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International environmental policy and governance issues

**Compilation of statements and recommendations by major
groups and stakeholders from Africa, Asia and the Pacific,
West Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America
and Europe for consideration by the United Nations
Environment Assembly at its sixth session**

Note by the secretariat

1. Annex I to the present note contains an executive summary of the discussions held by major groups and stakeholders in 2023 in preparation for the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme. Regional consultative meetings of major groups and stakeholders were held in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, West Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and Europe. The meetings focused on the proposed theme of the session, “Effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution”. The summary has not been formally edited.
2. Annex II contains the outcomes of the regional consultative meetings. The statements, key messages and recommendations are reproduced as received, without formal editing.
3. Some of the statements and recommendations were also submitted to regional ministerial forums for their consideration, including to the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment at its nineteenth session, the fifth Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of the Asia-Pacific Region, the Arab Forum for Environment and Development at its second session, and the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean at its twenty-second meeting.

* UNEP/EA.6/1.

Annex I*

Executive summary of the discussions held by major groups and stakeholders

Regarding the proposed topic of UNEA-6 and the three planetary environmental crises, the following thematic areas were discussed across the regions and are summarized here below.

Climate action

Climate change has adverse impacts on biodiversity, food systems, marine and terrestrial ecosystems, livelihoods, human security and health and human settlement. Additionally, climate change is an issue of justice, whereby the most vulnerable and marginalized communities are disproportionately affected, and mitigation and adaptation measures therefore need to be well balanced.

The need for a just transition to renewable energy, while prioritizing energy demand reduction and addressing social and economic disparities, is highlighted by all regions: The energy transition should be contextual, recognizing local value chains in critical minerals, while ensuring that mineral extraction contributes to just energy transition and sustainable development. Developed countries are urged by the African region to support a just energy transition through scaled-up and accessible climate finance. The Latin American and Caribbean region and the European region demand to denounce the continuation of extractive mining practices and to move towards a circular economy which is based on sustainability.

The impacts of extreme weather events and their social and economic consequences in the affected region are of particular concern to the Asia Pacific region and the North American region underlines the need to acknowledge the real costs of climate catastrophes and loss of ecosystem services. In this regard the region warns about the failure to adapt or maladaptat impending advancement in community resilience. The African region highlights climate adaptation and loss and damage as a priority and in line with the West Asia region, calls for the establishment of a “Loss and Damage Fund” to ensure accountability of high emitting countries and support to countries bearing the brunt of the crises. In addition, the African region demands that climate finance should also be made accessible to grassroots communities at the forefront of climate change impacts to facilitate effective implementation.

Furthermore, the African region stresses the importance of considering the building and infrastructure sectors for climate adaptation. Climate resilient infrastructure secures the protection of the most vulnerable, including the protection of life, health, human mobility, social and cultural identity and knowledge. Investments in addressing climate-related displacement must be made by all member states. Food systems are threatened by the effects of climate change and the African region calls for more investments in climate-resilient development pathways, that prioritize biodiversity, soil health and water conservation, such as agroecology. Accordingly, the Asia Pacific region underlines the importance of agroecology in improving livelihoods and resilience while ensuring the inclusion of different knowledge systems that can support social solidarity.

The European region opposes all kinds of climate altering technologies and measurements as they fail to address root causes of the triple planetary crisis and are potentially dangerous. The region calls on Member States to oppose the draft resolution for UNEA-6 tabled by Switzerland which focuses on solar radiation modification. The leadership in strengthening the existing moratorium on geo-engineering should remain within the “Convention on Biological Diversity” and should not be shifted to UNFCCC or UNEA. Furthermore, the precautionary principle should be affirmed and the decision on marine geoengineering under the London Convention and Protocol should be ratified.

Nature action

Intact environmental systems and rich biodiversity are preconditions to sustain human health, livelihoods, food security, resilience, and cultural diversity. Ecosystems need to be preserved, conserved, and restored to address the effects of climate change and to improve ecosystem resilience. All regions welcome the ratification of the “Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework” and call for the creation of national and regional action plans for implementation, incorporating Indigenous Knowledge Holders and ensuring the meaningful participation of local communities and stakeholders.

* The annex has not been formally edited.

Furthermore, the need for financial support to developing countries and biodiversity hotspots towards the implementation of the Framework was requested. The European region demands more research on management of invasive species. All regions commend member states that ratified the “Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction” treaty and ask non-signatory parties to ratify the treaty. Moreover, Member States are urged to further strengthen their commitments and cooperation to conserve and protect the oceans and their vulnerable ecosystems by reducing and avoiding pollution, by monitoring and responding to oil spills and by preventing seabed mining.

The African Region calls on Parties to the “Convention on Biological Diversity” to update their national biodiversity strategies and actions plans to develop targets which are in line with the “Kunming-Montreal GBF” before the UNCCD COP-16 and to allocate more funds towards domestic and international biodiversity-related funding. Furthermore, the region urges the integration of the One Health approach into national biodiversity strategies and action plans and advocates for harmonization between the Paris Agreement and the “Kunming-Montreal GBF”. The West Asia region advocates for an increase of protected areas and for sustainable use of natural resources by local communities.

The Asia Pacific region is concerned that the concept of nature-based solutions is misused to justify false solutions that aim to manipulate environmental and climate systems. Therefore, Member States are called on to support, enable and promote genuine solutions. A similar position is held by the European region which demands that nature-based solutions are planned and implemented on a solid scientific basis and that financing for nature-based solutions should be dedicated towards the science-policy interface. The West Asia region emphasizes the need for more funding for studies and research in the areas of biodiversity and nature-based solutions.

The Asia Pacific condemns countries of the Global North who continue to exploit natural and human resources in the Global South for industrial purposes. The region requests installing an adequate accounting and governance system to ensure that benefits and impacts are shared equally. Similarly, the European region advocates for an international treaty for global governance of raw materials, defining zones where the extraction of raw material is prohibited and reduction target in the use of raw materials are installed. Public control should be asserted over natural resources and therefore, strong policies and standards are required. Moreover, the European region highlights water resources as a human right and requests Member States to strengthen water policies that prevent water pollution and regulate overconsumption of scarce water resources.

Chemicals and Waste Management, and Pollution Prevention

The European region calls for the implementation of regional and global multilateral agreements and for progress towards phasing out of “forever chemicals”. The Latin America and Caribbean region and the West Asia region call for waste reduction at its source and the promotion of collection and recycling systems to ensure the return into technical and biological circuits. In this regard plastic pollution was especially addressed by all regions. Member States need to fulfil UNEA resolution UNEP/EA.5/Res.14 to end plastic pollution and to implement a full-cycle approach, taking national circumstances and capabilities into account. Effective cooperation between stakeholders is needed to reduce the causes of plastic pollution. The African region highlights the necessity to consider chemical substances in plastics and recommends detailed enforcement mechanisms, strict liability, and compensation for transboundary movement damages, including penalties for polluters. The European region also expresses concern about the continued use and dispersal of chemicals added to plastic and demand full access to information on chemical composition of manufactured materials.

The Asia Pacific region is concerned about increasing emissions which contribute to air pollution not only contributing to climate change but also pose a serious threat to human health. The European region underlines that air pollution is the biggest environmental threat for human health. The region calls for a global industrial emission monitoring agreement, improved air quality standards and the development of national air quality plans and short-term action plans.

Regarding the production and use of chemicals, the Asia Pacific region mentions the threat of pollinator killing pesticides and criticizes the double standard of northern countries by shifting the burden to emerging economies in the Global South.

The increased use of hazardous pesticides poses a serious health risk to the population and the African region underlines the issue of illegal transboundary movements of chemicals and waste. The European region highlights chemical pollution caused by armed conflicts creating a long-term risk to human health, biodiversity, soil and water bodies. The region welcomes the “Science Policy Panel” (SPP) to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution” but expresses its concerns on the undue influence of representatives of the chemical industry. The Asia

Pacific region emphasizes that the SPP needs to have an equal focus on chemicals and pollution and Member States are urged to commit to a pollution free future.

Cross-cutting themes

Regions have also articulated demands that are cross-sectoral in nature. The statement by the Asia Pacific region specifically focuses on the issue of social wellbeing and justice and it underlines regional challenges regarding poverty, inequality, malnutrition and limited access to health care services, which were further aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. It also further notes the need for increased research capacities and strong law enforcement. Lastly, the region also requests Member States to regularly seek an assessment of impacts of wars and conflict on the environment and its ecosystems. In line with this the European region welcomes the Ukrainian draft resolution on the environmental impact of armed conflict and calls to recognize the interlinkages between the triple planetary crisis, conflict and peace. The lack of progress in reaching the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs is noted by the Asia Pacific and the African Region.

The African region notes that transformations are needed which are built upon the principles of the right to food, food security, food sovereignty and participatory governance. Furthermore, the region emphasizes the need for an ambitious ministerial declaration that reflects on progress achieved since UNEA-5. The West Asia region highlights the potential of digital transformation as a tool to promote and enhance sustainable behaviours and influence sustainable consumption and production patterns and systems. The European region therefore welcomes the EU draft resolution on Circular Economy. The North American region advocates for the replication of successful local projects by other local communities, instead of scaling them up as this might carry high risks and might not have the same benefits. Furthermore, the region advises UNEP to help advance international standards for recently adopted frameworks in the areas of mineral recycling and supply chain transparency.

Meaningful and participatory engagement of civil society actors

The need to protect human rights, including the rights of Indigenous Peoples and to recognize Indigenous Knowledge Systems has been made repeatedly across the regions.

The North American Region also emphasizes the importance of governments and non-Indigenous stakeholders recognizing Indigenous Knowledge Systems as equal to Western scientific knowledge. Peoples' and communities' rights should be prioritized in both multilateral and national actions, with an emphasis on creating an enabling environment.

The European region requests that decision-making should be based on democratic principles and intergenerational equity. All regions emphasize that Major Groups and Stakeholders should be included in every decision-making space at all levels whereby meaningful engagement of underrepresented and marginalized groups needs to be assured.

In order to strengthen transformative multilateral actions and foster cooperative multilateralism, it is imperative to establish relevant platforms that facilitate effective cooperation, collaboration, and meaningful participation.

According to the North America region, UNEP and UNEA is a key space for cross-sectoral and cross-topical discussions, supporting holistic solutions and inclusive system thinking. All regions concur that enhancing strategic partnerships among civil society, private sector actors, and governments is essential for achieving a comprehensive whole-of-society approach and for accelerating and improving implementation efforts.

To enhance implementation effectiveness, it is imperative to reinforce environmental governance while recognizing and acknowledging various governance models. Advanced governance encompasses heightened accountability, transparency, and equitable access to data and information.

Capacity-building opportunities, including the integration of comprehensive climate education into school curricula, should be prioritized and it is therefore highly recommended to educate, support, advocate for, and engage children and youth, as well as facilitating meaningful involvement of youth-led organizations to promote intergenerational approaches.

All regions demand a just transition in all relevant processes, viewing it as an opportunity to construct inclusive, supportive, equitable, sustainable, and resilient communities and societies.

Annex II*

Compilation of statements and recommendations by major groups and stakeholders

I. Regional report from Africa

Statement of the UNEP Major Groups & Stakeholders, Africa to the Nineteenth Ordinary Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment Held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

We, UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa, having met in a hybrid manner in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on the occasion of the Nineteenth Ordinary Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), hereby adopt the following Statement and submit for consideration at UNEA 6.

Preamble

We express our deepest appreciation to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for graciously hosting the Nineteenth Ordinary Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) and for their support to the preparations and hosting of the 2023 Regional Consultative Meeting of the UNEP Major Groups & Stakeholders, Africa. We congratulate the Republic of Senegal for running the presidency of the Eighteenth Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment in an open, inclusive, and successful manner that fostered engagement of the UNEP Major Groups & Stakeholders, Africa particularly in the expert segments of the AMCEN; We congratulate the Republic of Egypt for successfully hosting the Twenty-Seventh Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2022; the Kingdom of Morocco for its excellent leadership of UNEA6 and as the first African Presidency of a United Nations Environment Assembly; and the Federal Republic of Ethiopia for ascending to the Presidency of the Nineteenth Session of the AMCEN.

We register our most sincere congratulations to Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema on her appointment as the Deputy Executive Director of the UNEP and to Dr. Rose Mwebaza for her appointment as the Director for the UNEP Africa Office and take this opportunity to express our commitment to working closely and collaboratively with them.

Taking note that previous AMCEN sessions, including AMCEN18 decisions, provide clear policy direction and that the focus of the outcomes of the Nineteenth Ordinary Session of the AMCEN should be on driving implementation as led by national governments and supported by other actors such as civil society, communities, and development partners,

Recognizing that AMCEN decisions do not take place in a vacuum and require enabling means of implementation at national and other levels,

Deeply concerned that the environmental sector is underfunded at the subnational, national, and regional levels throughout Africa, and that more financing remains a priority for progress on Africa's environmental agenda,

Underscoring that mineral extraction, processing and usage in Africa should significantly contribute to Africa's just energy transition and sustainable development prioritizing added value for the continent.

Noting AMCEN/18(II)/6 para 15 which makes specific recommendations for action by national governments, cities, and development partners,

Aware that climate change is a justice issue that has disproportionately affected millions of Africans,

Recognizing the importance of robust policy frameworks and cross-sectoral collaboration, to effectively tackle the complex challenges of climate change,

* The annex has not been formally edited.

Appreciating the value of regional and global collaboration in sharing best practices, exchanging knowledge, and mobilizing resources to amplify our collective impact,

Emphasizing the importance of indigenous knowledge in reducing deforestation and degradation,

Recognizing that adaptation is a key priority for Africa and the critical role of ecosystem-based approaches emphasizing decision 18/1 (a) of the resumed 18th session of the AMCEN last year - on fostering sustainable soil governance in Africa - to enhance climate adaptation and resilience among communities that are most affected and vulnerable.

Affirming that the energy transition in Africa must both enhance reliable and affordable access for the 600 million people who lack access to electrification and 900 million others who lack access to clean cooking while increasing investment in renewable energy including decentralized renewable energy,

Underscoring that energy transitions should be contextual and recognize and prioritize local value chains in critical minerals mining and renewable energy sectors while upholding best practices in business and human rights,

Noting that climate adaptation and loss and damage funding are a priority for Africa,

Acknowledging the significant efforts by the African member states to adapt to the negative impacts of climate change,

Acknowledging that biodiversity is essential for all health, livelihoods, food security, resilience and cultural diversity, we express our concern over the alarming rate of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation in Africa and globally.

Noting that biodiversity contributes significantly to the GDP, and the urgency needed to implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework,

Applauding the African Group of Negotiators on Biodiversity for taking up the mandate and ensuring that most priorities that were advanced by Africa were successfully included in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework,

Appreciating the role of women, youth and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) in conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity,

Recognizing that within the African context, the fair and equitable sharing of benefits amongst IPLCs from the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, is vital to achieving Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Noting that while Africa had stressed on the establishment of an independent Global Biodiversity Fund, and the compromise reached to establish a Trust Fund under the Global Environment Facility; and further noting the directives from the Global Environment Facility Council in this regard,

Further noting that Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity are required to update their national biodiversity strategies and action plans or develop national targets aligned with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework before the sixteenth Conference of the Parties,

Acknowledging the role of UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa in the consultative processes, intersessional meetings and Conference of Parties on the negotiation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and reiterating our commitment to participate and engage in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

Welcoming the ongoing consultations on the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, adopted at COP15 in December 2022 under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD),

Recognizing the need for strengthening cooperation and collaboration in building the necessary capacity and transfer of technologies to allow Parties, especially developing countries, to fully implement the framework.

Recalling resolution 5/14 of the resumed fifth section of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 5.2) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) entitled, “End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument, including in the marine environment,” which requested the Executive Director of UNEP to convene an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to begin its work during the second half of 2022, with the ambition of completing that work by the end of 2024,

Reiterating the UNEA 5.2 decision that the INC develops an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment that includes both binding and voluntary approaches, based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full lifecycle of plastic, taking into account, among other things, the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, as well as national circumstances and capabilities, and including provisions described in the resolution,

We submit the following perspectives:

1. **On the implementation of the decisions of the AMCEN**, we underscore that it is important to facilitate stock-taking and collaboration between AMCEN and regional networks/platforms of Major Groups and Stakeholders, and other actors. This would enable measuring progress at AMCEN, national, and subnational levels to improve accountability. We call on the AMCEN as the sole African Authority in the field of Environment to continue engaging and collaborating with the global processes and forums for multilateral environmental agreements in line with its mandate. It is imperative that going forward, Member States and Major Groups and Stakeholders report back on their contribution and progress in implementing previous AMCEN decisions to subsequent AMCEN sessions. Lastly, we remind all member states that Africa's environmental agenda is also realized through the support of non-financial resources, which should be recognized and further leveraged to realize a whole-of-society approach.
2. *Concerning the Africa Green Stimulus Programme*, we are considerate that African countries are still recovering from COVID-19's impact on economy, environment, and society and that COVID-19's impacts underlined existing vulnerabilities. We caution that rapid response will not lead to full recovery and will require transformative interventions that lead to resilience in the long term. As such, we recommend the enactment of enabling laws, policies, and mechanisms at the subnational and national levels for the implementation of the programme. In addition, we underline that the Green Stimulus Programme should be linked to efforts that address the risks posed by pandemics. Further, financing for the programme should be focused on implementation. In addition, priority actions should be identified to address major threats.
3. *Concerning critical minerals and their role in energy transitions in Africa*, building the capacity of the actors in Africa's mining sector should be prioritized to ensure that exploitation is informed by evidence-based and scientific analysis considering environmental, social, and economic impacts. Moreover, promoting intersectoral collaboration between the mining, environmental and other related sectors should underlie decision-making processes.
4. *With respect to phasing out open burning of waste in Africa*, we invite the Nineteenth Ordinary session of the AMCEN to consider adopting a decision to initiate regional policy interventions and processes that will lead to the phasing out of open dumping and burning of waste.
5. *Regarding the Africa Environment Partnership Platform*, we call on governments and partners to engage collaboratively to prioritize specific environmental sectors that require critical action in their development strategies. We also call on the African member states to facilitate regional platforms for environmental actors such as the Africa Protected Area Directors to engage in cross-sectoral and cross-regional dialogue and collaboration. We call for the mobilization and coordination of resources that foster knowledge and alignment for the platform. We encourage collaboration between African member states, and the UNEP Major Group of Stakeholders, Africa, regional networks, and other platforms of State Actors.
6. *On collaboration between African ministers of environment and African ministers of finance and economic planning*, we call for the development of an enforcement mechanism that enables long-term collaboration between AMCEN and African ministers of finance and economic planning. To enhance financing, we urge AMCEN African member states to adopt a decision to significantly increase their annual national budget quota/contribution to environmental ministries/departments to enable concrete means of implementation. We also call on member states to develop, revamp and support the mobilization and capitalization of innovative financing mechanisms for biodiversity, climate, and the environment from domestic sources. These include but are not limited to mechanisms such as A Pan-African Conservation Trust (A-PACT) and mechanisms of the Consortium of African Funds for the Environment (CAFE). We also call on African member states and governments to enhance accountability mechanisms that promote transparent deployment of financing from diverse sources.
7. *With reference to the circular economy*, we strongly recommend the development of a mechanism for integrating circular economy into national development plans, with AMCEN policy direction at the regional level.

8. **On Climate Change**, the adverse impacts are felt in particular by vulnerable groups including women, Indigenous people, local communities, and the youth. Climate change impacts adversely affect biodiversity, food systems, forestry, marine and terrestrial ecosystems, livelihoods, human security, and human settlement among others. The 2022 report of the IPCC warns that Climate change's impacts are becoming increasingly complex, more difficult to manage, and will lead to numerous risks to natural and human systems if left unchecked, requiring substantial adaptation efforts to protect human life and economic stability. Africa contributes to less than four percent of global greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) but bears the brunt of the climate crisis and those historically responsible as high emitters should be held to account. The 19th ordinary session of AMCEN is an opportunity for African leaders to renew their commitment to the fight against climate change. Acknowledging the centrality of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the AU Agenda 2063 and the importance of the African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032), it is important to update, as appropriate, the common position of Africa on climate change, and revisit commitments made in the context of multilateral environmental agreements such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement and focus on the implementation of important regional initiatives such as the African Renewable Energy Initiative, the African Adaptation Initiative and the Adaptation of African Agriculture Initiative and the three Regional Climate Commissions of the Congo Basin, Sahel and African Island States as well as other relevant elements such as the Malabo Declaration.

9. Today, over a quarter of global energy-related greenhouse gas emissions come from operating buildings, including their heating and cooling systems and electricity use. Considering rapid urbanization around the world, the number of people living in hazardous locations and inadequately built housing is expected to more than double to three billion over the next 15 years. Without immediate and appropriate solutions, growing numbers of climate-displaced populations will add to the complexity of the global need for adequate and affordable housing.

10. Recognizing and promoting women's participation in the development of innovative policies and solutions - both technologies and processes - to solve the pressing climate and environmental issues like governance, adaptation, and mitigation is critical, taking into account the fact that four out of five people displaced due to climate change are women. As a continent with a population of over 70% of young people, Africa has the opportunity to leapfrog towards a sustainable development model through meaningful engagement of youth in decision-making processes at all levels. Thus, we call upon the AMCEN to enhance inclusion, alignment, and ownership of climate strategies, policies, programmes, and plans across all spheres of both state and non-state actors.

11. *Regarding food systems and climate change*, agriculture is said to contribute seventy percent of employment, forty percent of exports, and one-third of the gross domestic product (GDP) in Africa. The global food system is responsible for 21-37 percent of annual emissions according to some studies.

12. It is our belief that the triple planetary environmental crisis that concerns AMCEN is linked to the food systems in a cyclic manner. Firstly, environment and nature-based agriculture and allied sectors remain the largest employers in Africa. The majority of the food producers, who are women, have their livelihoods adversely affected by climate change. Secondly, agriculture is one of the key sectors to curb emissions. We call on the African member states to focus and increase finance on climate-resilient development pathways such as agroecology. Agroecological policies and approaches that prioritize biodiversity, soil health, and water conservation should be adopted.

13. Cognizant that our current food systems are failing us, and need transformation it is our belief that this transformation needs to be socially accountable and built on the principles of the right to food, food security, and food sovereignty, participatory governance of the food system, and enhancing accountability & transparency mechanisms for communities - particularly rural women, food producers, farm workers, young people involved in the food supply chains, and particularly those living with hunger.

14. Emphasizing in AU agenda 2063 and, in particular, Aspiration 6 on people-led development, we urge AMCEN to ensure that dialogues be inclusive with the participation of marginalized groups and their experiences and voices in relation to the nexus between environment and the right to food, gender, livelihoods opportunities, education, and health-forming centerpiece. We further indicate that any solution being proposed need to be built around promoting community resilience, taking into account the triple planetary crisis, building on local knowledge, and supporting environmentally friendly-gender responsive agriculture. We further urge African Member States to UNEP to promote and advocate a shift towards the use of organic fertilizer as opposed to synthetic fertilizers that harm soil health and ecosystem balance.

15. *Concerning ecosystem-based adaptation*, we call on increased investment towards community-led aquatic and terrestrial management. We call upon the member states to commit to the outcomes of the CITES COP15 to safeguard Africa's endangered animal and plant species.

16. *On just energy transition pathways*, we are calling on AMCEN to lay out a strategy for operationalizing, within the African context, the principle of just transition and the Work Programme on Just Transition Pathways at COP28 to reduce, in the long-term, Africa's dependency on fossil fuels and prepare the continent for low carbon energy systems. We strongly recommend that member states increase investment in renewable energy, and use social dialogue and stock-taking to deliver a people-centric just energy transition that addresses the needs, priorities, and lived realities of communities.

17. *With respect to climate finance*, we are calling on AMCEN to push for new and additional climate finance that is adequate, flexible, predictable, and accessible to grassroots communities especially those at the forefront of climate change impacts. We emphasize that funding should be grant-based, in alignment with Africa's special needs and circumstances and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

18. *Regarding loss and damage*, African Member States to UNEP should prioritize strategies that enhance the long-term resilience of society for society to respond and cope with the increasing frequency of extreme weather events such as rising sea levels, droughts and floods, forced migration, and related conflicts. While COP27 agreed to establish a Loss and Damage Fund, we urge member states to push for the operationalization of the Loss and Damage facility that emphasizes the value of Africa (sovereign wealth in our natural resources) in delivering for the world hence the need to prioritize investing in the continent based on vulnerabilities of communities in the Africa region. For example, the prioritization of improved housing as a component of loss and damage is an essential entry point for effectively preventing the loss and damage of non-economic assets. This includes accounting more accurately for the impacts that climate change has on housing through loss and damage discussions. Notably, the IPCC calls out that "concentrated inequalities in risk are broken through prioritizing affordable housing and upgrading of informal and precarious settlements paying special attention to including marginalized groups and women."

19. *Regarding adaptation*, recognizing the progress made in COP26 and COP27, we call on the developed countries to honor their obligations to double funding provided for adaptation to developing countries. Further, we call upon member states to the UNFCCC to finalize the framework for the global goal for adaptation at COP28.

20. *Concerning the climate change and environmental degradation security nexus*, the compounding effects of climate change on fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCAS), and conflict sensitivity should be part of the official AMCEN agenda, discussed in negotiations, and included in agreements or other outcome documents.

21. *About policy advocacy and implementation of regional commitments*, commit to advocating for policies that prioritize sustainable development, climate resilience, and social equity.

22. *With focus on housing and human settlement*, as the home of a third of biodiversity globally, Africa's development trajectory is vital for delivery of climate adaptation by redefining development through embracing climate resilient infrastructure. While a house is considered an economic asset, adequate and resilient housing especially for the most vulnerable is a means of securing protection of non-economic losses, including life, health, human mobility, societal/cultural identity and knowledge. Moreover, climate change is effectively reducing the supply of affordable housing around the world. In many developing countries, affordable housing has been developed in hazard prone areas, either formally or informally, exposing communities to greater risk of flood and sea level rise. We, therefore, call on AMCEN to ensure that adaptation actions that protect communities and natural habitat are inclusive of the needs of the most vulnerable. Adaptation must be prioritized in our urban spaces, especially in rapidly urbanizing cities and informal settlements in Africa. Industrial mitigation efforts in the built environment and housing sector must not drive-up costs for households and further expand the global deficit of adequate and affordable housing.

23. *On the issue of climate mobility*, we can no longer talk about Climate change without talking about Human Mobility. Well-managed migration in the context of climate change and environmental and land degradation can contribute to both sustainable development and climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts. We call on AMCEN to establish and strengthen regional and national weather and climate institutions and systems to generate adequate and timely data and information on the impact of climate change on human mobility and increase collaboration among

member states. We call on member states to support and invest in addressing the issue and challenge of climate-related displacements in the continent.

24. *With respect to youth and climate change*, we recommend that AMCEN's focus should include, in a stronger manner, advocating, engaging, and educating youth through targeted awareness campaigns and partnerships with schools and youth organizations. At the national level, there is a need to integrate comprehensive climate education into school curricula, ensuring that every student receives the necessary knowledge to understand and address environmental challenges effectively. AMCEN must meaningfully engage youth-led organizations at all levels to increase the opportunity to scale green jobs, green housing, sustainable agriculture, adoption of renewable energy, etc. while ensuring that the youth access financing directly.

25. **On the implications of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework on Africa**, we express our concern over the alarming rate of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation in Africa and globally. We urge AMCEN to ensure that with the implementation of the framework, African member states reflect the aspirations and priorities of Africa. As UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa we have actively engaged in the consultative processes, intersessional meetings, and Conference of Parties meeting on the negotiation of the GBF, and we remain committed to ongoing active participation and engagement in the implementation of the GBF.

26. *With respect to Africa's participation in the making of the Kunming – Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and UNEP Major Groups - Africa's Approach*, we urge Member States to take appropriate measures to implement the Kunming-Montreal global biodiversity framework including through revision of national biodiversity strategies and action plans by COP16, and where not possible to report on progress at COP16.

27. We urge AMCEN to work with the African Union Commission to ensure that UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, in Africa are involved in consultations on the draft African Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.

28. We urge African member states to UNEP to recognize the role and contributions of UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa in implementing, monitoring, and reporting of the GBF, and to actively engage them in all GBF processes including consultations and intersessional work.

29. We encourage African Member States to UNEP to contribute as appropriate and continue pressing for the mobilization by 2030 of at least \$200 billion per year in domestic and international biodiversity-related funding from all sources – public and private; and we support the urgent call for international financial flows from developed to developing countries, in particular for Africa with focus on the least developed countries and small island developing States.

30. We call upon African Member States to ensure coordination and harmonization between all government ministries, spearheaded by the Ministries of Finance and Environment with regard to the prioritization and budgetary allocation for biodiversity conservation.

31. We urge African member states to develop common positions for engaging in the intersessional work of the CBD as well as the sixteenth Conference of the Parties while ensuring the meaningful engagement of UNEP MGS Africa in their preparations, especially on issues of Digital Sequence Information, resource mobilization, and the development of indicators. We urge the African Group of Negotiators on Biodiversity to ensure that the outcome of the continued further negotiation on DSI at the sixteenth Conference of Parties, will be favorable to Africa. We further request the informal biodiversity support group to continue providing technical and financial support to the African group of negotiators on biodiversity during the intersessional meetings of the Conference of the Parties as well as participation in the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties.

32. We request AMCEN to ensure that subnational governments, cities and other local authorities are represented in the informal biodiversity support group and encourage Africa member states to ratify the Marine Biodiversity Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Treaty under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Further, we call on the African Union Commission, the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), the United Nations Environment Programme, and other development partners to support African countries in strengthening regional data and information capacity on biodiversity, including on undertaking digital sequencing of genetic resources, access to information for research and development, value addition, and innovations that support sustainable utilization of biodiversity.

33. We also urge African member states to UNEP to integrate the One Health approach, among other holistic approaches, in their national biodiversity strategies and action plans, and national

health plans, as appropriate, to support the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Further, we call on African member states to UNEP to advocate for the harmonization between the Paris Agreement and the Kunming Montreal GBF towards the achievement of targets 8 and target 11 of the GBF. We also call on African member states to UNEP to, in consultation with related sectors and informed by the best science available, urgently enact legislation that addresses the impacts of pollution across respective value chains, specifically plastics, highly hazardous pesticides, and fertilizers, on biodiversity and human health communities.

34. With regards to **Africa's participation in the development of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment**, we call on African member states to UNEP to continue upholding the UNEA 5/14 resolution to End Plastic Pollution through the international legally binding instrument and the AMCEN 18/2 decision to "protect the Africa region from the health, climate, and biodiversity threats posed by plastic pollution". We underscore that the treaty must facilitate advancements in key goals of reducing and enforcing a rapid shift to biodegradable forms of plastics through a just and inclusive transition process and to swiftly prohibit the most harmful and high-risk plastic products, chemicals, and substances. Further, the treaty should impose mandatory, full, and transparent disclosure on the chemical composition of plastics produced by manufacturing companies and address all false solutions to the plastic crisis and its related problems to ensure meaningful engagement of youth and indigenous persons in formulation, implementation, and the review of strategic actions, establishing targets and requirements for reuse, non-toxic recycling, and recycled content. The UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa stand ready to support the African Group Negotiators (AGN) in a technical capacity throughout the negotiation process.

35. Fostering swifter innovation through more robust regulations and incentives for the private sector, producer accountability, and private sector transition is essential. The transition from a linear to a circular economy and ensuring a just transition for vulnerable groups including waste pickers and indigenous communities to enhance shared solutions and technologies must be appropriately framed. Together with the recently established Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the internationally binding instrument developed within the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea concerning the conservation and sustainable utilization of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, such a treaty would serve as a cornerstone for a novel international environmental legal structure, which would enable Member States to construct a more equitable globalization that safeguards nature and promotes beneficial innovation for our planet.

36. We welcome the Just Transition Initiative for an effective global instrument to end plastic pollution, led by Kenya and South Africa to incorporate issues of justice, equity, and inclusivity for the effective implementation of the future instrument shown at INC1 and INC2, and we hope to continue seeing the AGN functioning as a strong and consolidated group that drives the INC processes towards a treaty that addresses plastic pollution in the full lifecycle approach that reflects the African context.

37. *On the substantive elements of the treaty*, the UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa, collectively ask the AMCEN member states to consider the following regarding the scope of the Global Plastic Treaty: the UNEA Resolution 5/14 defined clearly the mandate for the international legally binding treaty's scope to end plastic pollution across the full lifecycle of plastics that includes all plastics and associated pollution with no exceptions, and remediation of existing pollutants. Efforts to tackle plastic pollution must involve the means to prioritize different types and categories of plastics but not limited to hazardous, toxic, and problematic plastics. The treaty must also cover the expected cooperation modalities and articulate the stakeholders to be involved clearly beyond its actual territorial scope. This is the scope to which it should adhere without further negotiations at INC3. Furthermore, with regard to the principles of the treaty, the UNEA Resolution 5/14 is underpinned by many principles of the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development which includes among others:

- (a) The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR)
- (b) Liability and compensation
- (c) Transboundary environmental justice, also known as the "no harm rule" protecting states from transboundary harm
- (d) The Preventive and Precautionary Principle
- (e) The Polluter Pays Principle

38. To make the treaty truly international legally binding, the outcome document should uphold human rights and access to environmental justice to all whose interests will be affected, and especially the negative ones during implementation of response measures including waste workers, women, indigenous, people with disabilities and frontline communities. We note that the principles are usually added to the preamble, but it is important to translate them into the text through obligations and control measures.

39. INC2 envisioned that intersessional work will play a crucial role in the support the development of the international legally binding instrument. Based on the reports published by the two Contact Groups that took place at INC2, we recommend focused areas for Intersessional work. For Contact Group 1, we recommend focusing on information on the definitions associated with terminologies such as plastics, microplastics, and circularity amongst others. We also recommend that Contact Group 1 works on the information on criteria also considering different applications and sectoral requirements, including chemical substances of concern in plastics, problematic and avoidable plastic polymers and products and related applications, designs (for reuse and circularity of plastic products), and substitutes and alternatives to plastic polymers and products.

40. For Contact Group 2, we, firstly, recommend focusing on developing articulate and detailed enforcement mechanisms, strict liability, and compensation for transboundary movement damages, including penalties for polluters and translation of the treaty into national laws. Secondly, we recommend focusing on domestication of the international legally binding instrument at the national level, including methodological approaches and implementation such as National Action Plans and National Implementation Plans.

41. We would like to highlight the importance of the unity of the African voice, which should also reflect in the collaboration between the African Member States to UNEP and the UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, Africa. This collaboration will be key to realizing the treaty at the regional, national, and subnational levels and to connecting the treaty with the Agenda 2063 of the African Union in synergy with the 2030 Agenda.

42. **With respect to the 6th Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA)**, we emphasize the need for an ambitious ministerial declaration that reflects on progress achieved since previous sessions of the United Nations Environment Assembly (particularly UNEA 5.2), and a clear determination of what constitutes transformative change. We strongly urge Member States to UNEP to ensure that the necessary means of implementation, including finance are mobilized, so that the resolutions adopted at UNEA 5.2 especially those lagging behind, are implemented accordingly, in particular in Africa.

43. We highly appreciate the meaningful and ongoing engagement of the Moroccan UNEA 6 Presidency with the UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders, in particular the African Major Groups and Stakeholders, and we urge UNEP to make that type of engagement a standard to enhance inclusion and participation. Accordingly, we strongly urge UNEP to make appropriate arrangements to support robust and meaningful in-person participation of UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders Africa during UNEA 6 to ensure that the processes and decisions are participatory and inclusive in nature. However, we note with concern that some processes impeded within UNEA do not remain anchored within the UNEA process and strongly urge UNEA to make the necessary arrangements to address that issue and maintain and strengthen the coordinating role of UNEP to address, globally, the triple planetary crisis.

44. We urge African Member states to UNEP to call for strengthening UNEP, bearing in mind that it is the only UN agency headquartered in the Global South. We further invite African Member States to UNEP to urge UNEP to strengthen the leadership role of African experts in UNEA Processes and in UNEP. We also urge UNEA to strengthen the global environmental governance structure including amongst other things an environmental court of justice, capacity building on environmental justice, and recognizing the significant threat of environmental crime internationally and nationally. In addition, we urge UNEA to advance the understanding and responses of Member States to the impacts of conflicts on the triple planetary crisis and vice versa.

45. We also urge African Members States to UNEP to further enable a just transition towards affordable and clean energy, leveraging, in particular, the potentialities of renewable energy and strongly urge developed countries and other partners to support that transition including through scaled-up and accessible climate finance for Africa. With respect to biodiversity, we urge UNEA to include biodiversity finance, and coordination and harmonization between the Ministries of Finance and Environment with regard to the prioritization of, and budgetary allocation for, biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration in the UNEA 6 agenda, acknowledging the biodiversity finance gap.

46. On the grave matter of chemicals and waste, we call upon UNEA to prioritize the issues of chemicals and waste, noting, in particular, its detrimental impacts on human health and the environment in Africa. In this regard, we urge Member States to look into the issue of illegal transboundary movements of chemicals and waste as reported by African countries in line with the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm conventions.

47. We commend the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework for acknowledging the important roles and contributions of indigenous peoples and local communities as custodians of biodiversity and partners in the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use and urge UNEA to mainstream that recognition across the environmental spectrum. We take cognizance of the role of women in environmental action and call on Members States, development partners, and all Major Groups and Stakeholders to further commit to building and strengthening their capacity, especially at the grassroots level. We also call on UNEA to support meaningful youth engagement across the spectrum of environmental governance and mainstreaming of the Youth Assemblies in subsequent UNEAs, building on the inaugural Global Youth Environment Assembly that happened on the sidelines of UNEA 5.2.

II. Regional report from Asia and the Pacific

In the middle of nowhere at the midpoint of agenda 2030; Peoples demand for development justice and transformative environmental multilateralism

Statement of the Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum for the fifth Asia Pacific Forum and UNEA 6 3rd October, Colombo, Sri Lanka

A. Chapeau

1. We, more than eighty community-based and grassroots organizations (CSOs) belonging to the Major Groups and Stakeholders, met at the Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum on 3rd October, 2023 at Colombo, Sri Lanka ahead of the Fifth Asia Pacific Forum of High Authorities and Ministers of Environment.

2. We considered the multiple intersecting crises (including the climate crisis, rapid loss of biodiversity, pollution and cost of living and financial crises, ecosystem collapse, and punctuated recovery from the COVID 19 pandemic; systemic issues and structural barriers as major drivers of crises, and impact on the people, economy and environment) in the region. We also considered the lack of progress on the Agenda 2030 and its SDGs and its implications for the poverty, food, water, health, education, access to renewable energy, sustainable industrialization and infrastructure, inequality, wars and conflicts in the region and impact on human rights, gender, rights of the workers and the marginalized and the most vulnerable communities.

3. Having considered these broad and wide perspectives and our lived experiences, we strongly feel that among the meta crisis of ambition, legitimacy and sustainability, we are at the cusp of a time where incrementalism is no longer sufficient, and where multilateral actions can either break or make a sustainable and inclusive future for the region as well as all for entire humanity.

4. We are concerned that despite some efforts, we are still shackled by multiple structural or systemic barriers and a fractured multilateralism impeding our progress. Therefore, we urge the governments in the region (and beyond) to focus on the drivers of poverty, inequality (global as well as regional and national), patriarchy and marginalization besides triple planetary crises, in order to resolve them through ambitious political solutions and a strengthened cooperative multilateralism committed for transformational changes [Click here to enter text](#).

B. Overview of Asia Pacific Region

5. The Asia-Pacific region has been a global growth engine for quite some time. It has lifted more than a billion people out of poverty in the last few decades, but many countries have also slipped deeper into poverty. Environmental degradation has also been a prime victim in its growth story. Besides, democracy, rule of law, freedom of expression and press freedom, gender, human rights and rights of women, indigenous peoples, workers, communities discriminated on work and descent (CDWD)/ Dalits and environmental defenders have also seen significant backsliding.

6. At the midpoint of the agenda 2030 and its SDGs, it is clear that SDGs remain a promise belied. Asia-Pacific with 14% targets likely to be achieved by 2030, it will take another 42 years to achieve the SDGs. SDG 13 and SDG 14 have regressed to a situation worse than 2000 in all five

sub-regions. The assessment in Asia-Pacific is based only on 60% of data as 40% of targets cannot be measured due to lack of data. The region is on track to achieve only 9 out of 104 measurable targets. Also keep in mind the delay in achieving the SDGs is likely to set runaway degradation once environmental tipping points (planetary boundaries) have been exceeded. Lack of resolute action to pursue the SDGs now is creating a very risky situation in which achieving SDGs can become downright impossible and the consequences for human and environmental systems is likely to be disastrous.

7. 155 million people in Asia Pacific (3.9%) lived in extreme poverty in 2022 (at USD 2.15/day). The pandemic pushed 75 million more people into extreme poverty in the region. Now, the cost of living crisis is undermining efforts to eliminate poverty in many countries. The poorest communities (including the urban poor) are worst affected as often they have to pay more to access basic services and as they buy commodities in small quantities, have bigger health expenses as they live in poorer living conditions. Majority of them are coping by cutting expenses on food, education and health. Despite Asia-Pacific providing 70% of the global growth, an estimated 30% of the population will still be economically vulnerable even in 2030. In addition, Unilateral Coercive Measures (UCMs) exacerbate the situation. A total of ten countries are under the UCMs in Asia and it is the very basic human rights of the grassroots and local communities that are being violated.

8. Global hunger is likely to remain at 600 million in 2030, almost the same number as when the Agenda 2030 was adopted in 2015. 122 million more faced moderate to severe food insecurity taking the total number of people facing hunger to 735 million in 2022 as compared to 2019 pre-pandemic status. More than 42% were unable to afford healthy food in 2022. In Asia-Pacific, 7 million more people faced acute food insecurity making it 69 million people in acute food insecurity. The region is also home to 465 million undernourished people (55% of global undernourished population). 1.9 billion people in the region are also unable to afford healthy food.

9. The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound and lasting impact on health systems and economies in all the countries including in the Asia-Pacific region. The crisis not only exposed the underlying inequity and fault lines in the health systems but further exacerbated them. Particularly for marginalized and most vulnerable communities including women and indigenous peoples, elderly, people with disabilities and the poorest, limited access to essential health care services unbearably high levels of out-of-pocket expenses and catastrophic health spending, and poor health infrastructure, among others, characterize the health situation in the region, especially among the low income countries (LICs) and lower middle income countries (LMICs).

10. Since January 2020, 1 million people have died due to the COVID-19 pandemic and more than 80 million have lost their jobs. Life expectancy reduced by one year during the COVID-19 pandemic and maternal mortality ratio (140/1000 live births) in the LICs and LMICs is still twice of the SDG target against the SDG target (70/1000 live births). Neonatal mortality in poorer countries (15.8/1000 live births) is still higher than the SDG target (12/1000 live births). There is huge variation in the health spending in the LICs and LMICs (USD 285/person/year) as compared to the UMICs (USD 822) and HICs (USD 3891) regrettably, almost half of the health spending (49%) comes from out-of-pocket expenses from poor people in the LICs and LMICs in the region.

11. The corporate drive for profit is fuelling intensified plunder of natural and human resources as seen in the massive land grabbing for industrial and infrastructure purposes and in the exploitation of labor to spur overproduction and overconsumption; control of land, water, seeds and produce of small farmers is resulting in hunger and malnutrition. The aggressive extraction of minerals and oil by TNCs further worsens the export-oriented economies as well as exacerbates the situations of local ecosystems and communities.

12. There are critical issues of environmental governance including the lack of environmental and social safeguards, false solutions including net zero, nature-based solutions, and geo-engineering financed by vested interests and transnational corporations. Prosperity and affluence in the global north remain partly financed by the exploitation of natural and human resources in the global south. There is a need to devise an adequate accounting and governance system to capture and remedy this situation to ensure that benefits and impacts are shared equitably across a planet characterized by ever shrinking spaces.

13. Apart from the direct references to the role and rights of Indigenous Peoples in the 2030 Agenda, many of the Sustainable Development Goals and associated targets are relevant for Indigenous Peoples. Moreover, the overarching framework of the 2030 Agenda contains numerous elements that can go towards articulating the development concerns of indigenous peoples. Of significance is the fact that out of 48 countries in Asia, just three of them (Philippines, Nepal, and Japan) legally recognize their Indigenous Peoples. The lack of recognition in this region led to the

violation of the rights of these people regarding their lands and territory, education, language, culture, resources, and human rights.

C. At the intersections of climate, biodiversity and pollution crisis

14. Accounting for more than half of the global carbon emissions, the Asia-Pacific region is warming faster than the global average. The surface ocean warming rate in the region is three times of the global average. Asia-Pacific countries' emissions are projected to increase by 16% (over 2010 levels) by 2030 as against the 45% reduction in emissions as desired by the 1.5 degrees Celsius pathway. 44 economies in Asia Pacific have some sort of the net zero targets but only 7 of them have enshrined it in the law (Australia, Fiji, Japan, Maldives, New Zealand, South Korea and Taiwan). Though G20 (including 8 countries in Asia-Pacific, namely, Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye) accounting for more than 80% of global emissions are only likely to reduce their emissions by 10% by 2030. Yet, only one country in the region (i.e., New Zealand) has committed to phase out coal by 2030 and only six countries (mainly small countries led by Vanuatu) have supported the Fossil Fuel Non-proliferation Treaty.

15. The region is witnessing the impact of runaway climate change in extreme weather events. There were 81 extreme weather events and water related disasters in 2022 (83% of them being floods), which killed 5000 people, directly affected 50 million people and caused an economic loss and damage of \$ 36 billion. China suffered prolonged droughts, Pakistan suffered biblical floods and most glaciers suffered intense mass loss.

16. 155 million people in the region still do not have access to electricity and 35% of the population do not have access to clean cooking fuel. The infrastructure gap in the region requires investment of USD 1.7 trillion every year through 2030.

17. We welcome the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and legally binding High Seas Treaty in March 2023 where countries agreed to protect 30% of the marine areas biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). However, we are also aware that there are significant challenges in achieving the GBF.

18. The Asia-Pacific region (especially South East Asia and South Asia) is also richest in biodiversity. The food, land and ocean ecosystem contribute to 40% to the regional GDP and provides employment to 60% of the population. As of 2021, only 16.6% and 7.7% of marine areas globally were under protection. We are cognizant of the fact that the Asia Pacific region recorded the highest number of threatened species in 2014 and reportedly 40% of coral reefs in the region have disappeared. The region was also the most underperforming region in achieving the Aichi Targets (2010) of protecting 30% terrestrial land and inland waters and 10% marine areas by 2020. It had only 13.2% land being designated as terrestrial protected land. At this rate the region is only likely to achieve 18% protected land as against the GBF target of 30% by 2030. 63% of the GDP of the region is at risk due to rapid biodiversity loss. In South East Asia 42% of the biodiversity could be lost by the end of this century. We underline the critical need of regional and global cooperation in South East Asia and South Asia for meeting GBF targets.

19. Air pollution is a scourge in Asia and the Pacific. Globally approx. 7 million deaths take place due to air pollution and 70% are in the region. Despite a slight downward spiral, people in South East Asia and South Asia still breathe deadly air. 37 out of 40 most polluted cities are in South Asia and 148 most polluted cities are in Asia. People lose several years of their life due to this deadly air, from 3 years in Kathmandu, 7 years in Lahore, 8 years in Dhaka to 10 years in Delhi.

20. Over half of the world's plastics (52% of 390.7 million tonnes in 2021) are produced in Asia Pacific, with China being the largest producer (32% of global production). Over 11 million tonnes of plastic waste enter oceans and Asia Pacific countries contribute over half of land-based source of marine plastic production. Up to 95% of riverine plastic pollution is transported by just 10 major rivers, eight of which are in Asia. The region is projected to increase production by 3.2% by 2026 and single use plastics are projected to increase by 5.6% by 2030 despite recent plastic pacts on China, India and Japan.

21. Production and use of chemicals is shifting to developing countries and emerging economies in the global south and double standards of the northern countries, leading to increased use to pesticides and highly hazardous pesticides, herbicides with serious health impacts and poisoning of air, water, land and food. Often with irreversible damage. Poor national legislations, insufficient information on environmental and health impacts, poor technological and human resources and profiteering by private companies and corporations is making it impossible to achieve pollution free future.

22. People and community solutions and innovations and appropriate technologies that protect the environment, promote sustainability, community ownership, social solidarity deepen democracy. Innovative solutions that make positive changes in peoples and communities' lives are not necessarily technological solutions but social innovations rooted in traditional practices and evolved through local and indigenous schools of knowledge. Women play an important role as innovators in managing energy, water, food security and health in the families. These solutions contribute to building community resilience and response to environmental challenges far more effectively than top down technological solutions.

Key messages and recommendations

1. Protecting people's rights and Recognizing existing adaptive capacity

23. Peoples and communities' rights and sustainability should be at the core and center of multilateral and national actions in achieving the SDGs, climate action and environmental conservation. An enabling environment must be provided to develop and advance peoples and grassroots innovations and alternatives as responses to environmental challenges and unsustainable lifestyles. This requires recognizing the rights, traditional knowledge and adaptive strategies employed by different groups such indigenous groups, women, coastal communities and communities discriminated on work and descent (CDWD)/Dalits.

(a) Social enterprises allow poor and marginalized communities to become key economic players based on principles of care, cooperation, solidarity, fair trade, and participation. These should be promoted as they have strong human dimension and help to diminish poverty and inequality.

(b) Member states and the private sector should commit no harm and protection to environmental and human rights defenders.

(c) Assert and protect public control over natural resources. Strong policies and regulatory standards are required to address corporate driven interests and techno fixes that cause and further aggravate environmental problems and undermine people's rights and responses. Advance good governance with increased accountability and transparency and remove anti people policies to protect natural resources. The need to address environmental wellbeing hand in hand with human development cannot be a step that comes after certain human development indicators are achieved. This cannot also be done without pro-poor policies and attention to addressing inequality and discrimination in all its forms. The responsibility to achieve this also lies squarely in the realm of multilateralism.

2. Transformative Multilateralism from below; Meaningful participation and environmental governance

24. Ensure and enable peoples and CSOs meaningful participation in environmental governance at the national, regional and global levels and address the barriers to effective participation. Ensure and promote transparency and access to information as a fundamental prerequisite to people's meaningful participation.

(a) Participation must be extended to CSOs, trade unions, grassroots movements and other stakeholders in assessing new and emerging technologies as a key component of environmental governance. Due importance should be given in capturing the interpretation of evidences by different actors and enabling broad participation in societal deliberation on technologies.

(b) Environmental governance should include governance of research and ensuring peoples participation in defining the direction and priorities of research on technologies that would benefit society and those who are left behind.

(c) Furthermore, preventing catastrophic climate crisis, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation and pollution (and many resultant crises) is the result of flagrant negligence of the systemic barriers and cannot be improved without a transformative multilateral actions and cooperative multilateralism.

25. Just transition should be viewed as an opportunity not only for energy transition but also building an inclusive, equitable and sustainable society. It should involve recalibration of existing fossil fuel infrastructure by reducing their emissions while reskilling workers towards green and decent jobs. Just transition plans must be developed in social dialogue with workers and their trade unions to ensure that fundamental labour rights, social protection, job security, and training opportunities for workers affected by global warming and climate change policies are guaranteed.

26. We also call for the tightening of what is referred to as “nature-based solutions”. This is a concept that is widely misused to justify false solutions such as GMOs and geoengineering that aim to manipulate biological and climate systems to technologically address the biodiversity, environment and climate crises that we humanity is currently facing. We strongly condemn and oppose these dangerous distractions, and call on the UN and member-states to support, enable and promote genuine solutions.

27. Member states should put up strong national Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs) aligned with the Global Biodiversity Framework. They must ensure that the pledged financial support to developing countries and biodiversity hotspots start flowing by 2024.

28. Other core framework elements such as the Science-Policy Interface processes and mechanisms must be genuinely inclusive, enable the participation of communities and civil society and treat their insights and lived experiences as on par with experts’ knowledge in informing policies, decisions and collective actions.

29. Furthermore, the proposed Science Policy panel on sound management of chemicals, waste and prevention of pollution should have equal focus on chemicals as well as on pollution. We endorse this idea urge the member states to commit to a pollution free future.

3. Solutions based on Natural Resource Management

30. It is proven that food production, agro ecology as a practice, a science and a social movement is known to improve soils, protect health and the environment, improve livelihoods and increase household income and resilience. Agro ecology also harnesses traditional and indigenous knowledge systems supported by people’s science and builds social solidarity. These techniques should be promoted and supported.

31. Planetary scale renewable energy will further increase extraction many times and therefore, there is an urgent need for reduction in energy consumption in northern countries and affluent communities in the global south. In addition, mega scale renewable energy projects restrict energy democracy and localization and people’s participation. These projects should respond to local needs and should respect their rights and access to resources and should not result in further extraction of resources.

32. Localised implementation is also needed with adequate resources, better harmonization of needs and definitions, life cycle management, strong law enforcement and Increased research capacity if developing countries are to achieve the desired global agendas.

33. Member states should regularly seek an assessment of impact of wars and conflict on environment and its management.

III. Regional report from West Asia

Statement for the West Asia region on the main groups and stakeholders of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) عربي

34. Delivered to the Sixth session of United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6) Effective, inclusive and sustainable multiple actions for Climate Change, Biodiversity loss and Pollution
26 February - 1 March 2024, Nairobi, Kenya

First and foremost,

We declare our condemnation of the humanitarian and environmental violations caused by the occupation of Palestine for 76 years.

We confirm what was stated in the statement of the Council of Arab Ministers responsible for Environmental Affairs issued in October 2023, especially about stopping the aggression and lifting the blockade first.

We demand the restoration of the resulting environmental, health and humanitarian impacts and disasters, and to ensure the rebuilding of health, environmental, humanitarian and infrastructure facilities.

We also demand immediate investigation, inquiry and follow-up from the international community regarding the catastrophic consequences of this aggression against humans and the

environment, as well as the sabotage and use of various types of weapons, including those that are internationally prohibited.

Your Excellency the President, Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

We express our appreciation for the efforts of the General Assembly of UNEA, linked to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), as it was behind the issuance of critical decisions related to protecting the environment in which humans live. A safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is an integral part of the full enjoyment of a wide range of human rights, including the right in life, health, food, clean water and sanitation.

Since the inception of the first UNEA in 2014, we continue to welcome “the richness of discussions that took place on the side of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and the contributions from academia and civil society experts, within various forums so as to enhance our understanding of the challenges and opportunities that the Assembly faces.”

We are working hard in harmony with the aim of achieving a balanced integration between the three dimensions of sustainable development within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in taking comprehensive and sustainable multilateral measures to address the triple global crisis of pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss, within the work of the United Nations and its member states.

We believe that there are opportunities that must be invested by the West Asia Office at the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in making good use of the experiences and achievements of accredited Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and their experts from civil society in West Asia, from creativity and innovation to initiatives to address challenges.

We appreciate the continued support from the UNEP’s Unit of Civil Society to all NGOs representatives to make regional activities successful and to overcome difficulties in aspects of cooperation and coordination with the UNEP Regional Office of West Asia.

While accredited NGOs in West Asia face challenges around their engagement in regional and international fora, focusing efforts on increasing regional consultations, and participating in the preparation of existing and future status reports in cooperation with stakeholders, in which the UNEP Regional Office is expected to play a major role in overcoming it, by developing approaches and mechanisms for involving civil societies to address the problem and move towards the solution by providing the appropriate space, while the absence of such societies hinders the hoped-for activity to achieve the desired goals.

(a) On the implementation of UNEA ambition

35. We realise that the final statements of UNEA do not come out of nowhere, and their consistency with the demands of civil society NGOs accredited by UNEP is appreciated by everyone, however:

(a) Firstly, we call for enabling means of implementation at all levels by providing a platform for establishing a regional dialogue among stakeholders to exchange information and experiences in relevant environmental sectors.

(b) Secondly, we call for the development of a mechanism that enables a long-term, results-oriented cooperation between NGOs and the Ministers of Environment, Finance, and Economic Planning to support local communities in implementing their development programs and achieving sustainable development goals.

(c) Thirdly, we request accredited NGOs to summarise the environmental challenges in West Asia, stating their views and ambitions regarding the followings:

(b) Concerning climate change

36. We fully recognise that climate change is a justice based issue which has disproportionately affected millions of Arabs, and we call from this platform on Member States to push for new and additional climate financing that is sufficient, resilient, predictable, and available to local communities, especially those at the forefront of being affected by climate change, in a way that guarantees their right to resilience and recovery and to achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

37. We appreciate the role of UNEA in its attempts to attract environmental establishments and build their capacities through civil society experts and accredit it, to increase the number of Arab NGOs and stakeholders that can participate in international environmental activities and discussions.

38. We call on Your Excellency the Ministers of the Environment and representatives of member states to support and finance the contributions of accredited civil society institutions.
39. We also call on Your Excellency to affirm the demands to approve the establishment of "Loss and Damage Fund" and to fulfil its obligations to increase developing countries' funding directed towards adaptation projects.
40. We demand compensation for damages by adopting a human rights approach for all economic, social, environmental and health sectors, and to support their adaptation in Arab countries that suffer from environmental disasters, wars, occupation, conflicts, and their consequences including sanctions, blockades, displacement and asylum.
41. We call for activating the role of social responsibility and involving the private sector and investors in the race toward zero and the race toward resiliency.
42. We also call for the necessity of involving the civil society within the member states for capacity building and contributing to the preparation of "Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)."
43. We call on member states in the West Asia region, civil society, academic universities and specialised institutes to demonstrate their efforts around nature-based solutions (NbS) in building plans and programs aimed at confronting climate change and gradually reducing dependency on energy sourced from fossil fuels and adopting renewable energy sources that are widely available in the region including solar energy, wind energy, or similar systems that are humans and environment friendly.

(c) As for the biodiversity framework

44. We are increasingly concerned about the high rate of biodiversity loss and the deterioration of ecosystems in the Arab region.
45. Regarding the implications of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework:
 - (a) We urge Member States to ensure that their recommendations include implementation of the framework in a way that reflects the aspirations and priorities of the Arab region through the review of national biodiversity strategies and action plans by COP16.
 - (b) We encourage Arab Member States of the United Nations to ratify the Treaty on High Seas Marine Biodiversity in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) of States under UNCLOS.
 - (c) We emphasise the importance of programs for preserving and conserving and restoring the efficiency of ecosystems in addressing the effects of climate change, improving flexibility and resilience, and combating desertification. Accordingly, lands must be reclaimed from pollution, desertification, and drought.
 - (d) We recommend increasing funding for studies, research, biodiversity baseline assessment, focusing on threatened species, paying attention to the concept of nature-based solutions (NbS) and Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) in West Asia, and encouraging its application.
 - (e) We recommend supporting and increasing protected areas, both marine and terrestrial, and encouraging partners to identify areas important for biodiversity and promoting the concept of Hima, which are protected areas within urban spaces, to promote sustainable uses of natural resources by local communities.
 - (f) We urge capacity building of NGOs in West Asia to align their work with existing and future Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).
46. As for issues related to environmental impact and pollution
 - (a) We emphasise the role of governments in strategic planning to reduce the causes of plastic pollution through effective cooperation among all stakeholders and adopting the principle of transparency in presenting information and scientific facts to civil society institutions.
 - (b) We encourage the adoption of national environmental laws and legislation related to the uses of plastic, to manage the manufacture, use, import, handling of plastic waste, and its recycling.
 - (c) We applaud the move to invest in recycling plastic waste and encourage the provision of waste collection and sorting centres in urban areas to reduce the proportion of municipal waste.

(d) We call on the United Nations General Assembly and the leaders of the Arab Group to influence the importance of supporting the participation of Arab NGOs accredited to the United Nations in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) on Plastic Pollution.

47. We would like to draw your attention to the fact that deliberately considering the environment as a crucial tool may negatively threaten water and food security, which contributes to the spread of diseases, and hinders efforts to combat climate change, environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, and suffering from pollution on land, sea and air.

48. Therefore, we demand, in the “Gaza” statement, that the final UNEP statement include the stand of civil societies in West Asia in solidarity with public and civil institutions.

(a) Endure UNEP is to continue governance, transparency, anticipating trends and risks, and engaging and attracting NGOs with the aim of prioritising initiatives and scientific research and also strengthening collective action and multi-stakeholder responses to the new challenges of environmental damage assessment.

(b) Its necessity to use the potential of digital transformation as a necessary tool for sustainable socio-economic and environmental behaviour at the global level, and to bridge the existing digital gaps.

(c) We call for the inclusion of accredited NGOs and to take advantage of the platform to build strategic partnerships, and to ensure coordination in all regional periodic meetings and in all existing and future UN Environment conventions to enhance their oversight role in following up on their implementation on the ground.

Therefore, as Arab civil society, we reaffirm our full commitment to working with all in the process of finding and implementing international resolutions and agreements to every problem so that “Leaving No One Behind.”

IV. Regional report from Latin America and the Caribbean

(Courtesy translation)

Regional Vision for Latin America and the Caribbean

49. We, representatives of the major groups of Latin America and the Caribbean, view with great concern the growing gap between the commitments made by our governments and their implementation in territory. We are witnessing alarming setbacks in environmental protection and human rights. Therefore, recognizing the inescapable link between the need for a healthy environment to guarantee human rights and peace:

1. We urge States to respect and protect Human Rights, the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the consent to be free and informed, the self-determination of such peoples and the guarantee of the right to effective participation in every instance. We reiterate the importance of recognizing Indigenous Knowledge Systems within the solutions to the triple planetary crisis.

2. We demand that in every decision-making space at all levels (local, national, regional and global), the inclusion, fair, transparent, equitable and participatory of major groups and other stakeholders, with a special focus on: Women, children, youth, indigenous peoples, local communities, and workers. We call for compliance with the principle of non-regression and principle 10.

3. We stress the need to address the triple global crisis by establishing a triple policy framework that includes: 1) the Rule of Environmental Law, 2) Environmental Education and 3) Environmental Health.

4. We request the Forum of Ministers of the Environment, on the basis of accountability, to establish an intersessional period with major groups and other stakeholders, with a procedure under the mechanism of participation of major groups to the UNEA. We propose that this intersessional period be held twice a year, in a hybrid way, and together with the meetings of the board of directors of the forum, in order to expose the actions carried out and propose strategies to improve its implementation.

5. We require a biannual report, with indicators of the impact of civil society, on the processes of implementation of the decisions of the Forum, and of the results of that monitoring framework. This report should be built on the efforts of a committee made up of an interagency United Nations LAC team, multilateral cooperation and funding agencies at the regional level, and major civil society groups at UNEP.

6. We urge the countries that have not yet acceded to or ratified the Escazu Agreement to become party to this Agreement and call on those who are part to take the necessary actions for its full and effective implementation by adopting a Regional Action Plan, and a Women's plan for COP 3.

7. The Amazon has a rich biological diversity, so it is essential to safeguard biodiversity and biocultural ecosystems, the largest river basin in the world and stop climate change in the region.

8. We urge States to create national strategies and action plans for the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Framework for Biodiversity by actively integrating women into all in situ conservation efforts, promoting an ecosystem-based approach, incorporating the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples, integrating women, girls, boys and young people as mainly affected groups, strengthening environmental democracy.

9. Addressing climate change by balancing management between mitigation and adaptation. A transition to renewable energy sources must be fair, prioritizing energy demand reduction, equity, and addressing social and economic disparities. We emphasize that states design and implement adaptation, loss, damage, and resilience plans, with a cross-cutting perspective for women, leaving no one behind.

10. Implement preventive measures in the matter of E waste, otherwise we face a problem of great magnitude. Alternative energies and electromobility are a medium-term development and with it E waste.

11. Solve management problems in parallel with the implementation of strategies that reduce the generation of garbage at its origin, eliminate scheduled obsolescence, encourage the development and strengthening of systems for the sale and distribution of bulk products, host differentiated collection systems of compostable and recyclable materials, and return them to biological and technical circuits. We welcome the UN's decision to proclaim March 30 as World Garbage Day. We urge the countries of the region to celebrate this day and implement strategies that go to the root of the problem of garbage and waste.

12. We urge Ministers to stick to UNEA Resolution 5/14 5.2, to end plastic pollution, from a full-life-cycle approach. The instrument must be aligned with the goals of the Paris Agreement, it must protect human rights, the right to health and a healthy environment, and it must have common and binding global obligations that start by reducing the excessive production and use of plastics globally.

13. Recognizing that air pollution not only poses a threat to public health, but also contributes to climate change; countries in the region must simultaneously achieve climate and health goals. In addition, a multi-stakeholder approach is crucial to addressing the complex challenges associated with air quality.

14. Denounce the continuation of extractive and mining practices in our region, the use of terms such as "ecological or sustainable mining" and the concession of natural territories with their own ecosystems and territories of indigenous peoples for extractive activity. Faced with this reality, we urge States to put aside the extractivist economy and move to an economy based on sustainability.

15. To strengthen, as a matter of urgency, the commitments of International Cooperation for the Conservation and Protection of the Oceans and their Ecosystems, with action plans to reduce and avoid pollution, regional protocols to monitor and respond to oil spills and a joint agenda to prevent any action related to mining at the bottom of the oceans.

16. Recognize the implementation of different types of governance with special attention to the models of shared government and governance by indigenous peoples and local communities; as well as the recognition of other effective conservation measures in situ, under an approach of respect for local and customary rights.

17. Promote Sustainable Consumption and Production Systems; for that reason, regulatory frameworks are urgently needed to guarantee the right of consumers to correct information, to choose, to safety and quality; policies that encourage sustainable production chains.

18. **We request the Ministerial Forum** to consider the particular requests of youth present in the Declaration of the LAC Youth Environment Forum, recognizing the process of the LAC Youth Environment Forum LAC "LACYEF2023", taking note of the contributions of youth from the region, and demonstrating their support for the fair, equitable, and inclusive participation of youth in the region.

19. Recognize the importance of the processes of building and strengthening capacities in environmental matters, in formal and informal educational systems. Formulate, strengthen and

implement environmental education policies, formulated in a broad participatory manner and ensure the inclusion of the environmental dimension as a transversal axis that permeates education at all levels and that allows the appropriation of knowledge and the strengthening of capacities in the territory.

20. Compliance and regulation of trade in chemical inputs that increase pollution and destruction of ecosystems is required, such as: Watersheds and basin headwaters, which are typical of actions of Industrial Agriculture and Mining.

21. Strengthened environmental governance will require governments to commit to improving partnerships with civil society and private sector actors in a whole-of-society approach with the development of new eco-social contracts to accelerate and improve implementation to achieve environmental goals.

22. We applaud those States that have made their contributions to UNEP by honoring their commitments and we highlight and invite those who do not make their financial contributions to the extent of their ability to strengthen UNEP.

END.

V. Regional report from North America

UNEA-6 North America Consultation. Regional Statement.

50. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as part of the North American process in the lead-up to the 6th United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA-6), sought to capture regional input around sustainable and inclusive action on the triple crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Stakeholders across Canada and the U.S. were invited to share examples and best practices within six topical areas, reflecting on both successes and challenges to date, and to formulate key actions and agendas that member states should consider catalyzing further durable progress.

51. The virtual consultation, facilitated by MIT Solve, took place on November 21, 2023, from 1:00-3:30pm EDT, and included 32 participants from Canada and 83 from the United States. Of participants, 46 were from organizations accredited with UNEP; 47 were men, with 72 women; and several major groups were represented: Business and Industry (15), Children and Youth (1), Farmers (4), Indigenous Peoples (17), NGOs (43), Local Authorities (1), Scientific and Technological community (26). Following plenary remarks, attendees joined two distinct breakout sessions that covered six topical areas, with report-outs after each breakout.

52. The six topics of discussion were selected trying to respond to the UNEA-6 theme *Effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution* and the six areas identified in the [Report of the Executive Director](#) where the Assembly may wish to compel more effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral action: a) implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, b) advancing integrated approaches for a water secure world, c) ensuring responsible mining and sustainable minerals and metals use, d) advancing cooperation around nutrients, especially phosphorus, e) reviewing climate-altering technologies and measures, and f) aligning the financial system for sustainability.

53. Based on this, and considering North American regional priorities, we discussed the six topical areas below:

- (a) Critical minerals in decarbonization
- (b) Adaptation & emergency measures
- (c) Centering Indigenous peoples for restoring biodiversity
- (d) Water for humans and ecosystems
- (e) Chronic & acute air pollution
- (f) Fertilizers and phosphorus runoff

54. Participants were encouraged to provide examples and best practices of sustainable and inclusive action in each of these six key areas.

Key messages

55. Eight key messages emerged from the consultations. These messages were compiled by the team at MIT Solve (Alexander Dale, Director, Global Challenges, Katie Morgan, Lead, Climate, and Gabriella Bianchi, Officer, Climate) in collaboration with the North America Regional Facilitators (Jennifer Garard, Deputy Director, Future Earth Canada and Sustainability in the Digital Age and Medani Bhandari, International Program Director, Atlantic State Legal Foundation Inc. Syracuse NY, USA, Prof. Akamai University, USA) and with the support of the UNEP North America Office.

(a) **Indigenous Peoples have a key role to play across all of these topics, with barriers to informed and meaningful participation remaining.** With strong participation across groups, examples of the value and inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and traditional knowledge were frequent. However, many participants highlighted that meaningful engagement will require (1) changes by governments and non-Indigenous stakeholders, including a the recognition of Indigenous knowledge as equal to Western and scientific knowledge, and (2) ensuring that Indigenous representatives are fully informed on modern frameworks for effective input and consent (e.g. carbon offset accounting). Example: Canada's Indigenous Guardians program.

(b) **Durable progress is frequently dependent on coordination among multiple stakeholders.** Successful North American examples - both specific projects and broader policy frameworks - have connected many stakeholders early on in development, and found ways to share benefits and align incentives for action in the same direction. Examples: California's Lithium Valley commission, Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management (NESCAUM),

(c) **Systemic support for youth is needed in order to foster intergenerational approaches.** Empowering youth by providing opportunities to participate in and lead initiatives can be a powerful lever of longer-term change. Exploring interventions through educational programs can help build the knowledge and capacity to engage meaningfully in environmental action. Example: Hawaii's Iolani Community Science.

(d) **The costs of inaction are real and often overlooked in North America, leading to mal-adaptation vs local resilience.** Impacts range from incentives to rebuild similar houses after storm events, to loss of ecosystem co-benefits that communities depend on like cleaner water from ecosystem barriers around waterways. There is a need to build capacity and leverage data-driven tools to develop evidence of the risks associated with failure to adapt or mal-adaptation.

(e) **Successful examples from North America should be replicated locally, not scaled as a monolith.** The North American context has demonstrated a variety of successes such as Nature-based Solutions and novel approaches to climate finance. But scaling a project to ten times the size can carry high risks without ten times the potential benefit. Instead, local communities should replicate these approaches with adjustments for context.

(f) **Data is critical to effective governance at many scales, and UNEP could support the expansion of consistent access (leveraging global data sets).** Tackling the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution will require robust data for decision-making plus effective policy frameworks. North America can offer both policy examples and global data that can be adapted for local use by different member states. Data stewardship frameworks should be co-developed with data owners prior to sharing data.

(g) **Standards are underappreciated and missing for some rising areas.** International building standards have been a key space to push more resilient and energy-efficient design and ecosystem accounting standards have had a significant positive impact as well. UNEP could help advance similar standards for mineral recycling, supply chain transparency, and defining biodiversity areas (based on recent frameworks).

(h) **Silos are dangerous, and UNEP is an overarching space that can eclipse them.** Whether sectoral (finance, social, environmental) or topic-specific (climate, biodiversity, pollution), issues and solutions are tied to the same systems and need spaces where discussion can include all of them. UNEP and UNEA is one of few key spaces for that work and to support holistic approaches and systems thinking in environmental action.

VI. Regional report from Europe

Bratislava Joint Regional Statement from Major Groups and Stakeholders in the European Region in preparation of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-6) based on the outcomes of the

Regional Consultation Meeting for the European Region (RCM) 27-29 November 2023, Bratislava, Slovak Republic + online

Preamble

56. We, representatives of Major Groups and Stakeholders who came together in Bratislava for our Regional Consultation Meeting (RCM), welcome the focus of the Sixth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-6) on effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. We sincerely appreciate the **recognition of the great urgency to take coordinated international action to tackle the systemic threats posed by the three planetary crises** of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution to sustainable development and their impacts on human well-being, environment, peace and security that are further aggravated by persistent levels of poverty, inequality and food insecurity.

57. While most stakeholders recognise the urgency, **action is too slow**. Global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions continue to rise. The climate crisis is a reality around the world with severe floods, droughts, storms, melting glaciers and whole ecosystems at risk of breakdown. Biodiversity loss is accelerating. Pollution has reached all corners of the planet, with children being born pre-polluted.

58. The emergency particularly **affects future generations** and is **disproportionately impacting marginalised communities** such as racialised communities and Indigenous People. Siloed environmental and climate policies and technology-focused solutions will not adequately address the triple crisis which is driven by the current economic system based on the limitless exploitation of natural resources, extractive materials and labour, and is further exacerbated by destruction of ecosystems in armed conflicts around the world. We are in need of a **deep, structural transformation** away from **an economic model depending on infinite economic growth** towards one centred on **achieving wellbeing for all within planetary boundaries and preserving human rights**. In particular those economies in the Global North whose wealth is linked to overconsumption and built on the exploitation of raw materials and labour in their periphery and the Global South, cannot further grow on a planet with finite resources.

59. We need an economic model in line with the **One Health** approach, recognising the interconnection between people, animals plants and their shared environment. We need favourable legislation, economic and financial incentives to **transform existing financial flows** in nature restoration, zero pollution and decarbonisation, while putting in place stronger **rules for accountability and liability** for environmental damage, including through criminal law and sanctions for individuals, companies and governments.

60. This transformation must **equally prioritise environmental and social justice objectives**, integrating strong policies to **secure the livelihoods of communities** affected by the transition. It must be guided by the **full respect for human rights**, including the **human right to a healthy, clean and sustainable environment**, and the protection and fulfilment of the **rights of youth and future generations** through long-term, future-oriented policies. Decision-making must be based on **democracy and the principle of intergenerational equity**. Truly effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions call for **meaningful engagement of underrepresented groups**, including youth, gender minorities, racialised groups and people from most affected areas, in all decision-making, budgetary, implementation and follow-up processes. Meaningful engagement in the transformation must also be built on **environmental education** focused on finding solutions and equipping people with knowledge and skills necessary to be able to cope and fight against the triple crisis.

61. UNEA 6 is meant to contribute to the **Summit of the Future** scheduled for September 2024. The Summit of the Future should ensure that:

(a) **civil society** is meaningfully included in decision making, starting from the UN Security Council, which should account for environmental consequences of armed conflict and for the environment as the main source of future conflicts. Civil society can make important contributions to the implementation of UN decisions, covering the gaps that persist in the implementations of global treaties. To do so, it must become a recognised member of the multilateral system.

(b) the **financial architecture** is restructured to enhance investments to support and not to impair the restoration of the environment. This requires the involvement of environmental advocates, especially young people, women and Indigenous People, in the allocation of resources.

(c) environmental felonies fall under **criminal law** while they are currently mostly persecuted under civil law, and that legal standing should be given to future generations and all living beings and ecosystems. The **right to a clean and healthy environment** must also entail the **right of the environment** to be clean and healthy, beyond the anthropocentric perspective.

(d) we increase the **understanding of and contact with nature** in order to lead to a cultural shift.

(e) UNEA decisions must be followed by concrete actions including resource allocation and implementation and monitoring mechanisms.

A. Zero pollution for a healthy environment

62. The **pollution crisis is closely linked to the climate and biodiversity crisis**. The main sources of harmful pollution are linked to air pollution from petrochemical and industrial activities and pollution from chemicals and waste, including plastic waste.

63. We are extremely concerned that **children are being born pre-polluted** with a cocktail of hazardous chemicals including **forever chemicals** (such as PFAS), **endocrine disrupting chemicals** (EDCs), reprotoxic, neurotoxic and carcinogenic chemicals which already result in increased levels of irreversible disorders and diseases. Entire ecosystems are at risk from **pollinator-killing pesticides** and **all-pervasive microplastics**; however, **some industry lobbies delay** urgent measures to **phase-out substances of concern** including hazardous pesticides. We call on our European leaders to **step-up measures towards zero-pollution** to protect our health and the environment, ensuring human rights and gender equality.

64. **Air pollution continues to be the biggest environmental killer** and the large majority of the population in the region is exposed to dangerous levels of air pollution. We call on all Member States to **fully implement the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution** and the **Pollution Release and Transfer Register Protocol** under the Aarhus Convention. We call for a **global industrial emission monitoring agreement, air quality standards** with limit and target values in line with WHO recommendations, and the development of national **air quality plans and short-term action plans**.

65. We call for urgent legislative measures to ensure the **sound management of chemicals and waste**, including through the implementation of regional and global environmental multilateral agreements such as the **Basel, Stockholm, Rotterdam and Minamata Conventions**, in particular progress towards phasing out of 'forever chemicals', the rapid implementation of the **Global Framework on Chemicals (2023)** and its **gender** resolution, and an urgent agreement on a strong **global treaty to end plastic pollution** throughout its lifecycle, which is currently being negotiated.

66. We call on governments to stop the further spread of toxic materials through wrong recycling practices. The petrochemical industry makes **false promises regarding the recyclability of plastic waste** which should be exposed and not funded. It leads to a continued use and dispersion of hazardous chemicals added to plastics including endocrine disruptors and forever chemicals which accumulate in recycled material.

67. **Access to information on the chemical composition of manufactured materials and products throughout their life cycle** is fundamental to control and monitor the implementation of multilateral agreements on chemicals and wastes. Yet, no globally harmonised mandatory disclosure requirements and labelling provisions for chemicals in manufactured materials and products exist in any current environmental agreements, leading to challenges in their implementation. However, transparency and traceability of chemical information is now high on the agenda in the negotiations of the international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, paving the way for other multilateral agreements to make necessary amendments and contribute to the development of a toxics-free globalised circular economy. Leading up to UNEA7, countries should prepare a **resolution for a globally harmonised cross-sectorial chemical transparency and traceability system** for informed decision-making on all types of manufactured materials and products throughout their entire lifecycle.

68. The continued exports of **highly hazardous pesticides** whose use has been restricted in many European countries, must be stopped. We call on governments to work together to phase out highly hazardous pesticides to protect human health and the environment.

69. Hazardous chemical pollution caused by **armed conflicts in the region** creates an enormous, long-term risk to human health, nature, biodiversity, soil and water bodies. We call on Member States to ensure and finance urgent measures to contain and clean up pollution stemming from military activities.
70. It is key to draw lessons from the devastating impacts of Covid-19 and leverage the **One-Health approach** to avert future pandemics, including stressing the use of non-chemical alternatives over insecticides and antibacterial substances is essential to **mitigate the risk of exposure to antimicrobial resistance (AMR)** in human and animal populations and the environment. This not only safeguards against the proliferation of AMR but also promotes healthier ecosystems and communities.
71. Finally, Major Groups and Stakeholders in the region welcome and support the **Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution Prevention** as agreed at UNEA 5.2. However, we are concerned by the undue influence of representatives of the chemical industry on the development of the Panel. We call for strong due diligence measures to avoid any conflict of interest and to ensure equal access for experts from Indigenous Peoples and local communities, in particular women.

B. Water resources and water ecosystems

72. Water resources are under pressure globally. Many parts of our region suffer from water shortage, droughts and water pollution. Water is not just a resource; it is a **fundamental pillar of life and a human right**, and our collective efforts must reflect its significance. We therefore welcome the initiative from Saudi Arabia to address droughts, and the initiative from the EU to step up water policy at international level. Recognising the critical importance of water resilience in the face of global challenges, we emphasize the need for **concrete actions to address water scarcity, overconsumption, pollution and the impact of climate change on water resources**. A **comprehensive approach to water management** including stronger policies, technological innovations and public awareness is vital for achieving sustainable and equitable water use in the region and globally, emphasizing equity and resilience.
73. First of all, we call on governments to step up **water policies that prevent water pollution** in particular caused by industries and agriculture as well as urban wastewater, **better water treatment technologies** and to **regulate overconsumption of scarce water resources** by certain industrial or production processes. Water is not for free, and prioritised access must be given for drinking water and human consumption and local and sustainable food production over water intensive mass manufacturing (e.g., textile or beverage production) and intensive agriculture. In the face of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, **new technologies in water treatment** are crucial to reduce waterborne disease spread, especially in the context of climate change.
74. Next to stricter rules, we call on member states to increase public awareness as a key component in fostering **responsible water consumption**. We ask for community-led monitoring systems to track water usage, quality, and potential issues, promoting a sense of responsibility and ownership. Moreover, recognising the **virtual water footprint in products** is essential. Water is intricately linked to various aspects of production, and understanding its virtual presence in goods can guide sustainable consumption practices.
75. Climate change must be taken seriously, and attention paid to **climate resilience in the design and construction of water infrastructure**, taking into account the potential impacts of climate change on rainfall patterns and extreme weather events. We call on governments to collaborate to develop and implement **early warning systems** to mitigate the impact of floods and droughts on water resources, and to internationally to invest in the upgrade and maintenance of water infrastructure, including pipelines, treatment plants, and distribution networks, to reduce water losses and improve overall efficiency.
76. We request that **financial support and capacity building** be provided to empower stakeholders, including local communities, governments and non-governmental organisations, in effective water resource management. We call for the establishment of international funds to assist developing countries in implementing sustainable water management practices, with a focus on both freshwater and marine ecosystems. We call for more **support of initiatives such as smart cities as well as promotion of smart water solutions** such as rainwater purification, green roofs and increasing water retention, reuse, and drainage in urban areas.
77. We also call on governments to step up **transboundary, inter-state cooperation on water basin management**, and to collaborate across borders to and **protect the last free-flowing rivers** their rich biodiversity, including through a moratorium on new dams.

78. We would like to highlight that **water resources, water ecosystems and marine environments are often highly impacted by armed conflicts, both in terms of direct attacks and environmental pollution from war**. We call on states to endorse strong international legal rules and procedures around the protection of water resources in armed conflicts and to support the restoration of water resources in affected areas.

C. Global Biodiversity Framework, Nature-based Solutions (NbS)

79. Even with the Global Biodiversity Framework adopted and protected areas growing, we are concerned by the overall lack of action. Biodiversity is declining rapidly, and ecosystems are under threat. We are calling on member states to bring biodiversity back to UNEA-6 and to discuss the establishment of a **transparent system of reporting and monitoring to ensure accountability**. We need to **better manage protected areas**, also through better transboundary cooperation for high value sites, and ensure **conservation of habitats outside of protected areas, while further expanding protected areas**. We call on member states to develop initiatives to **better enforce agreements** for biodiversity protection and to enable **prosecution of environmental crimes** such as habitat destruction and illegal wildlife trafficking.

80. More research on management of **invasive species** and prevention is needed. We also call on governments to support **harnessing Indigenous knowledge and local stewardship** with the goal to protect habitats and species and local livelihoods. We need to better protect and promote local and **sustainable agricultural and fishing practices** that protect local biodiversity. Overall, we encourage you to build on UNEA 5.2 resolutions and to address the interconnection of human, animal and ecosystem health with increased action from UNEP for cooperation to stop future pandemics.

81. We suggest declaring **30 November the International Remembrance Day of lost species** to increase awareness of rapid biodiversity decline.

82. We also welcome the initiative for a **UNEA-6 resolution on Nature-based Solutions (NbS)**. Throughout the discussion on NbS in the UNEA process, stakeholders have been warning of the risks linked to investments in NbS where these are not strictly defined. According to some research of climate mitigation investments in NbS, some research has shown, up to 90% result in **no net benefit to the environment**. Even if only 50% of investments are not beneficial, such projects often cause more harm than good and actually further degrade nature, such as monoculture tree plantations. Unfortunately, the consultation process that followed UNEA 5.2 was designed to have a positive outcome about NbS, and critical views were sidelined in the process and hardly taken up in reports.

83. What is missing from the discussion so far are **strict criteria for NbS** for governments and investors to follow including a **clear understanding of good and bad practices**. We ask for clearly defined ways to **exclude non-compliant projects**. We also call on the government to make sure the **rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities** are fully protected, and that all NbS projects respect human rights. **Indigenous and traditional knowledge** needs to be fully credited and directly benefit the communities. NbS investments must be planned and implemented on a **solid scientific basis and in close consultation with civil society under strict monitoring of their net benefits to the environment and communities**.

84. This also requires strict guidelines for financial institutions such as the World Bank and IMF. A substantial proportion of the commitments towards financing for NbS should be dedicated towards the **science-policy interface** for research, testing, new methodologies, criteria and standard-setting for NbS. Specific attention needs to be given to **tailor-made local solutions**, for instance, in an urban context, using local traditions as far as possible. Moreover, **certification, verification and long-term monitoring by the public** must be harmonised and financed. Investments must also be linked to **anti-corruption measures**, especially where the private sector is involved.

85. Finally, we support those Member States pushing for a **binding regulatory framework of NbS on the national or international level** as research shows that voluntary approaches tend to be ineffective.

D. Sustainable food systems, including sustainable nutrient use

86. We deplore the fact that the six priorities outlined for UNEA-6 do not include a **holistic approach to sustainable food systems**, but we welcome the priority set for the **sustainable use of nutrients**. We would like to share three main concerns and call on member states to bring sustainable food systems back to the agenda:

87. Across a number of areas, the risk to future sustainable food systems lies in the **challenge of attracting and retaining people across the food system**. With movement from rural areas to urban and declining generational industries like traditional farming and sea fishing, there is a major challenge to bring enough young people in. Low income levels and the problems of accessing capital are major barriers for young farmers. Member States should be urged to recognise the extent of the demographic problems within their own regions. We urge governments to support the use of agro-ecological practices and to ensure sustainable livelihoods, including a gender sensitive response.
88. The loss of small traditional and mixed farms and the financial pressure for cheap food that moves land use to monoculture under volatile markets has put many soils under pressure and contributes to water and air pollution. **Good soil health** is the foundation of sustainable food systems, sustainable nutrition of the soil and the food it produces. Effective recycling of nutrients is both good for the soil and reduces the impact of particular fertiliser demand. There is much new understanding of soil biology and soil management techniques. It is vital for member states to find improved communication and **education for future soil managers** and to **better regulate the input of chemical pesticides and fertilisers**. Good soil management also offers a unique opportunity to build, retain and store carbon in an entirely natural way.
89. **Excess nitrogen from agricultural sources is one of the main causes of water pollution** in Europe, and in many other parts of the world. It stems from fertilisers and manure and can render water unsuitable as drinking water. A UNEA 5.2 resolution has recognised the multiple pollution threats resulting from anthropogenic reactive nitrogen.
90. The ongoing negotiations to establish an **intergovernmental coordination mechanism** for nitrogen policies requires for **meaningful Major Groups representation**, and we call on governments to ensure that for the proposed mechanism.
91. Finally, it is widely recognised that the **future sustainability of water use across the food supply chain** will come under great pressure as demand grows and climate events bring more frequent extremes. Member states need to fully understand their own food system future water requirement and how it can be made more sustainable. In addition, the exporting and importing of food has a water footprint that is frequently ignored.

E. Climate-altering Technologies and Measures (CATMs)

92. Solar radiation modification (SRM), also known as solar radiation manipulation or solar geoengineering approaches, are a set of technological fixes intended to manipulate the amount of sunlight that reaches the Earth's atmosphere. They are a **dangerous distraction from the urgent task of finding solutions to the triple planetary crisis**. They seek to treat some of the symptoms of global warming but not the root causes, a convenient 'get out of jail free card' for big polluters.
93. The **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has been addressing the risks of geoengineering** since before 2008, applying the Precautionary Principle in view of the risks to biodiversity posed by 'climate-fixes' such as ocean fertilisation and all climate-related geoengineering. This led to the adoption of a **de facto moratorium in 2010**. The London Convention and Protocol adopted a series of decisions that call for **utmost precaution**, led to **ban ocean fertilisation**, and more recently called governments for extreme caution on four other marine geoengineering techniques (enhancing ocean alkalinity, macroalgae cultivation and other biomass for sequestration including artificial upwelling; marine cloud brightening; and microbubbles, reflective particles and material because of their "potential for deleterious effects that are widespread, long-lasting or severe". All UN member states agreed on the grave risks of flooding, droughts and threats to biodiversity from these technologies.
94. This is particularly concerning given that the **ocean is a crucial ally against climate change** due to its ability to absorb vast amounts of carbon dioxide and heat and to regulate global temperatures. The implementation of some of the referred marine geoengineering interventions may inadvertently **compromise the resilience of ocean ecosystems** and disrupt their natural ability to mitigate climate change.
95. **Switzerland has announced its intention to submit a draft resolution at UNEA-6 on Solar Radiation Modification**. Among solar geoengineering technologies are Stratospheric Aerosol Injection (SAI) which involves the release of chemicals and particles through balloons or airplanes into the stratosphere with the aim to limit sunlight coming to the earth, and Marine Cloud Brightening (MCB) which involves adding salt particles into clouds to make them whiter to reflect solar rays back.
96. SAI, if applied, would pose a great risk: stratospheric injections would have to be continued for hundreds and thousands of years into the future and stopping it would trigger a so-called

‘**termination shock**’ where the temperature would suddenly rise with the potential to destroy or at least severely damage life on earth. According to the **Advisory Committee to the UN Human Rights Council**, **solar geoengineering technologies are some of the most extreme and existentially threatening technologies ever conceived** and were declared **incompatible with human rights**.

97. We therefore call to fully support the **call for a non-use agreement on solar geo-engineering** already supported by hundreds of experts and academics¹ who call on countries to forbid any public investments in the development of these technologies, not to hand out any patents and for no support for SRM in international institutions.

98. We call on governments to **strengthen the existing moratorium on geo-engineering** under the CBD. The lead should remain with the CBD process and should neither be shifted to UNEA nor to the UNFCCC. We also ask to affirm the precautionary principle and to ratify the decisions on marine geoengineering under the London Convention and Protocol from 2013 and to support the current process of evaluation of marine geoengineering technologies with a view to ban all marine geoengineering technologies.

F. Sustainable raw material and resource use, Circular Economy

99. Both the current levels of consumption and production in our region as well as the transition to carbon neutrality require large amounts of raw materials. The projected increase for Europe is enormous, for instance, if we look at the amounts of lithium required for electrification of transport and industry. We cannot simply address the issue of raw material and resource use from the perspective of securing our access to these materials and ensuring “sustainable” mining. **Green Mining is a myth**: each mining project comes with huge impacts on nature and people. Across the European region and globally, we see a boost in mining projects that trigger **environmental conflicts and local resistance** and that threaten livelihoods, often those of Indigenous People or rural communities, such as in Serbia, Portugal or Sweden, to name only a few examples within Europe. The **Global North is dependent on raw materials exploitation** in the Global South and uses its own peripheral area such as the Balkans as its resource provider. The power imbalance between stronger EU economies and the periphery is huge.

100. We welcome the Swiss initiative to bring the international discussion on mining and raw materials forward and encourage the sponsors to look at raw material and resources from a **systems change approach**. We first need to minimise mining as far as possible and focus on **secondary materials recovered by recycling and solutions that reduce the demand for raw materials**. In economies with high resource consumption, we need to downsize those sectors that are very resource intensive; there needs to be a price tag on virgin materials and incentives for secondary material use; we need to address overconsumption and define consumption corridors, in particular in those countries that have the highest rate of per capita and total material consumption. We need an international treaty for **global governance of raw materials** to ensure the **equitable** use of the world’s resources. It needs to define **no-go zones** such as the most fertile agricultural areas, primeval forests and biodiversity hotspots, areas that are key as water resources or the deep sea. **It also needs to establish material use reduction targets**, similar to CO2 reduction targets, at international level.

101. Where mining projects are not avoidable, they need to adhere to the highest environmental and social standards in full respect of **human rights and environmental rights**, including a right of affected communities to say no. The rights of Indigenous People must be respected at all times, including Free Prior Informed consent. Even where mining projects are declared as strategic, **fast tracking** cannot be at the expense of the full respect of environmental rights, and full compliance with Strategic Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Assessments. We call for **very strict rules on the technologies and chemicals** used in mining, including for tailings management. Mining companies must be **fully liable for any environmental or economic damage** during the operation and after the closing, proper remediation and renaturation of the site.

102. **We also highly welcome the EU initiative to present a draft resolution on Circular Economy at UNEA 6**. A circular economy needs to be based on reducing consumption first, for instance, as outlined above, clear **targets for material use reduction**. The concept has been misused for **greenwashing** products and processes, and the term needs clear definition. For instance, downcycling cannot be considered as being a circular practice (e.g. plastic bottles into flooring), and circular practices need to be sustainable in the broader senses. We need to acknowledge that **economies in the EU are currently linear, not circular**. Current consumption levels require

¹ www.solargeoeng.org

resources from the Global South including raw materials, agricultural commodities and labour, with end-of-life products often dumped back into third countries.

103. We encourage **international initiatives to close all waste leakages** and illegal exports such as plastic waste, end-of-life vehicles and WEEE. We call for **international initiatives to regulate products and strict standards** around durability, repairability, reusability, recyclability, and to set up international Extender Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes. Product categories that need to be regulated also globally and that we are particularly concerned about include but are not limited to batteries, solar panels, cars, textiles, and buildings. **Unsustainable products and processes need to be phased out.** We call for clear incentives such as tax breaks on repair and refurbishment, and support for sustainable local practices and traditions that are already circular. We encourage the resolution to advance on creating a **toxics-free Circular Economy** to ensure harmful chemicals are not recirculated in new products.

104. Finally, we encourage the EU to **support and collaborate with third countries in ensuring sustainable waste management in full respect of the waste hierarchy with waste prevention** as the top priority. We call on governments not to invest in wrong solutions (such as incinerators which then require certain amounts to be produced in order to be operated), and to support countries to set up waste management systems.

G. Environment and Conflict

105. We note with disappointment that the **second draft of the Ministerial Declaration in its current version does not recognize the effects of conflict and military activities** on global climate and environmental and developmental challenges. This is at a time when the **devastating impact of the war** is contributing to serious conflict-pollution hotspots and loss of valuable natural areas and biodiversity, setting back whole countries and regions on their path to carbon neutrality, zero pollution, restored nature and long-term sustainability. Fragility and conflict lead to the collapse of environmental governance, which can exacerbate underlying environmental challenges and weaken systems of protection and sustainable resource use. Ongoing hostilities hamper States' abilities for climate adaptation, leaving vulnerable communities poorer, less resilient, and ill-equipped to cope with the effects of climate change. These concerns also come with particular gender angles in conflict areas that often put women and girls at risk from societal instability and degraded environmental conditions. We are convinced that recognizing the **interlinkages between the triple planetary crisis, conflict and peace** by UNEA 6 would not only contribute to better analysis of the nature of these global challenges but will also provide for effective and sustainable solutions to address them.

106. We welcome Ukraine's initiative for a **resolution on the environmental assistance and recovery in areas affected by armed conflicts**. We call on governments:

(a) to recognise that the adverse environmental effects of armed conflicts, such as Russia's war against Ukraine, result in the impossibility of the impacted countries to implement their commitments under the 2030 Agenda and multilateral environmental agreements on water and air pollution, climate and biodiversity.

(b) to support UNEP in working on the environmental dimensions of armed conflict and providing a clear plan, mandate, and resourcing that cements the commitment including increased funds for comprehensive assessments of environmental damage and its public health impacts, with methodological and technical support for calculation of environmental losses and damages.

(c) to include conflict sensitivity in relevant international environmental agreements for more coherent and effective multilateral response to pressing challenges related to climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution in the conflict settings.

(d) to provide regions and countries that have suffered from environmental damages in armed conflict with financial and technical support for a green and sustainable reconstruction and recovery, an integration of environmental consideration in the peace-building process including conflict-sensitive investment and redevelopment of energy projects, infrastructure and industry.

(e) to encourage States to adopt the International Committee of the Red Cross' Updated Military Guidelines on the Protection of the Natural Environment in Armed Conflict and International Law Commission's Protection of the Environment in Relation to Armed Conflicts (PERAC) principles on how the environment should be protected before, during and after armed conflicts as one of the ways to mitigate the triple planetary crisis.

107. We call up on UNEP Regional Office for Europe to **support the organization of consultations with Major Groups and Stakeholders on a regular basis** and use it as a platform to empower and build the capacity of MGS to advance the environmental dimension of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. We call on member states to **provide UNEP with** secure, stable, adequate, and increased financial resources to fulfill its mandate and to be able to support regular and meaningful stakeholder engagement.

108. **There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.** A **culture of peace** needs to cultivate **harmony between humanity and the planet**, promoting sustainable practices, protection and restoration, and responsible stewardship. It recognises the **interconnectedness of environmental wellbeing and human flourishing**, fostering a collective commitment to safeguarding the Earth for **present and future generations**.
