

TECHNICAL NOTE BY THE SECRETARIAT

DRAFT RESOLUTION ENTITLED “Sustainable Nitrogen Management”

Submitted by Sri Lanka on 25 October 2021

This draft technical note has been prepared by the UNEP Secretariat to facilitate consultations among Member States within the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) on submitted draft resolutions for the resumed session of UNEA-5, as requested in paragraph 31 the [Chair’s Summary of the 8th meeting of the annual subcommittee of the CPR](#) held 25 - 29 October 2021¹. The note may be adjusted and updated, as needed and relevant, in view of additional information that may become available in the course of upcoming consultations.

The [Draft resolution from Sri Lanka on Sustainable Nitrogen Management](#) seeks to halve nitrogen waste by 2030 by covering all the spheres of the Nitrogen cycle, supported through the establishment of an Inter-convention Nitrogen Coordination Mechanism (INCOM) to address Sustainable Nitrogen Management (SNM). The draft resolution suggests operational dimensions and elements to define the mandate of the INCOM, to be negotiated at UNEA 5.2. The draft also calls for closer collaboration with UN Agencies and requests the Executive Director to report to the sixth session of UNEA.

i) Relation to UNEPs Medium Term Strategy and Programme of Work

- UNEP MTS Paragraph 79: Operative paragraph (a) of the draft resolution has the ambition to halve nitrogen waste from all sources by 2030 as agreed in the Colombo Declaration. This relates to the MTS’ thematic subprogramme Chemicals and Pollution Action, paragraph 79 (c), namely “By 2025, actions towards modifying economy-wide nitrogen use are in place to halve the losses of anthropogenic reactive nitrogen to the environment”. Additionally, operative paragraphs (c) and (e) of the draft resolution call for further collaboration with other entities and UN Agencies, which is in line with the thematic subprogramme’s principle of “working through partnerships towards a pollution-free planet.”
- UNEP MTS Paragraph 93: UNEP will scale up ongoing efforts to address land-based sources of freshwater and marine pollution, especially nutrients, chemicals and plastic and other forms of marine litter. Through ... the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management, the Regional Seas Programme and relevant digital platforms, UNEP will support stakeholders in taking an evidence-based approach to identifying key sources, pathways and hazards, from source to sea and across product life cycles. Action on the most problematic products, sources and sectors will be prioritized through action plans on marine litter and nutrients.

¹ “The Chair also suggested that the secretariat will support our upcoming consultations on the draft resolution by providing technical guidance in writing for each draft resolution, with a technical analysis on the following three aspects: i) Relation to UNEPs Medium Term Strategy and Programme of Work; ii) Legal aspects; and iii) Budget implications”

- Nitrogen is closely linked with the Climate (GHGs) and Nature pillars in the UNEP MTS, including the ongoing UN decades for ecosystems restoration and ocean science, as well as food systems
- **UNEP PoW 2022-23 indicators**, under Chemicals and Pollution Action:
 - Number of Governments developing or implementing policies, strategies and mechanisms to prevent or reduce waste and ensure environmentally sound waste treatment or disposal,
 - Reduction in releases of pollutants to the environment achieved with UNEP support
- **UNEP Programme of Work Project No 522.4** “Protecting the Marine Environment from Land-Based Pollution through Strengthened Coordination of Global Action” (02/2019 – 12/2023) includes focus on sustainable nutrient management, including Nitrogen, under Output C.

ii) ***Legal aspects***

In general, the draft resolution is a logical next step following UNEA resolution 4/14, the Fourth meeting of the International Nitrogen Management System (INMS-4), which took place in April 2019, and the 2019 Colombo Declaration. There is a growing recognition that a coordination mechanism is needed and establishing a Nitrogen Coordination Mechanism is a sensible step forward.

The draft relates, inter alia, to the work of the International Nitrogen Management System, the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management, the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP) and its Task Force on Reactive Nitrogen, UNEA Resolution 4/14 entitled “Sustainable nitrogen management,” and the 2019 Colombo Declaration on Sustainable Nitrogen Management. It also relates to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (Basel Convention), which is correlated to nitrogen pollution. Although nitrogen waste is not listed among the waste streams covered under the Basel Convention, one of the pillars of the Convention, i.e., the promotion of environmentally sound disposal of waste, contributes to limiting the nitrogen pollution entering the environment. Furthermore, the general provisions on environmentally sound management (ESM) of hazardous wastes and other wastes of the Basel Convention, as well as the development of technical guidelines on specific disposal operations in line with the ESM criteria, e.g., on specially engineered landfilling, can be considered as measures to reduce nitrogen discharges into water and soil.

List of relevant documents and instruments:

- [UNEA4 Resolution 14 on Sustainable Nitrogen Management](#) (March 2019)
- [Colombo Declaration on Sustainable Nitrogen Management](#) (15 countries currently associated) (October 2019)
- [Berlin Declaration on Sustainable Nitrogen Management for SDGs](#) (June 2021)
- [Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework](#) (under negotiation) Target 7. Reduce pollution from all sources to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity and ecosystem functions and human health, including by **reducing nutrients lost to the environment by at least half**, and pesticides by at least two thirds and eliminating the discharge of plastic waste;

[Aichi target 8](#): “By 2020, pollution, including from excess nutrients, have been brought into levels that are not detrimental to ecosystem function and biodiversity”.

- [EC Farm to Fork Strategy](#): The excess of nutrients (especially nitrogen and phosphorus) in the environment, stemming from excess use and the fact that not all nutrients used in agriculture are effectively absorbed by plants, is another major source of air, soil and water pollution and climate impacts¹⁵. The Commission will act to **reduce nutrient losses by at least 50%** (2020).
- [UN General Assembly in its Resolution 69/245\) on Oceans and the law of the sea](#): “expresses its concern regarding the spreading of hypoxic dead zones and harmful algal blooms in oceans as a result of eutrophication fuelled by riverine runoff of fertilizers, sewage outfall and **reactive nitrogen** resulting from the burning of fossil fuels and resulting in serious consequences for ecosystem functioning, and calls upon States to enhance their efforts to reduce eutrophication, particularly by reducing total nutrient pollution from land-based sources and, to this effect, to continue to cooperate within the framework of relevant international organizations, in particular the Global Programme of Action (Para 191) (December 2014).
- UN General Assembly Resolution 51/189 “[Endorses the Washington Declaration on Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities and the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities](#) (December 1996).
- [UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution](#) (1979) and the [Gothenburg Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone](#) (1999).

iii) **Budget implications**

Taking into consideration the available existing resources, the overall extrabudgetary financial requirements for implementing this resolution during the Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) period of 2022-2025 is estimated to **USD 3,8 M**. This amount provides for USD 2,1 in staff positions and USD 1,6 in non-staff resources including activities covering travel, consultancies, operational costs, contractual services; etc. The table below provide the breakdown of estimated costs by budget group.

Budget Category	Financial requirements	PSC 13%	Sub-total	Existing resources	Net requirements
Staff	1,894,000	246,220	2,140,220	-	2,140,220
Non-staff	1,450,000	188,500	1,638,500	-	1,638,500
Total	3,344,000	434,720	3,778,720	-	3,778,720

Secretariat focal point for draft resolution on Sustainable Nitrogen Management:
Mahesh Pradhan (Mahesh.pradhan@un.org)