

## SUMMARY OF THE THIRD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY: 4-6 DECEMBER 2017

The third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-3) convened from 4-6 December 2017 at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, Kenya, under the overall theme “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet.” Over 4,300 delegates participated in UNEA-3 and its related events, including 1,197 delegates from more than 170 Member States, 711 representatives of Major Groups and other stakeholders, and 94 intergovernmental organizations.

During the closing plenary on Wednesday afternoon, UNEA-3 adopted 11 resolutions submitted by Member States, calling for accelerated action and strengthened partnerships on, *inter alia*: combating the spread of marine plastic litter and microplastics; eliminating exposure to lead paint and promoting environmentally sound management of used lead-acid batteries; environment and health; improving air quality globally; pollution control by mainstreaming biodiversity into key sectors; addressing water pollution to protect and restore water-related ecosystems; managing soil pollution to achieve sustainable development; and pollution prevention and control in areas affected by terrorist operations and armed conflicts. The Assembly also adopted three decisions related to organizational matters, agreeing on: the date and venue of UNEA-4; extension of the publication of the 6th edition of the Global Environment Outlook; and the management of trust funds and earmarked contributions.

Building on pre-session consultations, the draft resolutions and decisions were further developed during the third meeting of the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR-3), which was held from 29 November – 1 December 2017, and finalized for adoption by the Committee of the Whole established by UNEA-3.

For the first time, UNEA delegates also adopted a negotiated Ministerial Declaration by consensus, with numerous speakers attributing this achievement to the leadership of UNEA-3 President Edgar Gutiérrez-Espeleta (Costa Rica) and the inclusive and transparent approach adopted over the 18-month intersessional period as well as during the meeting itself. Taking a moment for a deep sigh of relief during the closing plenary, Gutiérrez-Espeleta described the consensus achieved by more than 170 countries as a clear sign of the global relevance of pollution, stating that “the results of this UNEA will provide us with concrete solutions to achieve our aspirations,” and expressed hope that they will also inspire concerted action on pollution.

Many delegates and observers noted that in focusing on a theme that resonates greatly with the public, as evidenced by more than 2.3 million pledges garnered from individuals across the world in the #BeatPollution campaign, UNEA has firmly positioned itself as the world’s voice on the environment, while strengthening the environmental pillar of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this regard, the adoption of a resolution on UNEA’s contribution to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) was broadly welcomed.

Also for the first time, UNEA held four consecutive 90-minute Leadership Dialogues with the aim of providing a forum for ministers to engage directly with a diverse range of high-level stakeholders from international bodies, business and finance, academia, and technology focused on practical policy measures towards a pollution-free planet. Concurrent to UNEA-3, the Science, Policy and Business Forum and the Innovation Expo took place with the aim of showcasing technologies and viable solutions, as well as the role of individuals, governments, civil society, the private sector, and other stakeholders to achieve the Assembly’s goal of reducing pollution. The Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum also met from 27-28 November, just prior to the meeting of the OECPR.

Although some countries took the floor to voice reservations on certain elements of UNEA-3 outcomes for the record, all decisions and resolutions were quickly adopted without any objections. And, in another departure from the first two sessions of the Assembly, UNEA-3 closed ahead of schedule, at 5:37 pm on Wednesday afternoon.

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## A BRIEF HISTORY OF UNEP

As a result of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, the UN General Assembly (UNGA), in resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 1972, established the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as the central UN node for global environmental cooperation and treaty making. The resolution also established the UNEP Governing Council (GC) to provide a forum for the international community to address major and emerging environmental policy issues. The GC's responsibilities included the promotion of international environmental cooperation and the recommendation of policies to achieve it, and the provision of policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes in the UN system. The GC reported to the UNGA, which was responsible for electing the 58 members of the GC, taking into account the principle of equitable geographic representation. The Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF) was constituted by the GC as envisaged by General Assembly resolution 53/242 (1998). The purpose of the GMEF was to institute, at a high political level, a process for reviewing important and emerging policy issues in the field of the environment.

The GC and the GMEF met annually in regular or special sessions beginning in 2000. Some of the highlights from 2000-2012 include: the adoption of the Malmö Ministerial Declaration in 2000, which agreed that the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development should review the requirements for a greatly strengthened institutional structure for international environmental governance (IEG); the creation of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management; the 2005 Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-Building; the establishment of the *Ad Hoc* Open-ended Working Group to Review and Assess Measures to Address the Global Issue of Mercury; and the establishment of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

**GCSS12/GMEF:** Convening from 20-22 February 2012, in Nairobi, Kenya, the twelfth GC Special Session (GCSS-12) marked the 40th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP. Eight decisions were adopted, including on: "UNEP at 40," IEG; the world environment situation; sustainable consumption and production (SCP); and the consultative process on financing options for chemicals and waste.

**RIO+20:** The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, or Rio+20, convened in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 13-22 June 2012. With regard to UNEP, the outcome document, "The Future We Want," called for the UNGA to take decisions on, *inter alia*: designating a body to operationalize the 10-year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP), and strengthening and upgrading UNEP, including through: universal membership in the GC; secure, stable, adequate, and increased financial resources from the UN regular budget; enhanced ability to fulfill its coordination mandate within the UN system; promoting a strong science-policy interface; disseminating and sharing evidence-based environmental information and raising public awareness; providing capacity building to countries; consolidating headquarters functions in Nairobi and strengthening UNEP's regional presence; and ensuring the active participation of all relevant stakeholders.

**UNGA:** On 21 December 2012, the 67th session of the UNGA adopted resolution 67/213 on strengthening and upgrading UNEP and establishing universal membership of its GC, which allows

for full participation of all 193 UN Member States. The resolution also calls for UNEP to receive secure, stable, and increased financial resources from the UN regular budget and urges other UNEP donors to increase their voluntary funding.

**GC27/GMEF:** Convening from 19-22 February 2013, this meeting was the first Universal Session of the GC. The GC adopted a decision on institutional arrangements, inviting the UNGA to rename UNEP's governing body the "UN Environment Assembly of the UNEP." Other decisions were adopted on, *inter alia*: state of the environment; justice, governance and law for environmental sustainability; Climate Technology Centre and Network; UNEP's follow-up and implementation of UN Summit outcomes; and budget and the Programme of Work (PoW) for the biennium 2014-2015.

**OECPR-1:** The first meeting of the OECPR to UNEP took place at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, from 24-28 March 2014. The OECPR considered: the half-yearly review of the implementation of the PoW and budget for 2012-2013; policy matters, including its advice to UNEA; and the draft PoW and budget for 2016-2017 and other administrative matters. The meeting provided an opportunity to: prepare for the UNEA sessions in 2014 and 2016; debate the role of UNEA in the UN system; and prepare draft decisions for adoption by UNEA.

**UNEA-1:** This meeting took place at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, from 23-27 June 2014, on the theme, "Sustainable Development Goals and the Post-2015 Development Agenda, including sustainable consumption and production." The Assembly included a High-Level Segment on "A Life of Dignity for All," which addressed the growing problem of illegal trade in wildlife, including the escalation in poaching and related environmental crimes. UNEA-1 convened two symposia, on the environmental rule of law and financing a green economy. Delegates adopted one decision and 17 resolutions on, *inter alia*: strengthening UNEP's role in promoting air quality; the science-policy interface; ecosystem-based adaptation; implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development; illegal trade in wildlife; chemicals and waste; and marine plastic debris and microplastics. A Ministerial Outcome Document was adopted, although several Member States noted their reservations.

**OECPR-2:** The second meeting of the OECPR took place from 15-19 February 2016 at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, in preparation for UNEA-2. Delegates discussed an initial set of 24 draft resolutions, working in five clusters on: environmental governance and education; chemicals, waste and SCP; oceans and water-related issues; natural resources, conflict and the environment; and biodiversity, administrative and organizational matters. Delegates also were presented with a concept note from the UNEP Executive Director on "Delivering on the Environmental Dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," and the draft Global Thematic Report on "Healthy Environment, Healthy People."

**UNEA-2:** UNEA-2 convened from 23-27 May 2016 in Nairobi, Kenya, on the overarching theme of "Delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." The High-Level Segment included interactive dialogues aimed at identifying relevant partnerships, policies, and tools in areas including air quality, ecosystems, and chemicals and waste management. Ministers also discussed and endorsed the Global Thematic Report on "Healthy Environment, Healthy People." The meeting adopted 24 resolutions and two decisions, including on a number of organizational matters such as the

UNEP Medium-Term Strategy 2018-19 and changes to the UNEA cycle to ensure a better fit with broader UN budgeting processes. In a lengthy closing plenary that lasted until the early hours, delegates debated on whether to put to a vote a draft resolution calling for an environmental assessment of the Gaza Strip, with a counter motion calling for “no action.” The draft resolution was ultimately not voted on due to the absence of a quorum. Informal discussions on the sidelines on the UNEA stakeholder engagement policy and a ministerial outcome document did not achieve consensus and neither of the draft documents were adopted.

**OECPR-3:** The third meeting of the OECPR convened from 29 November – 1 December 2017, at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. In addition to finalizing draft resolutions for adoption at UNEA-3, OECPR-3 reviewed progress in implementing previous UNEA decisions, and considered items pertaining to the UNEA-3 theme. During the closing plenary, delegates welcomed the consensus achieved on the draft ministerial outcome document and agreed to forward it to UNEA-3 for consideration. Acknowledging the view that more time is needed to determine how to reduce the use of acronyms in reference to UNEP (i.e., the use of UN Environment), the Secretariat retracted the proposed draft resolution on improving communication on the environment for further consideration by the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) during the intersessional period. OECPR-3 adopted eight draft decisions and resolutions and agreed to hold informal consultations on five more to facilitate their conclusion during UNEA-3.

### UNEA-3 REPORT

UNEA-3 President Edgar Gutiérrez-Espeleta (Costa Rica) opened UNEA-3 on Monday morning, 4 December. Introducing the overall theme, “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet,” he underscored that the most vulnerable are those at greatest risk from the negative impacts of pollution. Welcoming the 2.3 million individual pledges garnered to date under UNEP’s #BeatPollution campaign, he called on delegates to act now to address “a problem that we all created and that we can all fix.”

Judi Wakhungu, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Water and Natural Resources, Kenya, highlighted her country’s recent ban on the manufacture and use of plastic bags, and encouraged UNEP to strengthen its headquarters functions in line with the outcome of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development.

Miroslav Lajčák, President of the 72nd session of the UNGA, said that partnerships and multilateralism lie at the core of the journey towards a pollution-free planet, and UNEA will be the “leader of the pack.” UNEP Executive Director Erik Solheim highlighted government, business, and civil society as drivers of change. Among key environmental issues, he identified: environmental security, green finance, and protection of nature.

Following opening statements by regional groups, UN entities, and representatives of Major Groups and Stakeholders, the Assembly adopted the UNEA-3 provisional agenda: (UNEP/EA.3/1) and agreed to establish a Committee of the Whole (COW) to consider outstanding agenda items relating to the report of the CPR.

Delegates endorsed John Matuszak (US) and Travis Sinckler (Barbados) as COW Chair and Rapporteur, respectively.

**Adoption of the CPR Report:** CPR Chair John Moreti (Botswana) presented the outcomes of OECPR-3, held from 29 November to 1 December 2017, noting that an advance copy of the draft report (UNEP/CPR/141/2) had been posted on the

CPR portal. He highlighted the submission of two new draft resolutions, on strengthening South-South cooperation initiatives for sustainable development, and on the consolidation of UNEP headquarters functions in Nairobi, which delegates agreed to forward to the COW for consideration.

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The COW opened Monday morning with brief reports from facilitators on the outcome of informal consultations convened in the weekend following OECPR-3 with the aim of finding compromise language on outstanding draft decisions and resolutions to facilitate their adoption by the Assembly. COW Chair Matuszak proposed the establishment of two Friends of the Chair groups to consider the outstanding decisions on environment and health, and marine litter and microplastics. He also announced the continuation of informal consultations to finalize the draft resolutions on consolidating UNEP headquarters functions, and pollution prevention in conflict-affected areas, and the date and venue of UNEA-4.

During an extended plenary session on Monday evening, delegates could not reach agreement on three remaining draft texts on environment and health, date and venue of UNEA-4, and consolidated headquarters functions for UNEP. Following another day of informal consultations, the outstanding texts were finalized and accepted at a resumed COW plenary on Tuesday evening. All of the decisions and resolutions were adopted by the UNEA plenary on Wednesday.

### ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY ISSUES:

#### Management of trust funds and earmarked contributions:

The Secretariat introduced this draft decision during the OECPR-3 opening plenary on Wednesday, 29 November, noting that it emanated from previous requests to the UNEP Executive Director by GC Decision 27/14 and UNEA Resolution 2/23 to prepare a report highlighting the challenges of managing multiple trust funds and propose steps to reduce the administrative burden of maintaining these funds. The European Union (EU) highlighted that dormant trust funds remain significant, and, noting decreasing contributions from Member States, recommended these be closed and reallocated where appropriate.

This item was subsequently assigned to the OECPR Contact Group on overall coordination, facilitated by CPR Chair Moreti, which carried out a first reading on Thursday. Delegates agreed to the majority of paragraphs, however, a reservation was placed on proposed changes to the trust funds that support the Basel Convention, and the implementation of the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions in developing countries, pending a delegation’s consultations on whether these funds should be closed in the near future. On Friday morning, some delegates asked for clarification on whether Member States will be consulted on any reassignment of the balances, and requested more time to consult. Delegates adopted the proposed text during the closing OECPR plenary on Friday evening, and forwarded the draft to UNEA-3.

**Final Outcome:** The final decision (UNEP/EA.3/L.18) notes the need to accelerate the closure of inactive trust funds in order to use the outstanding balances to support the unanimously agreed Programme of Work. Where necessary, Member States also agree to “the shortest possible technical extension of the relevant trust funds, and their closure, subject to completion of their activities and clearance of all financial implications and obligations.”

The decision further takes note of and approves the establishment of two trust funds in accordance with GC decision 19/25 of 1997, which supports the activities of the Green Climate Fund. The decision also approves the extension of two trust funds: the Technical Cooperation Trust Fund financed by the European Commission (EC) to support EC-UNEP cooperation on Strengthening International Environmental Governance; and the 2014 Programme Cooperation Agreement with an expiry date of 31 December 2021, subject to the Executive Director's receiving requests to do so from the appropriate authorities.

The decision further requests the Executive Director, in consultation with the relevant parties and/or donors, as appropriate and in accordance with the terms of the respective agreement/fund, "to decide on reassigning the balances in inactive Trust Funds when the activities for which they have been established have ended, with a view to support the implementation of appropriate sub-programmes of the agreed Programme of Work before the end of 2019."

With respect to seven general trust funds, the decision notes and approves their shortest possible technical extension, if necessary, subject to completion of their activities and clearance of all financial implications and obligations.

The latter part of the decision provides an overview of diverse trust funds in support of regional seas programmes, conventions, protocols, and special funds established since UNEA-2. In a concluding section, UNEA requests the Executive Director, in consultation with the heads of the respective multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), to consult with parties and donors in accordance with the terms of the respective agreement/fund to decide on reassigning the balances in two trust funds initially intended to support the work of the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions, "that are no longer required for the initial purpose for which they were established," in order to support the appropriate activities of the Programmes of Work approved by respective governing bodies.

**Date, venue and provisional agenda of UNEA-4:** This item was first introduced in the OECPR on Wednesday morning, and assigned to the contact group on overall coordination, chaired by CPR Chair Moreti. During a first reading of the text on Thursday, delegates agreed to several paragraphs, but tabled alternative proposals for the dates of UNEA-4 and OECPR-4, based on, *inter alia*: the need for further clarity on meeting dates of MEAs; constraints faced by Geneva-based Permanent Representatives to UNEP, including with regard to meetings of the UN Human Rights Council; support for holding UNEA-4 early in 2019 to take into account the meetings of other relevant bodies, including the HLPF and the UN General Assembly, and the need to ensure alignment with the UN's budgetary cycle. There was both support for, and concerns about, holding the OECPR and UNEA back-to-back.

Delegates considered the mandates of different bodies to decide on this item, with the Secretariat clarifying that UNEA-3 must decide the date for its next session, whereas the CPR can decide when the OECPR meets.

Taking up this item in the COW plenary on Monday evening, the Secretariat introduced its note on "critical requirements" for organizing UNEA meetings, including organizational, translation, and other conference services, as well as travel costs. After extended discussions, the COW was unable to reach consensus on three broad proposals: one, tabled by Switzerland, and supported by the US, EU, and Russia, calling for shorter, back-to-back sessions of OECPR-4 and UNEA-4; those countries,

including Brazil, Kenya, and Zimbabwe, which favored reverting to OECPR and UNEA as originally conceived, comprising longer five-day meetings with an intersessional period of several months; and a compromise formulation by Mexico, opposed by Russia, proposing a five-day UNEA, "on an exceptional basis" to facilitate the transition towards a "normal cycle of Assemblies" in the future.

Seeing no consensus, Chair Matuszak requested delegates to continue informal consultations to arrive at a compromise. During the resumed COW plenary on Tuesday, delegates agreed to forward the decision text, based on compromise text, to the Assembly for adoption.

**Final Outcome:** In the final decision on the date and provisional agenda for the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEP/EA.3/L.16/Rev.1), UNEA-3, *inter alia*, recognizes the commendable work done by the UNEP and CPR bureaux in preparing the Environment Assembly through regular meetings under a model of joint cooperation.

It decides to, *inter alia*:

- hold the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its headquarters in Nairobi from 11-15 March 2019;
- request the CPR to deliberate, in consultation with the Bureau of the Environment Assembly, and decide, no later than at its 142nd meeting, on the format and date of the next meeting of the OECPR; and
- hold sessions of the Environment Assembly, following the fourth session of the Environment Assembly, during the last week of February, unless otherwise decided by the Environment Assembly, at its headquarters in Nairobi, consistent with Rule 4 of the rules of procedure.

The decision also approves the provisional agenda for the fourth session, further requesting the CPR, in consultation with the Bureau of the Environment Assembly, to contribute to the preparation of elaborated elements of the provisional agenda, and define a theme for the Environment Assembly no later than 31 March 2018.

The decision encourages Member States to submit draft proposals for consideration by the Environment Assembly five weeks in advance of OECPR-4, without prejudice to the rules of procedure.

**UPDATE ON THE SIXTH GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT OUTLOOK:** This item was first discussed at the OECPR-3 opening plenary on Wednesday, 29 November, and then in the contact group on overall coordination, facilitated by CPR Chair Moreti, following the presentation of the Executive Director's progress report on the sixth edition of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6), contained in document UNEP/EA.3/21. Introducing this item, UNEP Deputy Executive Director Ibrahim Thiaw said the related draft decision seeks to defer publication of GEO-6 to 2019, in order to ensure its alignment with UNEA-4. He highlighted that, compared to previous editions, GEO-6 will include a stronger focus on emerging issues, policy effectiveness, and impact.

The US supported the proposal to delay publication of GEO-6, calling for a summary to be made available to policy makers in advance of upcoming Conferences of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The EU highlighted the importance of maintaining the GEO as a core mandate under UNEP, adding that it should be a priority under the Environment

Fund. He called on the Executive Director to provide written information on the financial challenges related to its finalization, including projections.

In response to concerns by several delegations about the need to ensure timely delivery of the report, Thiaw noted that efforts will be made to ensure that GEO-6 will be published in time for UNEA-4. He proposed providing an analysis of the costs of GEO-6 based on similar budgets within the UN, and added the Secretariat will seek funds to compensate for the shortfall.

During a first reading of the draft decision on Thursday, the contact group considered recommendations provided by the high-level intergovernmental and stakeholder advisory group to UNEP regarding the extension of the delivery timeline for GEO-6 and its accompanying summary for policy makers. Several developed countries opposed proposals to remove text calling for the decision to be “guided by the principle of quality of the report over speed of delivery,” stressing the importance of ensuring the scientific integrity of GEO-6. The group also debated whether the OECPR has the mandate to call on the Assembly to “endorse” the report. Delegates eventually agreed to compromise language.

**Final Outcome:** In the final decision (UNEP/EA.3/L.2), UNEA-3 recognizes that the GEO is the flagship recurrent environmental assessment report of UNEP. The decision further recognizes the importance of delivering a high-quality GEO-6 report, and its accompanying summary for policymakers, as a key tool to strengthen the science-policy interface and assist Member States in implementing the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other internationally agreed environmental goals.

The decision requests the Executive Director to: issue the GEO-6 report three months before UNEA-4; schedule the negotiations on the summary for policy makers at least six weeks in advance of UNEA-4; and present the GEO-6 report and its accompanying summary for policy makers for consideration and possible endorsement by UNEA-4.

**Implementation of paragraph 88 (a)–(h) of the Rio+20 Outcome Document “The Future We Want”:** During the OECPR-3 closing plenary on Friday, CPR Chair Moreti noted the intention of African Group, with support from Pakistan, to forward this draft resolution, initially titled “Consolidation of UNEP Headquarters Functions,” for consideration by UNEA-3.

Following its introduction at the COW opening plenary on Monday, COW Chair Matuszak announced the continuation of the OECPR contact group, chaired by Iraq, to allow for further consultations. During the COW Monday evening plenary, the contact group chair reported progress, but requested time for additional meetings to further consult with legal advisors. During the resumed COW plenary on Tuesday evening, delegates agreed to forward the compromise text to UNEA-3.

**Final Outcome:** The final resolution (UNEP/EA.3/L.28), recalls, *inter alia*, various resolutions by the UNGA and the UNEP GC regarding the establishment, role, and strengthened mandate of UNEP and its governing bodies, as outlined in paragraph 88 (a-h) of the Rio+20 outcome document. It further reaffirms UNEA’s commitment to strengthening the role of UNEP as the leading global environmental authority that “sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.”

The resolution reaffirms UNEA’s commitment to the effective consolidation of headquarters functions in Nairobi

and the strengthening of UNEP’s regional presence. It also recalls UNEA’s strong commitment to the full implementation of paragraph 88 (a-h) and requests the Executive Director to provide regular briefings to the CPR on the progress of its implementation.

**INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES: Contributions of UNEA to the HLPF:** Proposed by Mexico, this draft resolution was allocated to the OECPR Contact Group on overall coordination, chaired by CPR Chair John Moreti on Wednesday. It was addressed by the group on Thursday and Friday.

In their first reading of the draft on Thursday, Member States discussed: whether, how, and where to reference the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) invitation to the UNEA President for input on UNEA’s contribution towards the 2030 Agenda, as well as concerns that the UNEA President was not given the opportunity to make an oral contribution to the 2017 session of the HLPF. They nearly reached agreement on preambular wording on the scope and purpose of the presentation of UNEA outcomes at the HLPF, with a reservation being placed on language that these provide the “key” environmental perspective of sustainable development.

Delegates resumed their work on this resolution on Friday. Among other issues, they discussed whether to specify that the UNEA President’s contribution to the HLPF should be “written and oral,” with some emphasizing the importance of ensuring both types of contributions are made, and others suggesting UNEA does not have the mandate to decide this.

The discussions also addressed whether a template provided by ECOSOC should be “considered,” “used,” or “used as appropriate,” with some registering concern about appearing to restrict UNEA’s input to this document alone. The Secretariat clarified that according to the relevant ECOSOC invitation, the template “could” be considered.

Other areas of debate included how to address: inputs from UNEA in years that it does not meet; the need to provide feedback to UNEA from the HLPF; the hierarchy among the UNEA President, the CPR, and the Secretariat with regard to preparation of inputs; and outcomes of Regional Forums on Sustainable Development. Delegates agreed to specify that regional offices should conduct related work “within available resources.” The group agreed on all paragraphs. The draft resolution was approved by the OECPR plenary and adopted by UNEA.

**Final Outcome:** In the final resolution (UNEP/EA.3/L.7), UNEA, *inter alia*:

- reiterates its commitment to convey its main messages to the HLPF to enable it to assess progress and challenges in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its interlinkages with the social and economic dimensions;
- decides to include a standing UNEA agenda item on “Contributions of UNEA to the meetings of High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development,” with the aim of considering in its deliberations the SDGs under review at the upcoming annual sessions of the HLPF;
- further decides to provide timely substantive inputs to the annual meetings of the HLPF, prepared by the Executive Director/Secretariat, under the guidance of the UNEA President, in consultation with and for consideration by the CPR, including during the period between the biennial sessions of UNEA, with inputs: being provided on the overarching environmental perspective of sustainable development; taking

into account the HLPF themes, the SDGs under review at each of the annual meetings of the HLPF, and the interlinkages between the environmental dimension and the social and economic dimensions; and taking into account relevant UNEA resolutions;

- encourages the interaction between the HLPF and UNEA and looks forward to its continuation and strengthening;
- recommends that the President of UNEA actively participates and conveys the main messages of UNEA to the HLPF;
- requests the Executive Director and recommends the UNEA President to work closely with the Presidents of UNGA and ECOSOC to enhance consideration of the annual contributions of UNEA in the work of the HLPF, and to report thereon to the CPR, with a view to providing feedback to UNEA; and
- requests the Executive Director, within available resources, to ensure that UNEP's regional offices work closely with Member States and the UN Regional Economic Commissions to provide timely inputs in preparation of the annual meetings of the Regional Forums on Sustainable Development, to enable regional environmental sustainability issues to be integrated in the recommendations to be submitted to the HLPF.

**Innovative environmental solutions for accelerating implementation of the SDGs:** Proposed by the African Group, this draft resolution was allocated to OECPR Contact Group 4, chaired by Marek Garzdecki (Poland), on Wednesday. During the draft resolution's first reading on Thursday, many delegates expressed their unfamiliarity with the topic and confusion over the resolution's purpose, which resulted in several discussions on terminology.

Although some delegates initially called for the inclusion of a definition of "innovative environmental solutions" that would also serve as a justification for the resolution, Member States eventually agreed to exclude the definition, as some argued it may convolute the resolution due to a lack of universality within MEAs. Delegates elected to use the "promotion," rather than "implementation," of innovative environmental solutions, as one Member State explained that the use of the latter would inhibit the creativity encouraged by the resolution. Expressing concern that new linguistic additions were detracting from the spirit of the resolution, the Chair emphasized that the resolution called for the environment to be treated as an area for new solutions rather than an "object of human manipulation."

Reconvening on Friday, the group was able to reach agreement on the draft resolution and the OECPR forwarded it to UNEA.

**Final Outcome:** In the final resolution (UNEP/EA.3/L.13), UNEA, *inter alia*:

- acknowledges that natural capital is a concept whose meaning is still under discussion;
- invites Member States, as appropriate, to take measures to promote and invest in innovative environmental policy interventions and actions to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;
- encourages Member States to promote and facilitate measures to strengthen innovative environmentally sound technologies that will ensure value addition through the sustainable use of natural capital and natural resources, while minimizing pollution and preventing, reducing, and reversing ecosystem degradation;
- reiterates the need to develop and strengthen partnerships between governments, the private sector, NGOs, the scientific community, intergovernmental organizations, and other

relevant parties to promote and enhance investment in innovative environmental solutions;

- urges Member States to: adopt, as appropriate, measures for preventing, reducing, and reversing ecosystems degradation and loss; and promote environmentally sound innovative policies for sustainable industrialization, agriculture, urban development, transport, tourism, and trade, as well as sustainable consumption and production in these key sectors;
- reiterates the importance of availability and accessibility of adequate, predictable, and sustainable resource mobilization from all sources; technology development, dissemination, diffusion, and transfer on mutually agreed terms; and capacity building; and
- requests UNEP to facilitate the strengthening of international cooperation by supporting countries in the promotion of innovative environmental solutions and their efforts to develop policies and measures to that end.

**Marine litter and microplastics:** This draft resolution, submitted by Norway and Australia, and co-sponsored by Iraq and Monaco, was introduced during OECPR-3 on Wednesday. Initial reading of the draft resolution commenced on Thursday morning in Contact Group 1, facilitated by CPR Vice-Chair Raza Bashir Tarar (Pakistan). Among other issues, delegates discussed options for appropriately referencing a regional call to action to reduce microbead pollution in the marine environment, taking into account that not all countries have committed to this.

Delegates supported including a new paragraph to recognize the benefits of reducing plastic use while improving design and quality standards in the face of increased production and consumption of plastic.

In several areas of the text, delegates flagged the need to clarify that recommendations should be implemented according to national capacity. On establishing nationally-determined reduction targets while cooperating towards establishing regional reductions targets on marine litter, several delegates voiced concern that an assessment of levels of marine litter and microplastics in the environment would be a necessary precursor to such efforts.

Delegates also discussed the request to the Executive Director to strengthen UNEP capacity in marine litter and microplastics, considering the unclear future of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter. On the formation of an open-ended *ad hoc* working group to recommend options to strengthen international governance for combating marine litter for UNEA-4, delegates expressed interest to further clarify, *inter alia*: budgetary implications; opportunities for collaboration with existing instruments; and specific terms of reference. They agreed to convene several informal drafting groups to integrate proposals for consideration by the contact group on Friday morning.

On Friday, OECPR Chair Moreti proposed that delegates continue informal consultations, facilitated by Andrew McNee (Australia), over the weekend.

The draft resolution was taken up on Monday in the COW. A Friends of the Chair group, also facilitated by McNee, subsequently met to consider the unresolved language on the modalities of the proposed open-ended *ad hoc* working group. On Monday evening, the COW approved the draft resolution and forwarded it to UNEA-3 for adoption.

**Final Outcome:** The final resolution on marine litter and microplastics (UNEP/EA.3/L.20), *inter alia*:

- takes note of the International Coral Reef Initiative's recommendation to reduce microbead pollution in the marine environment, as well as a call to action by the Pacific Regional

Environment Programme Member Countries on plastic microbeads;

- further notes with concern the high and rapidly increasing levels of marine plastic litter and the expected increase in negative effects, as well as the urgent need for strengthened knowledge on the levels and effects of micro- and nano-plastics on marine ecosystems;
- acknowledges the challenges in addressing marine plastic pollution in the face of increasing production and consumption; and
- urges all countries and other stakeholders to responsibly use plastic while endeavoring to reduce unnecessary plastic use, and promote research and application of environmentally-sound alternatives.

The resolution further encourages all Member States to:

- prevent marine litter and microplastics entering the marine environment and prioritize associated policies and measures at appropriate scale;
- cooperate to establish common definitions and harmonized standards and methodologies for measurement and monitoring of marine litter and microplastics;
- develop and implement action plans for preventing marine litter and microplastics, including prevention and increasing recycling rates and re-design and re-use of products; and
- prioritize, where feasible, clean-up in the marine environment.

The resolution encourages cooperation between governments, regional bodies, the private sector, and civil society, including through the Global Partnership on Marine Litter and its regional nodes. It requests the Executive Director, subject to the availability of resources, to strengthen UNEP's capacity and activity on marine litter and microplastics, including through:

- supporting countries, upon request, in closing gaps and improving the availability of accessible data on sources and extent of marine litter and microplastics in the environment;
- closely liaise with other UN agencies to encourage support to achieve marine litter and microplastic reduction; and
- compile the voluntary commitments, as applicable, targeting marine litter and microplastics and to provide an overview of their scope in support of UNEA's work towards achieving SDG Target 14.1 to UNEA-4.

UNEA further requests the Executive Director to convene meetings, subject to the availability of resources, of an *Ad Hoc* Open Ended Expert Group, to meet at least once, but not more than twice, before UNEA-4, enabling the participation of developing countries, to examine barriers and options for combating marine plastic litter and microplastics by identifying, *inter alia*: the range of national, regional, and innovative approaches, and voluntary and legally binding governance strategy and approaches; and environmental, social, and economic costs and benefits of different response options.

**Exposure to lead paint and promoting environmentally sound management of used lead-acid batteries:** The draft resolution submitted by the US, Argentina, and the African Group was introduced at OECPR-3 on Wednesday and was assigned to Contact Group 2, chaired by Elizabeth Taylor (Colombia). It merged draft resolutions on eliminating exposure to lead paint and promoting environmentally sound management of used lead acid batteries, despite initial resistance from some delegations who preferred to keep a standalone resolution on lead paint to build off the momentum generated by the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint. Discussions continued on Thursday, where delegates did not reach agreement on new text, reflecting the predominance

of negative environmental and health impacts from recycled batteries within developing countries, despite their use in both developed and developing nations. They did agree to amendments that emphasized the impacts of lead exposure on pregnant women, and to consider a proposal stressing the importance of strengthening national capacities.

On the final day of OECPR-3, the contact group engaged in lengthy discussions that demonstrated differences in regional preferences on capacity building and varying approaches to lead disposal and recycling. Despite differences, the group achieved consensus and CPR Chair Moreti forwarded the final draft resolution to UNEA-3.

**Final Outcome:** In the final resolution (UNEP/EA.3/L.24), UNEA emphasizes the need to reduce exposure to lead and expresses concern about the health and environmental impacts from "waste lead-acid battery" recycling. UNEA encourages governments to: develop, adopt, and implement legislation and support the private sector to eliminate lead paint; and continue their efforts for the environmentally sound management of waste lead-acid batteries.

It further requests the Executive Director to: continue assisting countries to strengthen sound management practices including by furthering capacity building; and assist countries to eliminate the use of lead paint by providing tools and capacity building.

**Environment and health:** This draft resolution was introduced in the OECPR on Wednesday, and forwarded to Contact Group 2, chaired by Taylor. It was originally submitted by the EU, but after Member States agreed to merge regional considerations on health from a draft resolution submitted by the Philippines, the EU and the Philippines became co-submitters, with Monaco, Sri Lanka, and Ukraine as co-sponsors. On Wednesday, during the initial reading of the text, several new paragraphs were introduced, including on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and the health consequences of pollution. A paragraph containing specific mention of lead was deleted since there was already a draft resolution dedicated to this topic. In subsequent meetings of the contact group, as well as informal consultations, some additions, such as on the "circular economy," received unanimous support. However, delegates did not manage to agree on the entire text by the final day of the OECPR, with some objecting to the inclusion of new sections, including referencing biodiversity, which was being addressed in another draft resolution.

Following informal consultations over the weekend, the draft resolution was taken up by the COW on the first day of UNEA-3, with Taylor reporting that one outstanding paragraph had been agreed upon, but four newly introduced paragraphs had yet to be finalized. COW Chair Matuszak invited a Friends of the Chair group, facilitated by Taylor, to explore compromise text. During the final COW plenary session on Tuesday, South Africa requested the inclusion of a footnote referencing the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Fifth Assessment Report regarding vector-borne diseases in climate change. The COW subsequently adopted the draft resolution.

**Final Outcome:** In the final resolution (UNEP/EA.3/L.8/Rev.1), UNEA, *inter alia*: welcomes the growing recognition of pollution exposure as a key risk factor contributing to premature deaths from non-communicable diseases, and encourages Member States and stakeholders to continue engaging on relevant intergovernmental regional processes.

On chemicals and waste, UNEA, *inter alia*:

- encourages governments and relevant actors to develop, adopt, and implement effective measures to minimize risks posed by chemicals; and
- requests the Executive Director to present a report on the environment and health impacts of pesticides and fertilizers, and ways to minimize them, by UNEA-5.

On climate, UNEA, *inter alia*:

- recognizes the increased risks of vector-borne diseases due to climate change; and
- requests the UNEP Executive Director to regularly report to the CPR on ongoing consultations with other agencies on joint activities on climate change, environment, and health.

On biodiversity, UNEA, *inter alia*:

- requests the Executive Director to include human health factors in its projects on ecosystem valuation; and
- encourages Member States and the Executive Director, in cooperation with stakeholders, to raise awareness of the negative impacts of chemical pollutants on wildlife.

On AMR, UNEA, *inter alia*:

- underlines the need to further understand the role of environmental pollution and AMR;
- requests the Executive Director, in collaboration with other stakeholders, to prepare a report on the environmental impacts of AMR by UNEA-5; and
- encourages Member States to consider establishing measures to manage waste and wastewater to minimize contamination contributing to AMR.

On sustainable consumption, UNEA, *inter alia*:

- recommends the inclusion of a cross-cutting monitored indicator on health and well-being impacts in the Indicators of Success Framework for the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns;
- requests the Executive Director to identify opportunities for and promote sustainable lifestyles and consumption that would promote human and environmental health; and
- requests the Executive Director to present a report on the implementation of the resolution at UNEA-4.

**Addressing water pollution to protect and restore water-related ecosystems:** This draft resolution, submitted by the US, Costa Rica, and Colombia, was introduced during OECPR-3 on Wednesday.

On Friday morning in Contact Group 1, facilitated by CPR Vice-Chair Tarar, delegates engaged in a first reading, with the understanding that the group would go through proposed amendments and leave time to engage informally before concluding. Resuming discussion of the text in the afternoon, some Member States objected to: the inclusion of future forum outcomes, such as the eighth World Water Forum; and reference to assessments that have not been clearly presented to Member States. Delegates also opposed the introduction of “aspirational” text, such as on international surveillance detection initiatives to strengthen preparedness and address waterborne diseases. The African Group agreed to withdraw a related draft resolution on “Accelerating efforts to address water pollution and to protect and restore water-related ecosystems,” in order to facilitate the contact group’s progress.

On Friday, OECPR Chair Moreti invited delegates to participate in informal consultations facilitated by Diego Padilla (Costa Rica) over the weekend to make progress on outstanding issues in order to bring forward a revised draft resolution to UNEA-3.

On Monday, the COW agreed to forward compromise text to the UNEA-3 plenary.

**Final Outcome:** The final resolution (UNEP/EA.3/L.27) stresses that monitoring water quality and quantity and sharing data are important for the effective management of water pollution and identifies concern about the limited legal, policy, financial, technical, technological, and institutional capacities required to monitor, enforce, and address water pollution in an integrated manner in many developing countries. UNEA welcomes the outcome of the UN Ocean Conference and the convening of the 8th session of the World Water Forum.

UNEA invites Member States to: establish and improve water quality monitoring networks in voluntary collaboration with relevant organizations and monitoring systems to fill relevant data and information gaps, and share data to help identify and address sources and causes of water pollution in water bodies; and enhance public access to relevant information on water quality status.

UNEA encourages Member States to: half the amount of untreated wastewater reaching water bodies by 2030; and develop and implement policies related to integrated water resources management and invest in the protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems. UNEA further calls upon Member States to, *inter alia*: increase transboundary water cooperation, where appropriate; and strengthen preparedness to address waterborne diseases by encouraging initiatives dedicated to activities of surveillance, detection, notification, and response to water-related public health emergencies.

The resolution also requests the Executive Director, within available resources, to, *inter alia*: build on the Global Environment Monitoring System/Water Programme Trust Fund to assist developing countries in water quality monitoring; work with relevant international organizations to build upon the 2016 Snapshot of the World’s Water Quality, taking into account recommendations of assessments of invasive species, pharmaceutical contaminants, emerging pollutants, and levels of pathogens in water bodies; and cooperate with other relevant organizations to develop a World Water Quality Assessment for consideration at UNEA-5.

**Pollution mitigation by mainstreaming biodiversity into key sectors:** This draft resolution, submitted by Mexico and co-sponsored by Egypt and Colombia, was introduced during OECPR-3 on Wednesday. On Friday morning in Contact Group 1, facilitated by CPR Vice-Chair Tarar, delegates completed a first reading of the resolution, engaging in lengthy exchanges on the notion of “compensating” or “remediating” the negative impacts of pollution on biodiversity, among other issues. Proposals to include reference to provisions contained in multilateral trade rules and subsidies were rejected. Noting that there is an established process for deciding the themes of future UNEA meetings, many delegates opposed paragraphs calling for the consideration of biodiversity as a possible theme for UNEA-4. They placed reservations on text requesting the UNEP Executive Director to prepare a concept note on the possible contributions by UNEP to the envisaged process of follow-up to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.

On Friday, Chair Moreti informed delegates that informal consultations, facilitated by Fernando Coimbra (Brazil), would continue over the weekend to make progress on outstanding issues, in order to bring forward a revised draft resolution to UNEA-3.

On Monday evening, the COW agreed to forward the draft resolution to the UNEA-3 plenary.

**Final Outcome:** The final resolution on pollution mitigation by mainstreaming biodiversity into key sectors (UNEP/EA.3/L.6/Rev.2) invites Member States, taking into account different national circumstances, to, *inter alia*:

- strengthen efforts to mainstream conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity within and across sectors in order to promote the reduction, mitigation, and remediation of negative impacts, including pollution;
- work on establishing, strengthening or fostering institutional, legislative, and regulatory frameworks and involve relevant stakeholders such as indigenous peoples and local communities, academia, civil society, private sector, and national and subnational governments; and
- support sustainable production and consumption through value chains, the application of clean technologies, and the elimination, phasing out, or reform of incentives harmful to biodiversity.

UNEA further invites Member States to consider biodiversity as one of the issues for UNEA-4, with a request for the Executive Director to prepare a note on upcoming milestones on biodiversity and present it to Member States for consideration by the 141st meeting of the CPR and first UNEA-4 Bureau meeting in 2018.

UNEA also requests the Executive Director to promote close coordination, collaboration, and synergies among relevant organizations of the UN system, MEAs and international initiatives, and to cooperate with the CBD Secretariat on the implementation and follow up of decisions of the 13th session of the CBD Conference of the Parties (COP 13).

**Preventing and reducing air pollution to improve air quality:** This draft resolution, submitted by Canada and the African Group and co-sponsored by EU, Chile, and Monaco, was introduced during OECPR-3 on Wednesday. In Contact Group 3, facilitated by Tarja Fernández (Finland), delegates opposed identifying specific tools referencing voluntary commitments, preferring universal best practices. A working group was established to address transboundary issues.

On Thursday afternoon, the contact group resumed its second reading without reaching agreement on compromise text aiming to provide examples of regional initiatives “to inspire countries to take action to improve air quality and protect human health.” References to the transboundary nature and global impacts of air pollution were consistently opposed by several countries. With various counterproposals offered to detail the types of actions to be taken to reduce air pollution, Chair Fernández invited interested parties to continue informal consultations and reconvene the contact group in the evening.

On Friday, Contact Group 3 met throughout the day and reached agreement on the draft resolution. During the closing plenary, delegates agreed to forward it to UNEA-3 for adoption.

**Final Outcome:** The final resolution (UNEP/EA.3/L.23) acknowledges the work of some initiatives such as the UN Economic Commission for Europe’s Batumi Action on Cleaner Air and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations’ Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution that can inspire countries to take action to improve air quality and protect human health. It further notes the voluntary reduction commitments and cooperative efforts by some Member States to reduce black carbon emissions.

UNEA encourages Member States, when taking actions across sectors to reduce all forms of air pollution, to consider joining or

cooperating with relevant global initiatives and further encourages governments to pursue synergies and co-benefits between national clean air policies, stressing further information sharing through engagement in regional cooperation.

UNEA also requests the Executive Director, within available resources, to support the enhancement of regional cooperation to address air pollution, including transboundary air pollution for interested Member States, in close cooperation with relative initiatives, and organize regional communities of practice for air quality management through UNEP’s regional offices.

**Pollution prevention and control in areas affected by terrorist operations and armed conflicts:** Following the introduction of this draft resolution, proposed by Iraq and co-sponsored by Norway, at the OECPR-3 opening plenary on Wednesday, the text was discussed by Contact Group 3, chaired by Tarja Fernández (Finland).

Some delegations expressed reservations on preambular references to adverse impacts of environmental migration or forced displacement, hazardous wastes, and illicit extraction of natural resources and minerals by non-state actors or criminal groups.

With regard to text invoking international humanitarian law, many delegates pointed to the lack of global agreements covering terrorist acts and called for its withdrawal. Following an update from the Secretariat on the proposed international convention to combat terrorism and related initiatives, delegates agreed to request the Executive Director to continue interacting with the International Law Commission in its work pertaining to pollution resulting from terrorist acts and armed conflicts. The group also agreed to encourage the Executive Director to continue undertaking field visits to affected areas “upon the invitation of the affected State.”

Several delegates rejected references to the prevention of pollution in transboundary waters, including compromise language calling for preventing and controlling pollution to facilitate dialogue, confidence building, and “cooperation between divided communities.” Language referring to UNEP support for conflict-affected states in “vulnerable situations due to climate change, desertification, or food security” was also deleted. Welcoming progress on text referring to international law, Chair Fernández encouraged delegates to continue consultations to ensure finalization of the text on Friday.

Reporting on the group’s progress during the closing plenary on Friday, Chair Fernández said that while the group had agreed on compromise language proposed during informal consultations, it had decided to allow more time for consultation with capitals over the weekend, in light of the political nature of the resolution. The OECPR subsequently agreed to forward the text to UNEA-3 for finalization.

During the COW plenary on Monday morning, Chair Matuszak updated delegates that consultations with capitals would continue with informal consultations, facilitated by Tarja Fernández. In the evening, progress was reported on the outstanding issues and the COW agreed to forward the revised draft resolution to UNEA-3 for adoption.

**Final Outcome:** The final resolution (UNEP/EA.3/L.5) expresses Member States’ deep concern about the threats to human health and environment from pollution caused or worsened by armed conflict or terrorism. Among other international policy frameworks, the resolution recalls: several UNGA resolutions addressing, *inter alia*, the protection of the environment in

times of armed conflict, and the need for mainstreaming and coordinating the prevention of armed conflict throughout the United Nations system.

The resolution further notes, *inter alia*:

- the collapse of environmental governance in conflict affected areas can lead to inadequate waste management and dumping, while the loss of economic opportunity can compel affected communities to pursue unsustainable and polluting coping strategies;
- the potential threat from, and far reaching impact due to, the movement of hazardous wastes over long distances, including persistent organic pollutants (POPs) in areas affected by armed conflict or terrorism; and
- illicit extraction of natural resources and minerals in areas affected by armed conflict or terrorism can generate pollution and displacement of people, in particular those in a vulnerable situation, especially women, children, persons with disabilities, and older persons.

Stressing the need for the swift identification, assessment, and remediation of pollution impacts in the areas affected by armed conflict or terrorism in order to protect human health and the environment, and welcoming UNEP's work on the protection of the environment in areas affected by armed conflict or terrorism, UNEA, *inter alia*:

- reaffirms the rules of international law, including the UN Charter, human rights law, and international humanitarian law, as applicable;
- emphasizes the need to raise greater international awareness of environmental damage and pollution resulting from armed conflict or terrorism;
- urges Member States to take appropriate measures to minimize and control pollution in situations of armed conflict or terrorism;
- stresses the importance of preventing the pollution of rivers and water reserves with harmful substances as a result of armed conflict or terrorism; and
- urges all states affected by armed conflict or terrorism to encourage all actors at the national level to participate in the preparation of the national plans and strategies aiming at setting the priorities for environmental assessment and remediation projects, and that the data necessary for identifying health outcomes is collected and integrated into health registries and risk education programmes.

Among follow-up actions, UNEA requests the Executive Director to:

- continue undertaking field visits to affected areas upon the invitation of the affected state, as appropriate;
- dispatch urgent assistance missions, as appropriate, upon an affected state's request, within available resources and in conformity with UNEP's mandate, to affected areas, in order to undertake field-based and post-crisis environmental assessments and recovery, with a view to assisting affected states in controlling pollution resulting from armed conflict or terrorism; and
- continue interaction with the International Law Commission, *inter alia*, by providing relevant information to the Commission at its request in support of its work pertaining to pollution resulting from armed conflict or terrorism.

UNEA also invites United Nations Offices, Funds and Programmes, Specialized Agencies and related organizations, other international organizations, and relevant stakeholders to collaborate closely with UNEP in providing technical assistance

upon request of states affected by pollution resulting from armed conflict or terrorism to implement international agreements on the environmentally sound management of chemicals and waste and to help build effective environmental governance.

#### **Managing soil pollution to achieve sustainable**

**development:** This draft decision, submitted by the African Group, was first taken up on Wednesday evening in OECPR-3 Contact Group 4, chaired by Marek Garztecki. Terminology appeared to be one of the biggest hurdles for the group, as the group consulted technical experts to choose appropriate wording related to the use of carbon, for example deciding between "pool," "sink," or "stock." On the last day of OECPR-3, the group forwarded the finalized text to UNEA-3 for adoption.

**Final Outcome:** In the final resolution (UNEP/EA.3/L.14), UNEA welcomes the work of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification on soil and land issues, respectively. It also: acknowledges soils as containing the largest active carbon stock after oceans, adding that they are essential for climate change mitigation; recognizes that preventing, reducing, and managing soil pollution as vital to protecting human and environmental health; and expresses concern about the threat of soil pollution and the knowledge gap on the effects of the aforementioned on health and the environment.

UNEA further:

- encourages Member States to undertake national and regional levels to reduce and manage soil pollution;
- invites the international community, civil society, and the private sector, to support the development of information systems and research aimed at preventing, reducing, and managing soil pollution; and
- requests the Executive Director, for UNEA-5, to: prepare a report on future trends of soil pollution and its risks to environmental and human health; and elaborate technical guidelines for the prevention and minimization of soil contamination.

#### **HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT: "TOWARDS A POLLUTION FREE PLANET"**

The UNEA-3 High-Level Segment convened on Tuesday and Wednesday and addressed the overarching theme "Towards a Pollution-Free Planet." The segment included: an opening plenary with remarks by key dignitaries; national statements; Leadership Dialogues; a Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue; a gala dinner; a wrap-up plenary session; and a closing plenary session. Discussions were supported by the Background Report of the Executive Director on the UNEA-3 theme of the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, "Towards a pollution-free planet," and the note of the Executive Director on the organization of UNEA-3 (UNEP/EA.3/INF/1).

#### **OFFICIAL OPENING AND NATIONAL STATEMENTS:**

In his opening address, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta underscored the importance of the recent ban on the manufacture, sale, and use of single-use plastic bags in Kenya and announced plans to host a conference on the blue economy in 2018. Remarking that his participation at UNEA-3 demonstrated a commitment to building bridges over borders, Trinidad and Tobago President Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona stressed the importance of educating children to advocate for the environment and to "save adults from themselves."

A video recording of UNEA-3 statements is available here: <http://web.unep.org/environmentassembly/>

**LEADERSHIP DIALOGUES:** The aim of the interactive high-level Leadership Dialogues, held on Tuesday, was to provide participating ministers with an opportunity to intensify engagement in order to discuss solutions, provide strategic direction, and accelerate action on the pollution agenda. Four consecutive, 90-minute dialogues took place, addressing: science, evidence, and citizens' awareness for change; regulatory frameworks, institutions, and the rule of law to address pollution; practical solutions for a pollution-free planet; and financing and innovation to combat pollution. Presenting key messages from the dialogues during the wrap-up session on Wednesday morning, Beatrice Marshall, Anchor, China Global Television Network Africa, highlighted: a call to harness science and technology to actualize and drive policies and partnerships with the private sector; identification of legal and regulatory frameworks essential to tackle pollution; lessons learned; and a call for policy formulation to incentivize green investments and create markets for green goods and services.

For more detailed coverage of the dialogues, see <http://enb.iisd.org/download/pdf/enb16142e.pdf>

**MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE:** Convening on Tuesday evening, this session moderated by Felix Dodds, International Ambassador for the City of Bonn, aimed to build on the #BeatPollution campaign and UNEA-3 Leadership Dialogues to focus on root causes of different aspects of pollution, including their connections to poverty, rule of law, and human rights.

The discussions took place in two rounds, with representatives of civil society highlighting problems and solutions, followed by reactions from ministers and high-level representatives of government and international institutions. The first round highlighted the impacts of pollution on local communities, discussing personal experiences with pollution and exploring "why" and "how" citizen-led actions have succeeded in tackling pollution. Speakers emphasized the need for governments to enforce standards and punish polluters for the sake of human and environmental health.

The second round showcased both community- and business-led approaches to combat pollution. The discussions highlighted the need for green public procurement and the importance of engaging stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and vulnerable groups. The session closed with one civil society representative saying that "If we really want to solve pollution, we should consider ending funding to it in the first place."

Reporting on the outcome of the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Wednesday, Facilitator Dodds underscored messages to increase *inter alia*: multi-stakeholder engagement; capacity support to developing countries to implement national laws; government incentives such as carbon taxes; public awareness to mobilize political will; and the role of data and monitoring. He added that voluntary commitments are a "good step, but not good enough," and identified the need to address corruption that underpins success of all approaches, calling on UNEA-4 to contribute to HLPF in 2019.

For more detailed coverage of the dialogue, see <http://enb.iisd.org/download/pdf/enb16142e.pdf>

**PRESENTATION OF COUNTRY, STAKEHOLDER AND INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENTS:** During a wrap-up plenary session on Wednesday morning, Member States and other stakeholders shared their commitments to end the pollution of air, land, waterways, and oceans, and to safely manage chemicals and waste.

Malta shared efforts to integrate environmental values into policies aimed to mitigate and reduce pollution, highlighting a low-carbon strategy involving energy resource diversification, along with voluntary commitments to reduce plastic beverage containers by 70% and protect freshwater to offset ground water extractions.

Mali described the adoption of laws to prevent importation of plastic bags and public awareness campaigns to deter use.

The Seychelles reiterated commitments made during the UN Ocean Conference to operationalize the Seychelles Marine Spatial Planning Initiative, increasing marine protected areas and championing a blue economy.

The International Telecommunication Union advocated the role of information, technology, and communications in a 20% reduction in global carbon emissions by 2020, through their application in the transportation, building, and energy sector, while also reflecting targets to reduce e-waste by 50% by 2020 and increase energy efficiency in electronic devices.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) reiterated that pollution "makes us sick" by contaminating our food and threatening the natural environment, underscoring IUCN's aim to champion nature-based solutions.

The BRS Secretariat emphasized commitments to: coordinate and cooperate with UNEA-3; establish new partnerships to address household waste and marine plastics; and identify chemicals and persistent pollutants that require regulation.

The Ramsar Convention Secretariat reported concern regarding the estimated 80% of untreated waste that is dumped into water supplies and called for "urgently stepping up protection and restoration of wetlands" through integrated policies and actions.

The CBD Secretariat regretted to report that Aichi Target 8 on pollution will not be achieved by 2020, calling for accelerated efforts to gain strong political engagement and increase levels of both ambition and action, suggesting focus on sustainable consumption and production, and public participation and monitoring, among others.

**ADOPTION OF THE OUTCOMES OF THE SESSION:** During the concluding plenary on Wednesday afternoon, UNEA-3 President Gutiérrez-Espeleta invited the chairs of the sessional committees and working parties to report on the outcomes of their respective work, including on the agreements reached on draft resolutions and decisions, and the outcome document of the High-Level Segment.

**UNEA-3 Ministerial Declaration:** Consultations on a UNEA-3 ministerial outcome document were initiated by the CPR during the intersessional period under the leadership of the UNEA-3 President. During the OECPR-3 opening plenary on Wednesday, 29 November, President Gutiérrez-Espeleta highlighted progress in the CPR negotiations and expressed hope the document would be endorsed on Friday afternoon. Delegates then convened the first of several consultation sessions over the three days, chaired by the UNEA-3 President.

During their second reading of the draft outcome document on Thursday evening, delegates made general comments, including on language related to: means of implementation; the Paris Agreement on climate change; armed conflict and the environment; actions to address pollution; and North-South, South-South, and triangular cooperation. One delegate suggested linking the document's text with the UNEA-3 resolutions. President Gutiérrez-Espeleta explained that new text for a

paragraph on the role of environmental ministers in delivering actions to address pollution would be proposed on Friday morning.

During the OECPR-3 closing plenary on Friday evening, President Gutiérrez-Espeleta reported that the consultations had concluded, with delegates agreeing on a concise, action-oriented explanation of how governments intend to combat pollution. The OECPR agreed to endorse the draft declaration and forward it to UNEA-3, without prejudice to discussions by environmental ministers and heads of delegation.

Introducing the draft ministerial declaration to the UNEA-3 plenary on Wednesday morning, 6 December, President Gutiérrez-Espeleta informed delegates that the document had been further amended during consultations the previous day. He welcomed the political will and commitment of political leaders to address the threat of pollution, as reflected in the draft. The Assembly adopted the Ministerial Declaration.

In reactions from the floor, Syria, supported by Cuba, highlighted that “unilateral economic coercive measures” affect the achievement of environmental sustainability and emphasized that the Declaration’s lack of reference to this theme should not be seen as setting a precedent.

Ethiopia underscored the importance of implementation, including through: means of implementation, information exchange, and coordination between different environmental conventions. The EU expressed appreciation for the Declaration’s strong message.

Underlining continued commitment to UNEP and UNEA, the US highlighted various concerns with the Declaration, including on: “provocative, misleading text” on the topic of untested chemicals; and language on climate change, which he stressed is without prejudice to his delegation’s evolving position on this topic. Regarding the document’s reference to an implementation plan for a pollution-free planet building on the outcomes of UNEA-3, he highlighted his delegation’s understanding that “outcomes” refers to resolutions, and that the plan is to address only UNEP’s actions.

Pakistan, for the Group of 77 and China, assured delegates of the group’s continued cooperation during the intersessional period and expressed hope that others would engage in the same spirit.

In a final round of statements following the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration, delegates praised the successful conclusion of a negotiated outcome, with many expressing their appreciation to the UNEA-3 President for his leadership. Despite expressing their reservations on references to technology transfer and intellectual property rights, the US described the process of coalescing divergent views as a “truly extraordinary effort.”

**Final Outcome:** In the Ministerial Declaration of UNEA-3 (UNEP/EA.3/L.19), the world’s Ministers of Environment underscore their belief that everyone has the right to live in a clean environment, and highlight that pollution has a negative impact on the length of human life. The Ministers alert people everywhere to:

- the inexcusability that tens of thousands of chemicals are used in everyday objects and applied in the field without proper testing, labelling or tracking;
- their acknowledgement of the links between pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, and ecosystem degradation, including that pollution disproportionately affects the poor and vulnerable;
- their concern by the legacy and damage of pollution that armed conflict or terrorism causes to the environment;

- their certainty that, *inter alia*, determination, collaboration, knowledge generation and sharing, and innovation can provide solutions to tackle pollution;
- their support of the actions, commitments, and resolutions adopted by UNEA;
- their advocacy of the Declaration, including at the HLPF, given that addressing pollution is crucial in achieving the SDGs; and
- the Declaration as their commitment to work towards a pollution-free planet.

While acknowledging that combating pollution requires commitment from governments, the private sector, international organizations, civil society, and individuals, Environment Ministers agree to take actions to prevent, mitigate, and manage pollution, including through, *inter alia*:

- increasing research and encouraging the development of reliable scientific and disaggregated data;
- promoting science-based decision-making and effective standard-setting by all stakeholders;
- encouraging sustainable lifestyles and moving towards sustainable consumption and production, including through education;
- promoting the adoption of policies and approaches including for the environmentally sound management of chemicals and wastes; and
- affirming their political commitment to create an enabling environment to tackle pollution in the context of sustainable development, including through adequate means of implementation as agreed in the 2030 Agenda and Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

Ministers also agree to promote: North-South, South-South, and triangular cooperation, while recognizing that South-South cooperation complements, rather than substitutes for North-South cooperation; regional dialogue; and coordination across the UN.

**Adoption of UNEA-3 decisions and resolutions:** Presenting the report of the COW to the UNEA-3 closing plenary on Wednesday afternoon, Chair Matuszak expressed that he was “happy and excited” to report the successful conclusion of the Committee’s assignment. He informed the Assembly that the COW had convened two meetings on Monday, suspending the closing plenary due to lack of agreement on three draft texts. He noted that in addition to considering resolutions submitted from OECPR-3, the COW had also taken up the African Group’s draft resolution on consolidation of UNEP headquarters functions, while a second new resolution on South-South Cooperation was not formally introduced, leading to its withdrawal.

Chair Matuszak thanked the UNEA-3 Rapporteur, chairs of the various contact groups and Friends of the Chair groups, as well as delegations, Secretariat staff, and all service providers, for their commitment and spirit of compromise. Reflecting on the successful outcomes at this Assembly, he said this was in part due to setting firm goals and agreeing to boundaries, and “choosing not to negotiate by exhaustion but to suspend our discussions to enable time to rest and reflect.” He expressed hope that this “constructive approach of a disciplined negotiation, cooperation and hard work” will serve as an example to future Assemblies, further noting that adopting these resolutions will not only contribute to UNEP’s work, but improve the life of our people and planet.

Delegates then proceeded to adopt all 11 draft resolutions and three draft decisions, submitted by the OECPR and the COW, without objection.

The Latin American and Caribbean Group expressed appreciation for the strengthening of the reporting process from UNEA to the HLPF. The EU, with Ukraine, said the Ministerial Declaration demonstrated willingness to step up action together towards a pollution-free planet. He noted that this will be underpinned by the substantive resolutions adopted at UNEA-3, which provide further guidance for national policy making and international cooperation. Highlighting the many links between pollution, human health, and biosphere, he identified the resolutions on environment and health and marine litter, as significant outcomes. The African Group said that with the UNEA-3 outcomes, “We have started the first steps in a long journey towards addressing pollution.”

Diverse Member States, representatives of UN entities, regional and international organizations, and Major Groups and Stakeholders representatives, also made closing statements.

**Credentials of Representatives:** The Secretariat reported that as of 5 December 2017, formal credentials had been submitted by 79 Member States, while another 77 Member States had presented their credentials through their missions. The Assembly adopted the report without comment.

**Election of Officers:** UNEA-3 President Gutiérrez-Espeleta presented nominations from the regional groups for the positions of UNEA-4 President, Rapporteur, and eight vice-presidents, noting the President is expected to be nominated from the Eastern European States and the Rapporteur from the Asia-Pacific States. He reported that Siim Kiisler, Minister of Environment, Estonia, had been nominated as President and Raza Bashir Tarar (Pakistan) as Rapporteur. He also presented nominations for the eight Vice-Presidents: two from the African States (South Africa and Gabon); one from the Asia-Pacific States (Iran); one from the Eastern European States (Czech Republic); two from the Latin American and Caribbean States (Brazil and Antigua and Barbuda); and two from the Western European and Other States (Finland and Switzerland).

Delegates endorsed the nominated officers by acclamation.

**Closing Statements:** In comments from the floor, Algeria expressed her expectation, based on standing practice, that members of the CPR be accredited as permanent representatives to UNEP, and that any nomination to serve as a Bureau Member must have attained the level of Minister, or a high-level civil servant. She expressed concern regarding the capacity of some of the elected members, noting that this may compromise the integrity of the rules of governance within the organization.

Luxembourg presented the outcomes from the Women’s Ministers of Environment Breakfast, which had more than 100 leaders in attendance to discuss a pollution-free planet and establish recommendations on action points to be undertaken. She called for gender responsive policies and programmes, and the support of “quick win projects.”

Chile highlighted its climate change mitigation efforts driven by the clean energy sector, including through retrofitting home installations for clean energy. He stressed that carbon pricing offers a crucial opportunity to align diverse SDGs, concluding that “this work has helped put health at the center of our sustainable development aspirations.”

UNEA-4 President, Siim Kiisler, Minister of Environment, Estonia, expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to serve as President of UNEA-4, and to the UNEA-3 President for his outstanding work during the Assembly. He expressed his goal to involve all stakeholders, including the private sector and NGOs, and called on all for their continued engagement.

Executive Director Solheim celebrated the many “firsts” of UNEA-3, including the adoption of a negotiated Ministerial Declaration by consensus, the Leadership Dialogues, and the Sustainable Business Forum. He spoke of follow up, calling for pragmatic approaches, including: phasing out plastic use with alternatives and recycling programmes; shifting from coal to solar and gas to electric; and improving organization of cities, specifically in mass transportation. He closed by saying “the most important word in the world today is the word ‘together.’”

**Any other matters:** President Gutiérrez-Espeleta invited the Assembly to express a vote of thanks to Kenya for hosting the Assembly.

On behalf of Secretariat staff, Jorge Laguna-Celis, Secretary of the Governing Bodies, presented a token of appreciation to President Gutiérrez-Espeleta, COW Chair Matuszak and other Bureau members. He also acknowledged financial contributions from Australia, the European Commission, Finland, France, Kenya, India, New Zealand, the Nordic Council, the Philippines, Romania, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the United Nations Office at Nairobi, and Denmark.

**Adoption of the UNEA-3 Report:** UNEA-3 Rapporteur Travis Sinckler presented the draft proceedings of UNEA-3 containing outcomes of the 3rd session (UNEP/EA.3/L.1). He informed the Assembly that a total of 1,197 representatives of Member States, 711 representatives of Major Groups and Stakeholders, and 94 intergovernmental organizations delegates had participated at the various UNEA-3 events.

The Assembly adopted the report on the understanding that Member States may present feedback for inclusion in final report.

Invoking his right of reply under the UNEA rules of procedure, Azerbaijan, opposed by Armenia, protested the latter’s occupation of his country. President Gutiérrez-Espeleta said the comments were noted, and expressed hope that in future Member States would address such complaints to the appropriate UN body.

President Gutiérrez-Espeleta then declared UNEA-3 closed at 5:37 pm.

## A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF UNEA-3

The third meeting of the UN Environment Assembly was gavelled to a close on Wednesday evening with standing ovation, following the adoption of 11 resolutions and three decisions as well as the first-ever negotiated political declaration at an Assembly on the theme, “Towards a pollution-free planet.” Yet as various delegations stressed in their closing statements, the urgency to address pollution, and its negative effects on human and environmental health, highlight the importance of ensuring follow-through on this lofty vision. Bridging the gap between aspiration and action requires a number of elements to come together. These include an effective process and format; strong and credible content, coupled with effective communication; and, perhaps most importantly, adequate means of implementation. This brief analysis will discuss how these three themes came to the fore at UNEA-3.

### FORMAT AND PROCESS

*“If you’re walking down the right path and you’re willing to keep walking, eventually you’ll make progress.” – Barack Obama*

In order to align the work of the Assembly with the UN’s budgetary cycles, UNEA-3 was held, “on an exceptional basis,” eighteen months after UNEA-2, rather than after the customary

two-year interval. To accommodate this change, Member States had agreed that UNEA-3 would be a “lean and mean” one, resulting in a shorter meeting convened “back-to-back” with OECPR-3. While the success of this unusual format was by no means a given, by the closing plenary, many delegates were convinced that “it clearly worked.” Indeed, UNEA-3 drew to a close ahead of schedule, with all agenda items addressed, and in good spirits: a stark contrast, many remarked, to the acrimony that had characterized the Assembly’s closing plenary in 2016.

Countries credited the able and transparent leadership of UNEA-3 President Gutiérrez-Espeleta as a major contributing factor to the meeting’s success. In addition, high-level participation at the OECPR and restraint demonstrated by many delegations had ensured that resolutions and decisions agreed *ad referendum* at the OECPR was not reopened during the Assembly.

The meeting’s novel format also prompted some delegations to reconsider what this could mean for future UNEA sessions. Amid over a dozen substantive resolutions and decisions to be considered, UNEA-3’s decision on the proposed date of UNEA-4—and in particular the question of whether the next Assembly should convene back-to-back with the OECPR—emerged as one of the most contentious of the entire meeting. While proponents of this approach pointed to the smooth running of UNEA-3, others expressed hesitation that, once UNEA reverts to its five-day configuration, a back-to-back format “will become a marathon” that will no longer allow all participants to attend for the entire stretch. A UNEP representative was also heard musing about the financial implications of the various options. A back-to-back format, he suggested, may be more cost-effective when it comes to the convening of the two meetings, but ultimately a “staggered” approach might be more favorable for UNEP’s longer term financial situation, by allowing Member States and the Secretariat intersessional time to work through the budgetary and programme of work implications of various draft resolutions.

Ultimately, the final decision mandates UNEA-4 to be held at UNEP headquarters from 11-15 March 2019; while the date of the next OECPR was deferred until a decision is taken by the CPR by March 2018. Getting the Assembly’s meeting format right will have important implications for how UNEA continues to provide “the key environmental perspective” within the UN system.

#### #BEATPOLLUTION

*“The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing is all that needs to be resolved.” – Mahatma Gandhi*

Over 12 million lives are lost each year due to environmental causes such as poor air quality, water pollution, and exposure to lead, asbestos and pesticides. That number represents one in four deaths worldwide. In this context, UNEA-3’s decision to organize the meeting around a theme that “brings the environment home in a tangible way” was welcomed by many.

Substantively, this focus manifested itself in a number of important steps forward, including the adoption of resolutions on pollution of air, water, and soil; environment and health; marine litter and microplastics; lead paint and used lead-acid batteries; as well as cross-cutting themes such as pollution prevention in areas affected by terrorism and conflict; and mainstreaming biodiversity for pollution mitigation. The UNEA Ministerial Declaration also galvanized ministers around actions to combat pollution. Given recent challenges to multilateral environmental cooperation—notably news of the US’ intended withdrawal from the Paris

Agreement on climate change—the consensus that this document was able to achieve was regarded by many as an important signal that progress on this front remains possible.

While pollution manifests itself in many forms, it was the topic of plastic waste in marine ecosystems that gained the most traction at UNEA-3, with “the plastics Armageddon” and admonitions that there might soon be more plastic than fish in the oceans making international headlines. While a possible international “plastic ban” highlighted in key news outlets may be a long way off, the meeting saw inspiring examples from various parts of the world, including host country Kenya’s ban on the use and sale of single-use plastic bags, demonstrating the transformative action that governments and communities can already take. In this context, UNEA-3 might be remembered as pivotal in setting the first steps towards a framework for action.

UNEA-3’s emphasis on plastics also helped underpin a new communication strategy, geared towards harnessing international attention and momentum for action. Communication is an issue that the Executive Director has designated a “life or death issue for the UN,” including UNEP, while underscoring the need to bring the environment “to the kitchen table.” Emphasizing this point, Solheim brought a copy of the *Daily Mail’s* headline, “Turning the tide on plastic” to his high-level plenary speech, highlighting that, not only was this issue now being picked up “beyond the converted,” but that its headline “had originated in Nairobi.” In addition to incorporation of hashtags in external messaging, efforts to “bring the environment home” at UNEA-3 included the collection of more than two million voluntary commitments from individuals on topics ranging from the use of public transport, to eating less meat, avoiding cosmetics with microbeads, and reducing electronic waste. While UNEP’s communication strategy appeared to be working, it was not without controversy. During OECPR-3, the Secretariat was compelled to withdraw a proposed decision on improving communication on the environment, following concerns about, among other issues, UNEP’s efforts to rebrand itself “UN Environment.”

#### BRIDGING THE FINANCE GAP

*“You can make a lot of speeches, but the real thing is when you dig a hole, plant a tree, give it water, and make it survive. That’s what makes the difference.” – Wangari Maathai*

A recurring theme during both OECPR-3 and UNEA-3 was the significant gap in funding required to deliver on UNEP’s ever-expanding programme of activities. These concerns were brought to the fore in the Secretariat’s OECPR report on implementation of UNEA-2 resolutions, which underscored “uneven” implementation across different issues. Indeed, the 11 resolutions and three decisions adopted at UNEA-3, let alone a relatively ambitious Ministerial Declaration, raise the question of how the meeting’s aspirations can be met in a time of resource scarcity—lest they remain “castles in the air.”

To address such concerns, UNEP has for the past few years been placing an increasing emphasis on broadening its funding base. In several ways, UNEA-3 went beyond previous efforts to tap into innovative funding, with the convening of the first-ever Science-Policy-Business Forum on the sidelines of the meeting; a consistent identification by the Executive Director, of the need for governments, business and civil society to work together to effectuate environmental change; and the convening of a series

of interactive Leadership Dialogues bringing together a range of stakeholders, including on the theme of “financing and innovation to combat pollution.”

Yet the Assembly also saw concerns about these developments come to the fore. It did not go unnoticed, especially by civil society, that representation at the Leadership Dialogues was tipped in favor of government and business, with NGOs struggling to have their messages heard. For many NGOs and civil society organizations, the Executive Director’s remarks at OECPR-3 that “we must not give into the demands of civil society” when it comes to concerns about partnering with certain businesses also raised apprehension about their precarious position vis-à-vis the private sector. With various interventions and actions at UNEA-3 serving to highlight the growing dangers faced by environmental activists around the world, some agreed that the Assembly will need to tread carefully to ensure its efforts to forge new partnerships are not perceived as dampening support of those defending the environment on the frontlines.

### TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE

*“We all share the same sky [...] There are 84,600 seconds in every day. You can do with them as you please, but you can never get them back.”* – Mae Jemison, first African-American woman in space

As demonstrated by the high spirits that characterized UNEA-3’s closing plenary, the 2017 meeting of the Assembly in many ways surpassed expectations, with delegates using the short number of days available to them to the best of their advantage. While progress on issues of format and means of implementation was mixed, the fact that the Assembly’s messages, buoyed by a relatable theme, resonated with the public beyond the negotiating halls in Nairobi suggests that the world’s “Parliament of the Environment” may be gradually finding its voice in the global sustainable development landscape.

Perhaps most importantly, UNEA-3 managed to keep environmental issues, and their interlinkages with social and economic dimensions, as the meeting’s core focus. This intention was underlined during closing plenary, where a brief altercation between Azerbaijan and Armenia was not permitted to escalate. Instead, UNEA-3 President Gutiérrez-Espeleta stressed that “UNEA is about the environment,” reminding delegates that issues of a political nature are best addressed “in New York.” Indeed, while time is not unlimited—and in fact appears to be running out for many environmental challenges—UNEA-3 illustrated how its effective use can help bring the vision of a pollution-free planet a step closer.

### UPCOMING MEETINGS

#### CBD SBSTTA 21 and 10th Meeting of the Article 8(j)

**Working Group:** The Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will meet from 11-14 December 2017, to address, *inter alia*, the links between the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the SDGs, biodiversity and health, and biodiversity mainstreaming in the energy, mining, and infrastructure sectors. The 10th meeting of the CBD Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions will meet from 13-16 December, to consider, among other issues, repatriation and progress towards Aichi Target 18 on traditional knowledge. **dates:** 11-16 December 2017 **location:** Montreal, Canada **contact:**

CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** [secretariat@cbd.int](mailto:secretariat@cbd.int) **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/SBSTTA-21> and <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/WG8J-10>

**Global Landscapes Forum:** The Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) is designed to produce and disseminate knowledge and accelerate action to build more resilient, climate friendly, diverse, equitable and productive landscapes. The GLF uses this approach around five broad themes: restoration, financing, rights, measuring progress, and food and livelihoods. The science-led Forum convenes diverse stakeholders to share knowledge and best practice to produce collaborative contributions to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. **dates:** 19-20 December 2017 **location:** Bonn, Germany **contact:** Global Landscapes Forum **email:** <http://www.landscapes.org/contact-us/> **www:** <http://www.landscapes.org/glf-bonn/>

**Climate Finance Day 2017:** Climate Finance Day 2017 will take stock of climate action in the financial sector since COP 21. It will showcase recent initiatives and innovations from the financial sector to accelerate the adoption of forward-looking strategies around the world. Those initiatives will be highlighted the following day at the One Planet Summit, which will be attended by international leaders, CEOs, and government representatives. **date:** 11 December 2017 **location:** Paris, France **contact:** Paris Europlace and French Ministry for the Economy and Finance **www:** <http://www.climatefinanceday.com/>

**One Planet Summit:** French President Emmanuel Macron has announced that, two years after the adoption of the Paris Agreement, he will convene a summit to take further action on climate, notably on the financial front. A main focus of this event will be to determine how those working in public and private finance can innovate to support and accelerate our common efforts to fight climate change. Attendance at the summit is by invitation only. **date:** 12 December 2017 **location:** Paris, France **www:** <https://www.oneplanetsummit.fr/en/>

**8th World Water Forum:** The goal of the forum is to enhance dialogue in the decision-making process on water at the global level, to achieve the rational and sustainable use of this resource. Given its political, technical, and institutional scope, one of the Forum’s main features is the open, democratic participation of actors drawn from different sectors. It will be the first time the event is held in the Southern Hemisphere. **dates:** 18-23 March 2018 **location:** Brasilia, Brazil **contact:** World Water Council **phone:** +55-61-3039-8530 **email:** [contact@worldwaterforum8.org](mailto:contact@worldwaterforum8.org) **www:** <http://www.worldwaterforum8.org/>

**IPBES-6:** The sixth session of the IPBES Plenary will consider for approval four regional assessments of biodiversity and ecosystem services and the thematic assessment on land degradation and restoration. The plenary is also expected to conduct regular elections of the Multi-Disciplinary Expert Panel and consider the review of effectiveness of the Platform. **dates:** 17-24 March 2018 **location:** Medellin, Colombia **contact:** IPBES Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-0570 **email:** [secretariat@ipbes.net](mailto:secretariat@ipbes.net) **www:** <https://www.ipbes.net/event/ipbes-6-plenary>

**48th Sessions of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies:** The 48th sessions of the subsidiary bodies to the UNFCCC are expected to take place in April-May 2018. **dates:** 30 April - 10 May 2018 **location:** Bonn, Germany **contact:** UNFCCC Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-1000 **fax:** +49-228-815-1999 **email:** [secretariat@unfccc.int](mailto:secretariat@unfccc.int) **www:** [http://unfccc.int/meetings/unfccc\\_calendar/items/2655.php?year=2018](http://unfccc.int/meetings/unfccc_calendar/items/2655.php?year=2018)

**6th GEF Assembly and Associated Meetings:** The 6th GEF Assembly, which meets every four years, will be held in conjunction with the 54th meeting of the GEF Council and other associated meetings. **dates:** 24-29 June 2018 **location:** Da Nang, Viet Nam **contact:** GEF Secretariat **phone:** +1-202-473-0508 **fax:** +1-202-522-3240/3245 **email:** [secretariat@thegef.org](mailto:secretariat@thegef.org) **www:** <https://www.thegef.org/events/sixth-gef-assembly-and-associated-meetings>

**CBD SBSTTA-22:** The twenty-second meeting of the CBD SBSTTA will address, *inter alia*: protected areas, marine and coastal biodiversity, biodiversity and climate change, and digital sequence information on genetic resources. **dates:** 2-7 July 2018 **location:** Montreal, Canada **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** [secretariat@cbd.int](mailto:secretariat@cbd.int) **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/SBSTTA-22>

**CBD SBI-2:** The CBD Subsidiary Body on Implementation will address: review of the effectiveness of the Nagoya Protocol, the global multilateral benefit-sharing mechanism under the Protocol, and specialized international access and benefit-sharing mechanisms in light of Nagoya Protocol Article 10. **dates:** 9-13 July 2018 **location:** Montreal, Canada **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** [secretariat@cbd.int](mailto:secretariat@cbd.int) **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=5691>

**HLPF 2018:** The sixth meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development convening under the auspices of ECOSOC, will address the theme of “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies.” The Forum will also review Goals 6, 7, 11, 12, and 15, as well as Goal 17, which is reviewed every year. **dates:** 9-18 July 2018 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UNDESA **email:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/contact/> **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2018>

**CITES AC30, PC24, and joint AC-PC:** The thirtieth meeting of the CITES Animals Committee and the twenty-fourth meeting of the CITES Plants Committee will meet for their separate meetings as well as a joint session. **dates:** 16-27 July 2018 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland (to be confirmed) **contact:** CITES Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-917-81-39/40 **fax:** +41-22-797-34-17 **email:** [info@cites.org](mailto:info@cites.org) **www:** <https://cites.org/eng/com/ac/index.php> and <https://eng/com/pc/index.php>

**Ramsar COP13:** The 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands will convene under the theme “Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future.” **dates:** 21-29 October 2018 **location:** Dubai, United Arab Emirates **contact:** Ramsar Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-999-01-70 **email:** [ramsar@ramsar.org](mailto:ramsar@ramsar.org) **www:** <http://www.ramsar.org/>

**CBD COP 14:** The fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity is anticipated to be held in November 2018 in Egypt. **dates:** 10-22 November 2018 (to be confirmed) **location:** Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt (to be confirmed) **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** [secretariat@cbd.int](mailto:secretariat@cbd.int) **www:** [www.cbd.int/meetings/](http://www.cbd.int/meetings/)

**Second Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury (COP2):** The Conference is expected to convene in 2018. **dates:** 19-23 November 2018 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** Interim Secretariat

of the Minamata Convention **fax:** +41-22-797-3460 **email:** [mercury.chemicals@unep.org](mailto:mercury.chemicals@unep.org) **www:** [www.mercuryconvention.org](http://www.mercuryconvention.org)

**Global Science, Technology and Innovation Conference (G-STIC) 2018:** G-STIC aims to build knowledge bases and global expert networks to support the technological transitions needed for implementation of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda. It is guided by an International Advisory Committee composed of more than 30 senior representatives from different UN agencies and expert institutes. **dates:** 28-30 November 2018 **location:** Brussels, Belgium **www:** <https://www.gstic.org>

**UNFCCC COP 24:** The 24th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 24) to the UNFCCC and associated meetings of the subsidiary bodies will take place in Poland. **dates:** 3-14 December 2018 **location:** Katowice, Poland **contact:** UNFCCC Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-1000 **fax:** +49-228-815-1999 **email:** [secretariat@unfccc.int](mailto:secretariat@unfccc.int) **www:** [http://unfccc.int/meetings/unfccc\\_calendar/items/2655.php?year=2018](http://unfccc.int/meetings/unfccc_calendar/items/2655.php?year=2018)

**UNCCD COP 14:** COP 14 is tentatively scheduled to take place in Bonn, Germany, in autumn 2019, or at another venue arranged by the Secretariat in consultation with the COP Bureau, in the event that no party makes an offer to host the session and meet the additional costs. **dates:** final quarter of 2019 **location:** TBD **contact:** UNCCD Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-2800 **fax:** +49-228-815-2898/99 **email:** [secretariat@unccd.int](mailto:secretariat@unccd.int) **www:** <http://www.unccd.int>

**Fourth Meeting of the UN Environment Assembly:** The fourth meeting of UNEA will be held in Nairobi. **dates:** 11-15 March 2019 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **contact:** Jorge Laguna-Celis, Secretary of Governing Bodies **phone:** +254-20-7623431 **email:** [unep.sgb@unep.org](mailto:unep.sgb@unep.org) **www:** <http://web.unep.org/environmentassembly/>

For additional meetings, see [sdg.iisd.org](http://sdg.iisd.org)

## GLOSSARY

AMR	Antimicrobial resistance
BRS	Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COW	Committee of the Whole
CPR	Committee of Permanent Representatives
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
GC	UNEP Governing Council
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
MEA	Multilateral environmental agreement
OECP	Open-ended Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly