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UNEA-6 opening session
Monday 26 February 2024

Draft Opening statement
on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

Madame President of the Assembly, Madam Executive Director, distinguished delegates.

It is my privilege to speak on behalf of the European Union and its 27 Member States.

Montenegro, Serbia, Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

I would like to start by thanking the President and the Bureau of UNEA, the Committee of Permanent Representatives, its Chair and Bureau as well as the Executive Director and her team, for their unwavering commitment and efforts to deliver ambitious and meaningful UNEA6 outcomes.

Allow me also to wholeheartedly thank on behalf of the EU and its Member States, UNEP and the host country Kenya for the tremendous effort made in preparing UNEA 6 and your generous hospitality.

The two years since UNEA 5, where we also celebrated the 50th anniversary of UNEP, have been marked by truly significant achievements in environmental multilateralism: the agreement on the Global Biodiversity Framework, the High Seas Treaty, the Global Framework on Chemicals. And nations are pressing ahead to conclude, by the end of this year, the negotiations on a legally binding agreement to end plastic pollution and to set up a new Science-Policy Panel for the sound management of chemicals, waste and pollution. Both will be breakthroughs, both are urgently needed.

As we meet in Nairobi this week – in record numbers – delegates come from all over the world, but are united in their expectation that UNEA, the world's leading environmental authority, will take and forward looking steps to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

Over halfway into the 2030 Agenda, most SDGs are off track. Especially those related to the environment. This is a stark reminder of the urgent need for more effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral action. For ourselves as well as our planet.

UNEA 6 comes at a critical moment and we must seek to set a higher pace and recalibrate our actions to deliver on the 2030 Agenda, in particular towards the current and future generations

who count on us. The Global Youth Declaration on Environment agreed here less than 2 weeks ago is unequivocal in its call for intergenerational equity, systemic science-based policy action and commitment to environmental multilateralism.

The wealth of resolution proposals on the UNEA-6 agenda underscores the urgency and the need to take action and deliver on our agreements and commitments. This should guide our negotiations and leadership debates this week.

We look forward to the first MEAs day which will be the opportunity to make environmental multilateralism work and deliver better. We know we need more cooperation between UNEP and Multilateral Environmental Agreements; more synergies between individual conventions and science-policy interfaces, more concerted actions on the ground.

We look forward to the launch of the Global Resources Outlook 2024 on Friday. Its findings on the role of natural resources management in the economies of today can and should inform our discussions, here at this UNEA and beyond.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Inauguring the 6th session of UNEA, we are aware of the work ahead of us this week. We are grateful for the rich exchanges we had the past week.

The EU and its MS are encouraged by everyone's hard work and dedication. But we cannot ignore that so far no resolution or decision has been agreed ad ref and some resolutions have not gone through a full first reading yet. The sense of urgency and compromise needs to return to the room. You can count on our collective commitment to accelerate work towards resolving the outstanding issues for a successful and ambitious outcome acceptable to all.

We look forward to engage with you, Madam President, to achieve a Ministerial Declaration with a level of ambition that reflect the urgency to address the key environmental crises at hand. It is in this manner that UNEA can send an important message to the Summit of the Future later this year.

The EU, its member states and aligned countries look forward to the adoption of important resolutions. It is only by addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution with equal determination and vigour that we can protect our planet to the benefit of all.

Thank you