable and poorest members of society. Climate change had been a strong factor in the ecological changes resulting in new patterns of disease vectors that had overwhelmed public health responses and created a window of opportunity for the spread of zoonotic diseases, included COVID-19.

18. There was general acknowledgement of the critical importance of gearing economies towards low-carbon growth through innovative and sustainable policies and strategies, with the ultimate aim of achieving “net zero” status. Innovative financing approaches were needed to encourage a transition towards carbon-neutral economies, including green investments and green bonds to facilitate sustainable financing. Several representatives stated that their countries had demonstrated their commitment to the Paris Agreement on climate change by increasing their nationally determined contributions to more ambitious levels, promoting renewable energy and clean technology, closing coal-fired power plants, mainstreaming climate action in national plans and legislation, and reducing emissions of greenhouse gases. Updated nationally determined contributions had the potential to unlock investment, support job creation, expand green sectors and contribute to healthy and resilient economic recovery.

19. Sustainable consumption and production was another common thread throughout the dialogue. The consequences of unsustainable consumption and production were seen in all facets of the global environment, including air and water pollution, marine litter and microplastics even in the most remote oceans, the proliferation of inadequately treated wastes, monocultural agricultural systems that threatened biodiversity, and food consumption patterns that were unhealthy and wasteful. Fundamental changes in production and consumption patterns were needed in order to achieve sustainable development.

20. Various models for sustainable consumption and production were gaining prominence. A circular or green economy based on a life-cycle approach, efficient use of energy, water and other resources, cleaner production methods, and waste recycling could reduce the negative impacts of wasteful resource use without compromising the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy, launched in 2018, served as a blueprint for a global transition towards a circular economy, while the carbon offsetting agreement between Peru and Switzerland under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, and the Leadership Group for Industry Transition launched by India and Sweden to encourage fossil-free industry by 2050, demonstrated how an innovative partnership approach could contribute to sustainable development. A number of representatives drew attention to the European Green Deal as a promising example of a regional agreement that could boost the efficient use of resources, combat climate change, reverse biodiversity loss and reduce pollution by moving to a clean, circular economy, while the Global Alliance on Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency, recently launched by the European Union, aimed to take the concept to the global level. Several representatives highlighted actions being taken at the national level to move towards sustainable consumption and production, including bans on single-use plastics, promoting research and education on viable alternatives, the creation of green employment, “blue” initiatives to tackle marine pollution and promote healthy seas, and the transformation of the waste and recycling industry to ensure proper treatment of waste streams.

21. Several representatives painted a broader picture, espousing a holistic, nature-based approach to the resolution of the challenges besetting the planet. A renewed vision of humanity and nature in harmony was needed to build back better in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nature conservation was not only an ecological or moral issue, it was also an economic, health and equity issue. A nature-based vision would recognize the interconnectedness of complex human and environmental factors and the need for integrated, balanced, science-based solutions. Nature-based solutions would have co-benefits for both climate and biodiversity and would increase resilience to natural disasters. Human rights were integral to such an approach, with cognizance given to gender equality, the rights of vulnerable groups such as women and children, and assistance for those affected by crises and conflict to ensure that no one was left behind.

22. A number of representatives highlighted the importance of models of cooperation and support that were equitable and recognized the different capabilities and needs of countries, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Several welcomed the emergence of innovative funding mechanisms, such as the Green Climate Fund under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It was essential to ensure that economic recovery efforts were consistent with environmental objectives so that the environmental dimension of sustainable development contributed to the construction of a resilient and inclusive world.

23. Partnership was an essential component of a nature-based approach. The process of recovery was not just a matter for Governments – it should also involve the private sector, civil society and international organizations, and other stakeholders under new cooperation schemes that responded to the conditions in each country. It was important also to empower and mobilize local human resources and communities, taking advantage of their indigenous knowledge and skills to protect natural habitats. A collaborative, multisectoral and transdisciplinary approach at the local, national, regional and global levels – as exemplified by the One Health concept – would aim to achieve optimal outcomes by recognizing the interconnectivity between people and the shared environment. As another example, the Business for Nature Coalition showed how private sector partners could play a key role in investing in science-based solutions that recognized the economic value of nature-based approaches. Digital solutions were needed to ensure that decisions were based on sound data and analysis. Technological innovations, such as renewable energy and information and communication technology, had brought opportunities for the greening of production processes, including enhanced supply chain management and green procurement practices. National policies and legislation should aim to place value on ecosystem services and natural capital, to strengthen environmental law and enforcement, to promote green finance and investment, and to build synergies when dealing with multiple environmental issues.

24. Many representatives described actions being taken at the national level to promote environmentally sensitive development and sustainable consumption and production, despite the setbacks arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, and affirmed their resolve to build back better during the post-pandemic transition, incorporating the lessons learned from the pandemic. Examples included the articulation of long-term economic visions based on the principles of sustainable development; public-private partnership for environmental protection; integrating environmental considerations into all decision-making; the promotion of plastics-free, low-waste consumer behaviour, and improved management of waste streams; strategies to improve air quality and reduce pollution; strategic planning to protect biodiversity; widening access to water supply and sanitation services to ensure public and environmental health; reforestation projects with ambitious tree planting targets; the promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency; fiscal measures to incentivize environmentally friendly production; revamped institutional structures, including forums and codes designed to ensure the inputs of different stakeholders and sectors; “green” and “blue” initiatives for land and water environments; increased funding for parks and heritage areas and the rehabilitation of wetlands; the prioritization of clean production and climate-friendly technologies; and the development of environmentally friendly public transport systems. Long-term planning and target-setting synchronized with the 2030 Agenda, and cross-cutting, intersectoral action aligned with the circular economy, were features of the approach adopted in many countries.

25. Finally, a constant theme of the dialogue was the vital role of action by the global community to reinforce and guide national measures to achieve environmentally friendly sustainable development. The increasingly urgent need for action had placed heightened focus and expectation on such multilateral agreements as the Convention on Biological Diversity, whose fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, scheduled to take place in Kunming, China, in May 2021, would aim to provide guidance on global biodiversity governance. Other relevant opportunities for engagement alluded to by representatives included the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum, planned for June 2022 in Katowice, Poland, which would focus on how the world could achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of relevance to the New Urban Agenda; the United Nations Ocean Conference, to be co-hosted by Kenya and Portugal in the first half of 2022; the meetings of the conferences of the parties to 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, scheduled to take place in Geneva in July 2021; the fifth Montevideo Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law, with virtual and in-person meeting segments scheduled for 2021 and 2022; the World Circular Economy Forum 2021, to be hosted by Canada in September 2021; the fourth session of the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia and the Pacific, to be held in the Republic of Korea in October 2021; and meetings relevant to the Leaders’ Pledge for Nature and the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People.

26. Giving the pressing environmental agenda, the roles of UNEP and the United Nations Environment Assembly, were of critical importance to the future of the planet and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. At the resumed in-person meeting of its fifth session, the Environment Assembly should reflect on how UNEP had contributed, during the 50 years since its creation, to the objectives of sustainable development, and how to further strengthen its role as the primary global catalyst for galvanizing action on environmental stewardship. The medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025 and programme of work and budget for the biennium 2022–2023 were of critical relevance in that regard. In pursuing its mandate, UNEP should work with and through other international organizations and forums, avoiding duplication of efforts. Suitable areas of focus for UNEP included plastics pollution of the oceans and the promotion of new technologies throughout the product life cycle, supported by the engagement of experts from all geographical regions. More specifically, in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNEP should continue to promote, initiate and communicate the latest research on zoonoses and their connection to air pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss, in close coordination with other parts of the United Nations family. In addition, the United Nations Environment Assembly, as the world’s highest-level decision-making body on the environment, should move forward with bold, high-impact actions that were inclusive and that supported the implementation of the multilateral environmental agreements.

27. In conclusion, building a resilient post-pandemic world should focus on preserving and restoring natural ecosystems in order to set society on a sustainable development pathway, engaging the international community to identify the most appropriate solutions, regardless of national borders. Only through collective action could an equitable, nature-friendly and carbon-neutral future be achieved for all.