

OECP-7 Highlights: Tuesday, 2 December 2025

The seventh session of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECP-7) to the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) continued its consideration of resolutions and decisions to be adopted by UNEA-7. They worked throughout the day and into the evening in four clusters related to: nature and climate; governance and law; circular economy, chemicals, waste and pollution; and strategic, budgetary, and governing bodies matters.

Preparation of Decisions and Outcomes of UNEA-7

Delegates worked in two informal working groups, considering resolutions and decisions under four clusters.

Cluster A on nature and climate: These discussions were co-facilitated by Kanako Okano (Japan) and Marie Haraldstad (Norway). Co-Facilitator Haraldstad opened discussions on the draft resolution on *strengthening the global response on the management of fires*. Delegates considered the need to build on existing initiatives, such as the Global Fire Management Hub hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) and co-chaired by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

Co-Facilitator Haraldstad established an informal group to discuss language on the recognition and use of Indigenous, traditional, and/or local knowledge in the context of wildfire management, as a cross-cutting issue, to report back to the group at a later session. Following a discussion on the importance of engaging in cooperative actions to address wildfires, with one delegation stressing their transboundary nature, the group worked to streamline language encouraging Member States and others to promote and enhance international and regional cooperation, including through capacity-building, for achieving wildfire resilience.

Some countries called for greater specificity on the type of coordination efforts mandated by the resolution, and others emphasized the need to ensure the full, equal, and meaningful participation of all women in these processes. A few delegations opposed the reference to “all” women. Delegates could not agree on the proposed insertion by a few developed country delegations

of “voluntary and mutually agreed terms” for the sharing of wildfire prevention and management technology, with several developing countries urging technology transfer be considered a cross-cutting issue, noting it is present in several resolutions. Divergent views also ensued on the inclusion of citizen science as a methodology for developing integrated wildfire management. Delegates further focused on the types of national measures requiring fire risk reduction integration, as well as which groups should be involved.

Co-Facilitator Okano led discussions on the draft resolution on *accelerating global action to promote the climate resilience of coral reefs*. Regarding the scope of the resolution, countries diverged on whether to highlight the types of coral reefs addressed, with some preferring no specification, others underlining that the resolution is targeted at warm-water- and tropical ecosystems, and yet others emphasizing that cold-water deep sea coral reefs are also threatened ecosystems requiring action.

Some delegations also expressed concern at attempts to dilute the importance of this resolution, while a few cautioned against developing overly prescriptive text. Divergence on the scope persisted on, among other issues, specifying the nationally-determined nature of actions, and on whether to include: marine spatial planning; climate adaptation and mitigation frameworks; and the Blue Economy in integrating the protection, conservation, and/or sustainable use of coral reefs in national plans, policies, and/or programmes.

Co-Facilitator Okano called for informal discussions in the evening to resolve these issues, as well as those on developing guidance to support the integration of coral reef conservation into nationally determined contributions and national adaptation plans. Delegates began streamlining the language on a series of requests to the UNEP Executive Director to develop guidelines and initiatives but differed on whether to specify that these requests should be undertaken in accordance with national laws and regulations.

Cluster B on governance and law: This cluster was co-facilitated by Sara Elkhoully (Egypt) and Martin Röw (Germany). Discussions focused on resolutions on children and youth, and sustainable solutions through sports.

On the draft resolution currently titled “*enhancing the meaningful [participation] (del) involvement of children and youth in environmental [governance] (del) [events]*,” delegates first deliberated on the paragraph related to Member States engaging with children and youth. Some delegations wanted to ensure strengthened participation in environmental decision-making and implementation. Several others objected, preferring to limit engagement to establishing education programmes. One delegation objected in principle to the involvement of children and youth in decision-making, stating any involvement should be limited to technical and advisory roles, and one delegation stressed the need to limit the scope to the legal age of adulthood. One group of countries supported inclusion of youth delegates in national delegations and queried the controversy on the issue of children and youth engagement, pointing to agreed language in UN General Assembly [resolution 78/179](#). Co-Facilitator Elkhoully suggested informal informals to clean the text.

In a detailed discussion on education and skills development, delegates debated how to refer to the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples, with some preferring Indigenous Peoples’ distinct recognition, and others suggesting using “knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.” One delegation suggested “traditional knowledge,” and another “Indigenous Peoples’ knowledge, science and practice.” Another delegation suggested this is a cross-cutting issue, to be addressed for all relevant resolutions, and one opposed resolving every disagreement in the informal informals. Views also diverged on whether to mention citizen science. Co-Facilitator Elkhoully informed delegates that these issues would be deliberated as cross-cutting issues. Other contentious issues included referencing green skills in the context of skills relevant for sustainable development and citing the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Education for Sustainable Development 2030 framework, proposed by one group and opposed by other delegations. One delegation proposed a streamlined text, which would allow national interpretation, supported by many but opposed by one group.

On a draft resolution on *promoting sustainable solutions through sport for a resilient planet*, delegates considered text encouraging Member States to integrate environmental sustainability concerns into sports strategies, programmes, and curricula. Many also supported including planning, delivery, and legacy of sporting events and infrastructure in the scope of the paragraph, which one delegation opposed. Some suggested including economic and social aspects of sustainability, while others preferred limiting it to environmental considerations, stressing that deleting all qualifiers would make the text too broad. Several delegations requested adding text on specific circumstances and capacities and national priorities, which was opposed by one group.

Delegates also debated levels of action on sports, with most agreeing on local and national actions, but diverging on whether to

also include regional and international levels. Views also diverged on the provision of technical and financial support and capacity-building, with Co-Facilitator Rów suggesting both as cross-cutting issues. On minimizing the environmental footprint of sports, several delegations supported including “environmental impact assessments” and deleting contentious references, such as low-carbon or low-emission transport. Delegates agreed to extend the scope of action to local authorities, where applicable, in addition to Member States.

Cluster C on circular economy, chemicals, waste and pollution: These discussions were co-facilitated by Ontumetse Ontumetse (Botswana) and Michal Novotný (Czechia).

Co-Facilitator Novotný opened discussions on the draft resolution on sound management of chemicals and waste. Several delegations supported retaining a request for the UNEP Executive Director to identify regional and national priorities related to lead, cadmium, arsenic, and organotins. Some also preferred replacing the identification of priorities with a focus on gaps and needs for achieving sound management of chemicals and waste, with others noting that national prioritization rests with governments. A number of delegations proposed that UNEP should convene workshops to exchange views, share best practices, and strengthen regional coordination. Several also highlighted the importance of balancing references to chemicals and wastes, acknowledging existing global guidelines established by the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions, which some noted do not extend to heavy metals.

Delegates also discussed the draft resolution on *environmental dimensions of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)*, revising the paragraph concerning UNEP’s role in advancing work in this area, and on the establishment and hosting of an independent panel secretariat by UNEP in Nairobi. While some preferred deleting this language, others supported retaining this reference, noting UNEP’s experience with scientific panels such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), and the value of joint facilitation by the quadripartite organizations for the OneHealth Joint Plan of Action: UNEP, FAO, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH).

They also debated how to frame the role of UNEP’s support to Member States in addressing AMR. Delegates diverged on whether to mention low- and middle-income countries or developing countries, with others opting for assisting countries “in need of support.” Substantive discussions considered measures to tackle AMR in the environment, including addressing discharge of AMR through effective effluent treatment, sustainable production, and incentivizing adoption of manufacturing standards.

Cluster D on strategic, budgetary, and governing bodies matters: This group was co-facilitated by Tobias Ogweno (Kenya) and Nader Al-Tarawneh (Jordan). Co-Facilitator Al-Tarawneh opened discussions on a draft resolution on *strengthening the role*

of UNEP headquarters in Nairobi [to address environmental challenges and enhance multilateral cooperation]/[to promote effective multilateral governance]. Some delegations noted their reservations on the draft, with one sharing that they were unable to agree with the core assumption of the resolution related to consolidating UNEP headquarters as a global hub for environmental decision-making processes. They called to instead focus on enhancing programme efficiency at UNEP, with others calling to include language on streamlining internal processes at UNEP before any additional role could be entertained.

Some delegations noted that the draft contradicted with the mandates of other processes. Opposing this, one noted that the draft complemented, rather than contradicted, ongoing processes under other MEAs. One delegation underscored that the draft resolution helps align UNEP with the UN80 initiative and corresponding reports.

On text urging Member States to prioritize the strengthening of UNEP headquarters in Nairobi as the primary host and reference center for conferences, forums, and decision-making processes related to environmental governance, one delegation proposed alternative language. This text invites States to assess the necessity and number of days of convening planned meetings, to consider the feasibility of conducting virtual meetings, and explore opportunities for cost efficiencies, including through the use of remote interpretation, remote report writing, and other appropriate measures. Opposing this, some delegations recalled UN General Assembly resolutions on strengthening the role of UNEP as a center for environmental decision-making, and others noting that the new language could, perversely, widen the digital divide.

On text encouraging UNEP to explore the consolidation of a joint knowledge hub focused on the environment, as proposed by the UN Secretary-General in the framework of the UN80 initiative, one delegation instead proposed requesting UNEP to provide an assessment of internal administrative processes, with a view to identifying efficiency gains. A number of delegations supported merging the two proposals.

Delegates debated a new text calling on all Member States to request CPR accreditation to enhance universal participation in the Committee's work and encourage them to consider establishing permanent representation in Nairobi. In this regard, some delegations underlined the importance of the host country upholding non-discriminatory conditions, proposing language that would extend the agreed UN Privileges and Immunities to the spouses and dependents of UN personnel, which, they noted, includes protections for LGBTQI+ persons. The UNEP host country said that any incidents of discrimination should be reported to the foreign office, and did not support the additional text.

Most delegations favored deleting text calling to transfer the secretariats of existing MEAs to Nairobi, underscoring the loss

of expertise and the tremendous associated costs of implementing this request.

Delegates then continued Monday evening's discussion on the *draft decision on the Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) for the period 2026-2029 and the Programme of Work (PoW) and budget for the biennium 2026-2027*, co-facilitated by Ogwen. Views diverged on whether UNEA would "approve" or "take note of" the MTS and PoW and budget. To address this, one regional group and several countries called to first address the preamble before returning to the operative text. Another delegation underlined that the MTS should represent the views of Member States, calling for a consensus-based Strategy and lamenting that it currently contains "red-line" issues that will not be endorsed by some delegations.

They noted that some issues pertain to climate and the ongoing plastics negotiations. One delegation recalled that donor countries would only fund the budget if the MTS was agreed. Co-Facilitator Ogwen underscored that it would not be possible to reopen MTS discussions, which were carried out during the intersessional period, and proposed addressing concerns in the preambular section. Some delegations called for clarification on when delegations would be able to endorse the MTS for approval by UNEA. Discussions on the preamble will commence on Wednesday.

In The Corridors

What is the place of young people in global environmental governance? Should leaders empower them, engage them, or involve them in environmental decision making? What would any or all of these actions do to tip the balance of power within states, given that some of the existential crises facing our world today – climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution – all require long-term solutions with a greater bearing for those who are children and youth today? These were some of the questions underlying a discussion on a seemingly innocuous resolution on enhancing the meaningful participation of children and youth in environmental governance.

Elsewhere, discussions on strengthening UNEP headquarters in Nairobi were off to a rocky start. While the request to strengthen UNEP came out of the Rio+20 process in 2012, some delegations feel that no real work has been done to actualize this. "But perhaps this is not the resolution that will get us there," shared one delegate, noting that it "does not do enough to address some of the core administrative issues that still need to be tackled." Others, calling for a concrete discussion on enhancing UNEP's administrative arrangements, entered more "sensitive waters," highlighting human rights and discrimination issues affecting both UN staffers and permanent representatives. "If Nairobi wants to host the world, it needs to extend human rights protections to everyone, regardless of sexual orientation," one delegate insisted.

With three days left, a lot of work remains to bridge the multiple gaps that still exist.

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