

Sunday, 14 February 2021

## Summary of the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF) prior to the online session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5): 9-11 February 2021

Taking place online, and self-organized by Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS), the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF) met to collect MGS input ahead of the online session of the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5).

The Forum focused on a limited set of consultative sessions, primarily addressing issues on the “lean” agenda of the online session of UNEA-5. Participants developed a joint global statement titled ‘Building Forward Better: Action is Urgently Needed,’ to be presented to the upcoming meetings of the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECP) and UNEA-5.

While the consultations noted the opportunity for UNEA to chart a transformative path towards a more sustainable and inclusive recovery from COVID-19, the final outcome document highlights a number of fundamental concerns regarding the proposed Medium-Term Strategy (MTS 2022-2025) and related Programme of Work (PoW) of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). Despite broadly welcoming the decision to organize UNEP’s work around the three interrelated “existential” crises of our time – climate, biodiversity and pollution – participants cautioned that the Strategy:

- does not allow for diverse sources of knowledge, including citizen science, in UNEP’s science-policy processes;
- omits references to UNEP’s commitment to protect the human right to a healthy environment, and the critical role of environmental defenders and indigenous communities;
- does not pay sufficient attention to the critical interface between human and planetary health, and especially the need to leverage the COVID-19 pandemic to “build forward better”;
- risks backtracking on agreed environmental governance targets with UNEP’s “pro-business” partnership approach; and
- fails to acknowledge the contribution of MGS in programme implementation.

The Forum further provided an opportunity to collate MGS’ views on the process, as well as on expected outcomes, of the planned conferences commemorating the 50th anniversaries of the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human

Environment (Stockholm+50) and subsequent establishment of UNEP (UNEP@50). The discussions recalled the spirit of multilateralism that inspired the 1972 Stockholm Conference, with calls for the upcoming commemorations to demonstrate the same vision and courage to secure our common future in the next 50 years.

Looking ahead to the resumed session of UNEA-5 in February 2022, MGS called upon member states to maintain the momentum toward:

- launching negotiations for a legally binding instrument to tackle plastic pollution.
- adopting an ambitious post-2020 framework on biodiversity;
- adopting a global legal mechanism to phase out highly hazardous pesticides by 2030;
- reaching agreement on a global framework for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 at the 2022 UN Oceans Conference; and
- pushing for transformational changes to the food system at the UN Food Systems Summit, scheduled for October 2021.

Further MGS consultations, including online regional consultations and an international online consultation, will take place throughout 2021 to prepare for a full-fledged, in-person GMGSF in February 2022.

An estimated 250 online attendees took part in the GMGSF discussions, which also drew on the outcome of regional consultations organized in 2020, and the virtual “Oslo

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Consultation” of Major Groups and Stakeholders that convened on June 7, 2020.

The first UNEP Global Civil Society Forum – later rebranded as the GMGSF – took place in Malmo, Sweden, in 2000. An associated meeting to UNEA, the Forum serves as a convening platform for exchange between UNEA-accredited Major Groups and Stakeholders and other interested observers.

## Report of the Meeting

### Opening Session

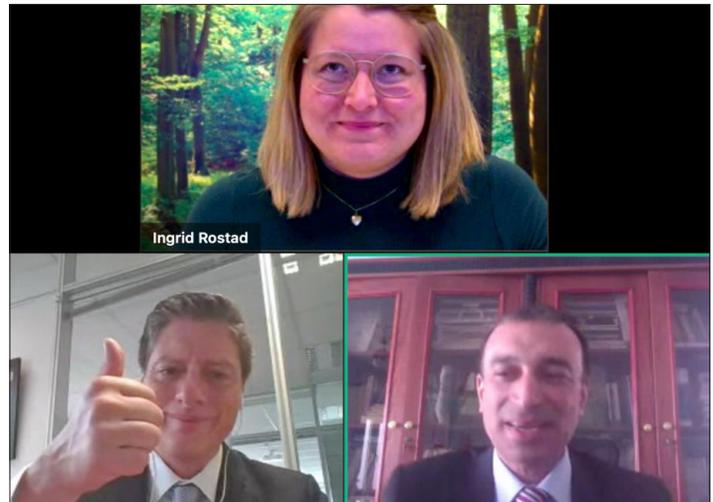
Welcoming participants on Tuesday, Mohamed Abdelraouf, Chair, Major Groups Facilitating Committee, expressed hope that the world’s recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic will be an opportunity to avoid past mistakes by effectively engaging major groups and stakeholders and supporting environmental defenders globally. He emphasized the need to place civil society at the center of planning, actions and monitoring activities.

Sveinung Rotevatn, President of UNEA and Minister of Environment and Climate of Norway, said MGS are integral to the success of UNEP and UNEA, noting that many of UNEP’s successes and multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) are the result of lobbying efforts by civil society. He asked the GMGSF to help governments be as ambitious as possible in the two UNEA-5 sessions, and encouraged all Major Groups to get fully involved.

Jorge Laguna Celis, Director of Governance Affairs Office, UNEP, stressed the UNEP Executive Director’s “absolute commitment” to maintain an open door to civil society and an open dialogue with all MGS. He emphasized that the GMGSF helps remind all negotiators who they should be accountable to, and that they are there to improve the conditions of the people that they work for. He underscored the importance of UNEP’s MTS 2022-2025 and the vital role civil society has played in helping to develop it. He sought MGS’ help in amplifying the messages about the importance of mainstreaming environment into development and putting nature at the center of building a resilient and inclusive post-pandemic world.

Ulf Bjornholm, Deputy Director of Governance Affairs Office, UNEP, briefed participants on the upcoming online, and resumed sessions of UNEA-5, as well as preparatory meetings of the OECPR. He noted that the online session of UNEP-5 will take administrative and procedural decisions on the MTS and PoW, hold an interactive dialogue on green recovery from the pandemic, and discuss UNEP’s 50th anniversary in 2022. He further reported that the meeting’s outcomes may include an agreed message from UNEA’s president, although many constraints and concerns still exist regarding this.

On other substantive agenda items for both sessions of UNEA-5, Bjornholm highlighted prospective discussions on options for the future of UNEP’s Global Environmental Outlook (GEO), marine litter and microplastics, and implementation of UN General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 73/333 on a political declaration on environmental law. He said the OECPR will also discuss UNEP’s contributions to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and management of UNEP’s trust funds and



The dais during the opening ceremony (clockwise from left): Moderator **Ingrid Rostad**, Norwegian Forum for Environment and Development (ForUM); **Mohamed Abdelraouf**, Chair of Major Groups Facilitating Committee (MGFC); and **Jorge Laguna Celis**, UNEP

earmarked contributions. Other tentative agenda items, he noted, include: a possible ministerial declaration focusing on UNEA 5’s theme, “Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”; decisions on implementation of strengthened global agreements on biodiversity, climate change, and chemicals; and celebrating UNEP@50.

Gyubin Hwang, Children and Youth Major Group, updated participants on the upcoming Global Children and Youth Environment Assembly, reporting that it has garnered over 5,000 registrations from approximately 2,000 youth-led and youth-serving groups worldwide. He said the Assembly will discuss: youth contributions to UNEP’s goals; capacity-building, knowledge-sharing and skills training; and new worldwide youth movements aimed at meaningful youth involvement in environmental governance. He reported that prospective outcomes include a youth chemical platform and a comprehensive youth policy paper and policy papers for Stockholm+50 and UNEP@50.

### UNEP Medium-Term Strategy (MTS)

This two-part panel discussion was facilitated by Ajay K Jha, Centre for Community Economics and Development Consultants Society.

#### Reflecting on the MTS in the light of grassroots realities:

The panel session opened with a video message from a frontline community in the Philippines, highlighting the hardships faced by environmental defenders despite their significant contribution to the sustainable management of natural resources.

Citing findings by recent studies of the increased risks faced by environmental defenders, Lia Alonzo, Center for Environmental Concerns-Philippines, stressed that the MTS fails to mention the integral role that environmental defenders play in securing a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Among her recommendations, she called for the MTS to:

- explicitly recognize that the human rights of environmental defenders are integral to the full realization of the SDGs;



Alejandro Barrios, PCFS and IPTK

- include further concrete actions it will undertake in support of environmental defenders; and
- adopt science- and rights-based standards in the mainstreaming of biodiversity protection in natural resource management and economic planning frameworks.

Alejandro Barrios, People's Coalition for Food Sovereignty, expressed concern that concepts such as “sustainable intensification” and “climate-smart agriculture” are rooted in mainstream industrial agriculture, which risks further alienating the role of small-scale sustainable farming practices that contribute to territorial, cooperative, and agroecological food production models. He called for a revocation of the 2019 strategic alliance between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) and the World Economic Forum, as well as a more inclusive World Food Summit 2021 to strengthen food systems that are “for-people and not for-profit.”

Caroline Muthoni, IBON Africa, noted that the MTS' focus on high-emitting countries and sectors masks the historic responsibility of industrialized countries in climate action, based on the principles of common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR) and polluter pays. She further highlighted MGS concerns that market-based carbon offsetting schemes not only fail to contribute to meaningful emissions reduction, but may exacerbate adverse impacts on communities and ecosystems due to, *inter alia*, displacement of local communities, increased pollution and biodiversity loss.

Sarojeni Rengam, IBON International Foundation, discussed the slow progress in phasing out highly hazardous pesticides. She highlighted recent data showing that 385 million farmers and workers suffer from non-fatal pesticide poisoning each year, including more than 110,000 deaths from accidental pesticide exposure. Pointing to the double standards of exporting countries, including in the EU, she called for, *inter alia*: a specific target and robust enforcement mechanism to achieve the elimination of hazardous pesticides in agriculture; discontinuing links between UNEP and agro-industrial corporations; and support for agroecology and other small-scale, sustainable, and sovereign

food production systems that offer economically viable and socially just nature-based solutions.

In the ensuing discussion, participants highlighted the need to address data privacy concerns when working with local communities, as well as the concern that future pandemics and broken food systems cannot be avoided without specific attention to the treatment of animals.

**Lessons for the MTS:** Doug Weir, Conflict and Environment Observatory, cautioned that the discontinuation of UNEP's former sub-programme on disaster and conflict (D&C) with a view to mainstream this work across UNEP's activities should not entail loss of dedicated financing and responsibility for D&C activities. He lauded the former sub-programme's influence on D&C activities by NGOs, and in bringing “ground” knowledge into policymaking. He voiced concern regarding future effectiveness, calling for targets and indicators to measure the impacts D&C work across UNEP.

Sascha Gabizon, Women Engaged for a Common Future, stressed the links between UNEP's environmental governance work and achievement of the SDGs, and lamented UNEP's dependence on private sector funding partners. She called for learning lessons from the pandemic, particularly to address the social justice effects of UNEP's environmental work on women and environmental defenders. She called for coherence across the three MTS themes, and for focusing on the rights of environmental defenders, not “private interest holders.”

Wali Haider, Farmers Major Group, stressed the CBDR principle, noting nature-based solutions entail protecting ecosystems and ecosystem-dependent communities. He called for decoupling elimination of fossil fuels from carbon offset actions, which he compared to land-grabbing. He also called for linking food sovereignty, and the human right to food from a sustainable environment, to mitigation schemes. Noting the double standards of countries that export domestically-banned pesticides, Haider called for a global mechanism for life-cycle management of pesticides, and for agro-ecological food production to replace highly hazardous pesticides. Neth Dano, Action Group on Erosion, Technology, and Concentration, said science must be consistent with principles of inclusiveness and gender equality, encompassing the social sciences and indigenous and traditional knowledge. She called for meaningful, inclusive mechanisms for civil society and grassroots contributions to policymaking processes, comparable to UNEP's Science-Policy-Business Forum, and for galvanizing action among stakeholders, including communities with interests directly at stake.

Hassan Ali Jaja, Jordan, Arab Group for the Protection of Nature, bemoaned the uprooting of fruit trees in Palestine – planted by his group over a period of 20 years – because they were viewed as a threat to the Israeli occupation. Recalling objections to a proposed resolution on Gaza's environmental situation at UNEA-2, Weir described this as an example of the limits of UNEA's mandate in managing conflicts, while stressing that UNEP is one of few organizations that can, and should, address such environmental peacekeeping.

In response, Laguna Celis praised participants' careful analysis. He noted strong support for the MTS' approach, but also concern that certain issues be better reflected. He said the MGS contributions would enrich the debate at the upcoming UNEA-5 session, and provide input to be considered for the Chair's summary.

**Final messages:** On Wednesday, Wali Haider, Roots for Equity, reported on progress towards a joint MGS position, highlighting six recommendations on the need for the MTS to:

- clearly define what constitutes “science” and “policy” to ensure the inclusion of diverse knowledge systems and consultative processes;
- establish a meaningful mechanism to link the work of UNEP's Science-Policy foundational sub-programme into UNEA processes;
- explicitly include civil society in UNEP's technology foresight and horizon scanning exercises;
- categorically state that UNEP will continue to support and defend environmental defenders beyond providing legal training;
- adopt clear targets and indicators to monitor progress in mainstreaming conflict and disaster measures; and
- reconsider decisions moving away from previous foundational principles such as common but differentiated responsibility and agro-ecological approaches for sustainable food production.

### **UNEP Programme of Work (PoW)**

This consultation was moderated by Mohamed Abdelraouf. He opened discussion by noting that the MTS 2022-2025 must be translated into two biennial PoWs, one for 2022-2023 and the other for 2024-2025.

Federick Staun, UNEP, outlined the proposed 2022-2023 PoW, saying it intends to provide a more focused approach to capturing the most important results of UNEP's work. He detailed how each of the three PoW sub-programmes, on climate, nature and chemicals/pollution, would feed into three of the nine strategic targets for 2025 envisioned in the MTS. He noted the connection

of these targets to those expected in the 2025-2029 MTS and to the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and SDGs.

Janice Cox, World Federation for Animals, reiterated concern that neither the draft MTS nor PoW explicitly address animal welfare. She called for more research and analysis on animal-related drivers that allowed COVID-19 to become a global pandemic, and suggested broadening the One-Health concept in the PoW to “One-Health One-Welfare,” as this accounts for every aspect of human, animal and environmental wellbeing, all of which are interlinked. Cox further called for “systemic understanding and real analysis” of how one action impacts across the UNEP pillars and affects other areas and interests. She cited as an example “the broken food system” included in UNEP's recent report on pandemic prevention, noting that the draft 2022-2023 PoW provides little detail on how to drive work on this issue forward.

In the ensuing discussion, Forum participants suggested:

- providing more outreach at regional levels when operationalizing the PoW and MTS;
- further defining the role of faith-based communities in implementing the MTS goals;
- explicitly addressing how food systems – in particular industrial and monoculture agriculture – are contributing to biodiversity loss, with analysis of how to develop economic systems that will safeguard nature;
- considering a UNEP partnership with the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to further define how citizen science can contribute to behavioral changes and societal shifts;
- developing a citizen science toolkit for UNEP staff to use across the world;
- addressing the challenge of financing chemicals and waste work, perhaps through UNEP leading work on industry internalization of the costs of pollution;
- exploring whether providing basic incomes that can only be spent on sustainable goods and services could promote transformational change;
- co-designing nature-based solutions with local partners, and more broadly considering the local-global interface on issues in the PoW.

Staun welcomed all inputs and suggestions, explaining that over the coming year UNEP will undertake further work on operationalization of the PoW, including through enhanced engagement with civil society.

Abdelraouf closed the consultation by suggesting that future GMGSF meetings should allow for more time to discuss the PoW.

**Final messages:** Presenting final recommendations on this item to plenary on Wednesday, Rapporteur Griffins Ochieng, Centre for Environment, Justice and Development, reported a strong call for the PoW to explicitly address animal welfare and address root causes and drivers in promoting transformation change. He said other issues that should be included on the agenda of UNEA-5 include the need to:



Mohamed Abdelraouf, MGFC Chair

- mobilize communities, especially faith-based communities, in PoW implementation;
- strengthen citizen science;
- allocate resources to civil society to participate in PoW implementation;
- enhance linkages with UN-HABITAT to address urban-rural connections; and
- co-design nature-based solutions at the local level, involving indigenous groups.

### UNEP@50

Opening this panel discussion, panel facilitator Stephen Stec, Central European University, Science and Technology MG, summarized UNEP@50 preparations. Facilitator Yugratna Srivastava, SustainUS, Children and Youth Major Group, underscored that UNEP@50 “will be a commemoration, not a celebration,” because of COVID-19 and the urgent environmental crises the world currently faces. She called for working under the “One UN” approach to find interlinkages between UNEP@50, Stockholm+50, and UNGA Resolution 73/333 on strengthening implementation of international environmental law.

Ulf Bjornholm, UNEP, presented an overview of the UNEP@50 Strategy, to be launched at the upcoming session of UNEA-5, noting the Strategy focuses on “putting UNEP on the map” through media outreach and engagement. He noted the need for global transformation during UNEP’s next 50 years, and called for UNEP leadership on this but with involvement of the whole UN system. He lauded MGS for an ongoing undertaking to produce their own report on “The UNEP We Want,” and underlined UNEP’s support for MGS’ influence on UNEP’s future. Bjornholm announced a forthcoming legacy publication on UNEP’s past and future. He outlined a number of related prospective decisions at UNEA-5, including on whether to endorse UNGA Resolution 73/333 to strengthen global environmental governance.

Responding to questions, Bjornholm noted UNEP’s achievements in initiating the conceptualization of sustainable development, fostering many MEAs, and mainstreaming the



Ulf Bjornholm, UNEP

environment. He lamented that many solutions to local problems are context-dependent and are hence not easily scaled up. He concurred that evidence-based policymaking depends on quality education for all, to help overcome credulity and superstition.

Ivar Baste, Senior Advisor in the Norwegian Environment Agency, and one of the Lead Authors of UNEP’s Synthesis Report of Major Global Assessments (SYR), entitled “Making Peace with Nature”, presented the SYR, which will be launched at the online session of UNEA-5. He said its production involved 58 experts from 27 countries, and reviewed conclusions of the latest assessments of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), and UNEP’s GEO. Baste noted that one of SYR’s core messages is that environmental damage is putting human well-being at risk and undermining hard-won development gains, hence the need to transform humankind’s relationship with nature, and not nature itself. He further highlighted SYR findings that ecosystem and human health hinges on: a clear break with trends of environmental decline, especially on climate, biodiversity, and pollution and waste; addressing environmental emergencies and human well-being together; transforming economic and financial and productive systems; and accounting for natural capital in decision-making.

Teresa Oberhauser, AEGEE European Students’ Forum, Children and Youth MG coordinator, presented Results of the MGS Snapshot Survey on UNEP@50. She said the process includes: gathering initial insights on a range of issues; presenting preliminary results at this GMGSF; and holding four consultations during 2021 that will feed into the MGS report on “The UNEP We Want,” which is currently under development. She reported that 39 responses have been received so far, with positive feedback commending UNEP for:

- achievements in increasing awareness at all governance levels;
- convening parties for discourse on environmental topics;
- its role in the IPCC and the Montreal Protocol;
- the GEO reports; and
- its role in integrating environmental goals in the SDGs.

On identified gaps, she noted observations that UNEP has lagged on environmental education, climate action, environmental law, environmental impact data, and human rights. She said respondents called for UNEP to play a special role in a green post-pandemic recovery, strengthen the science-policy interface, and take a more committed role, with more civil society engagement.

Responding to the issues raised, Baste agreed that UNEP’s progress has not kept pace with increasing pressures caused by a doubling of world population, a five-fold increase in the global economy, and a ten-fold increase in global trade since 1972. He stressed the need for a paradigm shift in organizing all aspects of society, noting this calls for a stronger science-policy interface to achieve needed transformation and for inclusion of faith communities in the transformation effort.

Speakers further noted a general lack of support for UNEP among member states. There were calls for UNEP to facilitate online tools to train clergy of all faiths in environmental

stewardship, with reference made to an ongoing process to create a “global faith coalition” that will include a youth council.

In a final discussion round addressing the content and outreach strategy for the proposed “The UNEP We Want” report, participants noted highly successful examples of “citizen science,” suggesting these should be mainstreamed to solve environmental problems. Others called for: reconstructing collaboration between governments and civil society members working for environmental change; encouraging the involvement of women and girls in science; and building capacity to monitor progress. Participants were encouraged to continue providing their suggestions for the report on onscreen jamboards that remained open throughout the GMGSF.

### **Stockholm+50**

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes, Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future and NGO Major Group, and Teresa Oberhauser, Children and Youth Major Group, moderated this panel session. In a scene-setting presentation, Strandenaes highlighted six legacies from the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment:

- the creation of a global institutional home for environmental matters, UNEP;
- the beginning of environmental governance;
- setting the role of science in informing environmental policymaking;
- setting the precedent in the UN system of direct civil society involvement;
- the start of environmental diplomacy, leading to several MEAs; and
- the beginning of environmental assessment and management.

He urged the proposed Stockholm+50 conference to adopt a strong declaration to guide the world forward. He said this should include adopting calls for UNEP to become a UN specialized agency with sufficient resources, a strengthened research and science base, and an upgraded mandate to contribute to a green and just transition. He also recommended the conference call for

further developing environmental rights and human rights for the environment, as well as strengthening and further developing environmental governance and environmental diplomacy.

Johanna Lissinger Peitz, Stockholm+50 Secretariat, reported on progress towards a draft UNGA resolution on Stockholm+50, jointly tabled by Sweden and Kenya in February 2021, noting the sponsoring countries will invite input from the resumed session of UNEA-5 in 2022. She suggested that the proposed conference should seek to be daring and forward-looking, offering an opportunity to work across issue silos, redefining the human relationship with nature, promoting sustainable consumption and production, launching efforts to build back better and greener after the pandemic, and strengthening and accelerating international cooperation by inviting existing bodies to consider taking on new mandates.

Zahra Abu Taha, on behalf of the Children & Youth Major Group, urged that Stockholm+50 seek to establish a balance between the human and natural world, saying “the time to act is now and we must do so faster than ever before.” She said her Major Group sees intergovernmental platforms as essential for progress, and that global approaches and commitments are needed for things such as embracing the circular economy and moving away from fossil fuels and linear economies. She said that as carriers of the environment flag, youth are key change makers and should be at the center of Stockholm+50.

John Scanlon, CEO, Elephant Protection Initiative Foundation, and Chair, the Global Alliance to End Wildlife Crime, said the Stockholm conference and the subsequent creation of UNEP led to an explosion of science in support of environmental policy. He highlighted work under the Montreal Protocol and the creation and work of the IPCC and the IPBES. Suggesting that the bulk of environmental work to date has been reactive instead of proactive, Scanlon called for a focus on integrated interventions that can provide multiple benefits and for finding ways to influence global value chains to make investments that do not destroy nature. He further stressed that youth would be



**Zahra Abu Taha**, Children and Youth Major Group



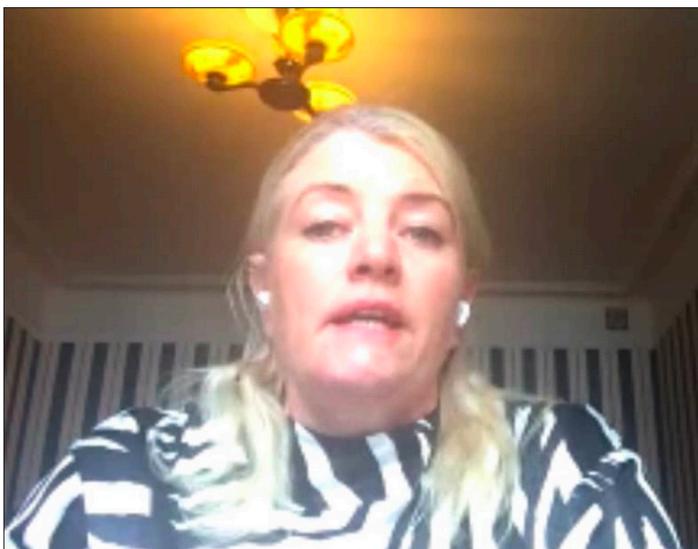
**John Scanlon**, CEO, Elephant Protection Initiative Foundation, and Chair, the Global Alliance to End Wildlife Crime

essential to getting ambitious outcomes from the UNEP@50 and Stockholm+50 conferences. Scanlon underscored the need to develop a vision of what kind of world we want to see in 2072, so as to chart the course that will ensure we get there.

The ensuing discussion highlighted additional issues for the Stockholm+50 agenda, including the need to:

- boost negotiations toward a future international convention, such as one on plastic pollution;
- endorse due diligence obligations for banks and companies regarding resource use;
- propose new forms of international environmental diplomacy, including through greater use of online platforms;
- consider how best to involve local governments and prompt local actions in support of global goals;
- endorse divestment drives to spur movement away from fossil fuels;
- endorse steps toward global commitments on a circular economy;
- examine the human relationship with animals and promoting animal welfare;
- discuss a new ethical framework for environmental policy;
- acknowledge the gender dimensions of environmental issues and reflect them in the solutions;
- consider a possible commitment of 1% of national GDP to fund ecosystem conservation;
- endorse a dramatic reduction in industrial farming over the next 50 years;
- explore the role and responsibility of consumers in effecting environmental change.

Lamenting the continued sidelining of Major Groups at multilateral environmental negotiations, speakers urged MGS to be active in the planning and conduct of Stockholm+50, while never accepting that the nine Major Groups must speak as one, since their diversity of perspectives is one of their strengths. They also said Major Groups should explore how they can assist in the implementation and follow-up to Stockholm+50 outcomes.



Johanna Lissinger Peitz, Stockholm+50 Secretariat Sweden

### **Main messages from MGS to UNEA**

On Thursday, the Forum convened a final round of plenary consultations on the main messages to be forwarded to UNEA-5. The session was co-facilitated by Khawla al Muhannadi, Environment Friends Society, Aisha Karanja, Back to Basics, and Patrizia Heidegger, European Environmental Bureau. Inviting input on the fourth draft of the final outcome document, the facilitators explained that the draft included most of the inputs from the facilitators of the GMGSF consultations on 9-10 February, as well as revisions resulting from the previous day's thematic breakout groups. After reading through the text and providing additional input on the various sections, participants agreed to continue to provide additional suggestions online until 13 February, and allow the facilitators to make final editorial revisions.

### **Draft final outcome**

Titled "Building Forward Better: Action is Urgently Needed," the Joint Global Statement from Major Groups and Other Stakeholders for Consideration by UNEA-5 is divided into three sections: Preamble; Main Messages for the online session of UNEA-5.1; and From UNEA 5.1 to UNEA-5.2 - Stepping Up the Momentum.

**Preamble:** The Statement starts by making the case that the time to act at the global level is now, that the COVID-19 pandemic has been a wake-up call to accelerate global environmental decision-making, step up ambition and increase the pace and scale of implementation efforts. It underscores the need for recognition of the human right to a healthy environment, as well as the need for changing current economic and social paradigms with a view toward a just transition to carbon-neutral, pollution-free and equitable societies and economies that thrive within the planet's ecological boundaries.

**Main Messages for UNEA-5.1:** This section contains four subsections on: UNEP's MTS 2022-2025; the related PoW and budget; the Stockholm+50 conference and UNEP@50 conferences planned for 2022; and follow-up to UNGA Resolution 73/333.

Concerning the MTS and PoW, the Statement includes a list of recommendations, including the need to:

- build more on citizen science and community-owned research;
- increase engagement with youth;
- allocate resources to work directly with civil society;
- incorporate animal health and welfare in UNEP policymaking and programmes;
- allocate more attention to sustainable food systems and food sovereignty;
- work toward elimination of chemical hazards, including endocrine disruptors and pesticides;
- review UNEP's Partnership Strategy, particularly regarding corporation funding; and
- reintroduce actions in support of environmental defenders.

With respect to Stockholm +50, the Statement calls for the conference to, *inter alia*: recognize ecocide as an international crime; strengthen and update UNEP to a specialized UN agency,

with the requisite resources; and to provide a final forward-looking conference statement highlighting issues to act on, and requesting follow-up from UNEP and UNEA that is buttressed by political support from the UNGA. The UNEP@50 subsection notes that MGS are preparing their own report on “The UNEP We Want” which they plan to submit to the resumed session of UNEA-5 in 2022.

The subsection on UNGA resolution 73/333 recommends, *inter alia*:

- a political declaration that commits UN Member States to work on a concrete Action Plan to be achieved by 2025, complete with objectives, targets, timeline and indicators;
- the declaration of a UN Day of Action for the Implementation of Environmental Law; and
- a tool on UNEP’s web portal to locate and show ways of closing gaps between multilateral environment agreements.

**From UNEA 5.1 to UNEA 5.2:** This section features seven subsections.

The subsection on responses to COVID-19 and “building forward better” calls for rethinking economic and social systems and ensuring that recovery programmes and investment are guided by the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The Statement also calls for no bailouts or subsidies for companies that have contributed to biodiversity loss, climate change or pollution.

The subsection on “beat plastic pollution now!” calls for negotiations to start on a legally-binding instrument on plastic pollution that adopts a life cycle approach covering the phase-out and reduction of plastic up-stream and middle-stream.

The subsection on showcasing nature’s role in supporting human security, post-conflict recovery and conflict resolution calls for UNEP and UNEA to provide leadership in addressing the environmental dimensions of armed conflicts and military activities, and identify meaningful steps towards preventing and reducing the harm they cause to people, animals and ecosystems.

The biodiversity subsection calls for an ambitious post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework based on a strong rights-based approach and the equitable sharing of benefits and costs. MGS

also call for battling corporate greenwashing regarding “nature-based solutions.”

The chemicals and pesticide pollution subsection calls for, *inter alia*:

- a global legal instrument to phase out highly hazardous pesticides by 2030;
- a stop to exporting pesticides banned in their country of origin; and
- the post 2020 Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) process and instrument to support the highest standards for health and environment for chemicals of concern that are not covered by existing MEAs and the full disclosure of hazardous chemicals in all products.

The subsection on the UN Oceans Conference planned for 2022 calls for a globally-agreed SDG 14 framework.

The subsection on the Food Systems Summit and food sovereignty urges UNEP to steer the UN Food Systems Summit, to be convened by the UN Secretary-General in October 2021, into endorsing transformational and systemic changes in the world’s food system.

### ***Closing of the meeting***

During the closing session facilitated by Chair Abdelraouf MGS representatives made final statements. They reiterated, among other issues, the need to:

- convey an inclusive and balanced message to UNEA;
- highlight the contribution of the private sector to food systems and a circular economy;
- pursue a One Health-One Welfare approach linking human, animal and environmental health for post COVID-19 recovery;
- safeguard UNEP’s scientific integrity from undue influence by corporate interests;
- ensure an inclusive and just transition through a focus on rights holders, including female food producers, young people, indigenous communities and environmental defenders; and
- address the impacts of chemicals and pesticides in food systems.

Providing additional perspectives, regional MGS representatives urged all to move from theory to practical, bottom-up solutions. They stressed the need for common measures and data across sectors and groups to drive accountability. They also urged reinsertion of language denouncing ecocide and biocide into the MGS Statement.

In his closing statement, Alexander Juras, Chief, UNEP Civil Society Unit, joined staff in thanking all organizers and participants for the success of the Forum and the powerful Statement produced, despite the limitations of the online format. He urged the MGS to activate the thematic clusters of UNEA 3 and consider adding more in light of COVID-19.

Closing the session, Abdelraouf encouraged MGS to participate in a dialogue with the UNEA President on February





Alexander Juras, UNEP Civil Society Unit

16, as well as an upcoming dialogue with UNEP's Executive Director on March 3, 2021. He declared the meeting closed at 17:59 East African Time.

### Upcoming Meetings

**Partnering for Green Growth and the Global Goals 2030 (P4G) Summit:** This Summit, hosted by the Republic of Korea and P4G, will bring together high-level government officials, CEOs, and civil society leaders to deliberate on how scalable and replicable market-based solutions can advance increased ambition on climate action and sustainable development. **dates:** 30 – 31 May 2021 **location:** TBC **www:** <https://p4gpartnerships.org/content/p4g-seoul-summit>

**Third meeting of the CBD Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF):** The final meeting of the Working Group is expected to develop the text of the post-2020 GBF for consideration at COP 15. **dates:** second quarter of 2021 (TBC) **location:** to be determined **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/WG2020-03>

**15th meeting of the COP to the CBD (COP 15/CP 10/NP 4):** The meeting will review the achievement and delivery of the CBD's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. It is anticipated that the final decision on the post-2020 GBF will be taken, together with decisions on related topics including capacity building and resource mobilization. **dates:** second quarter of 2021 (TBC) **location:** Kunming, China **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/COP-15>

**GMGSF online consultation:** This event will gather perspectives from Major Groups and Stakeholders in preparation for the resumed session of UNEA-5 in 2022. **dates:** June 2021 **location:** online **www:** <https://www.unenvironment.org/civil-society-engagement/participation-and-engagement/global-major-groups-and-stakeholders-forum>

**60th Meeting of the GEF Council:** The Council is the GEF's main governing body, and meets twice annually to develop, adopt, and evaluate the operational policies and programmes for GEF-financed activities. **dates:** 15-17 June 2021 **location:** TBC **www:** <https://thegef.org/council-meetings/gef-60th-council-meeting>

**High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) 2021:** The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) will convene the 2021 session of the HLPF under the theme "Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development." Following the first five days, the HLPF's three-day ministerial segment takes place jointly with ECOSOC's high-level segment. **dates:** 6-15 July 2021 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2021>

**2021 UN Food Systems Summit:** Convened by the UN Secretary-General, the Summit aims to maximize the co-benefits of a food systems approach across the 2030 Agenda and address the challenges of climate change. The Summit will provide a platform for ambitious new actions, innovative solutions, and plans to transform food systems and leverage these shifts to deliver progress across all of the SDGs. **dates:** September / October 2021 (TBC) **location:** TBC **www:** <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit>

**2021 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 26):** The 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 26), the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 16), and the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 3) will convene one year after its originally scheduled dates. **dates:** 1-12 November 2021 **location:** Glasgow, UK **www:** <https://unfccc.int>

**Resumed session of UNEA-5:** Convening under the theme, "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the SDGs," this final session of UNEA-5 will provide a platform for discussing and implementing nature-based solutions that contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, by holistically addressing its social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Building on the online UNEA 5.1 session in February 2021, the meeting will discuss ways to ensure that policies for economic recovery following COVID-19 lead to a resilient and inclusive post-pandemic world. A session of the GMGSF is also planned to proceed the meeting. **dates:** February 2022 (TBC) **location:** UNEP, Nairobi **www:** <http://web.unep.org/environmentassembly>  
For additional meetings, see <https://sdg.iisd.org/>

### Glossary

GCO	Global Chemicals Outlook
GEO	Global Environment Outlook
GRULAC	Latin America and Caribbean Group
MEA	Multilateral environment agreement
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SPM	Summary for Policy Makers
UNCLOS	UN Conference on Law of the Sea
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	UN Environment
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change