

OECP-7 Highlights: Wednesday, 3 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. After a brief stocktaking plenary in the morning, delegates returned to their clusters addressing: nature and climate; governance and law; circular economy, chemicals, waste and pollution; and strategic, budgetary, and governing bodies matters.

Stocktaking Plenary

UNEA-7 President Abdullah Bin Ali Amri (Oman) encouraged delegates to continue engaging constructively in OECP-7 negotiations, underlining that the success of UNEA depends on the Committee's ability to build consensus. OECP-7 Chair Sultan Hajiyev (Azerbaijan) invited the Co-Facilitators of the clusters addressing the draft resolutions and decisions to report on progress.

On nature and climate, Co-Facilitator Kanako Okano (Japan) reported that the group had achieved 10% progress overall but shared that they had identified discussions on how to refer to Indigenous Peoples and matters related to technology transfer as cross-cutting issues. She informed the Committee that informal discussions would be held on Wednesday, 3 December, and Thursday, 4 December. Okano also highlighted with concern the introduction of new proposals, which would require additional time for consideration, but noted that with a change of pace, progress could be achieved.

On governance and law, Co-Facilitators Martin R w (Germany) and Sara Elkhoully (Egypt) reported on resolutions related to synergies, artificial intelligence (AI), children and youth, sports, and crimes that affect the environment, noting limited progress on all. On the resolution highlighting the need to enhance the *response to crimes that affect the environment*, which was considered late on Tuesday, 2 December, evening, they noted that fundamental differences in opinion on the scope remained unresolved by either the working group or an informal-informal group established on this issue. They called for more time to conclude discussions on all resolutions. They noted that the group had also identified cross-cutting issues related to Indigenous Peoples and citizen science, with an informal session scheduled to meet in the afternoon on these.

On circular economy, chemicals, waste and pollution, Co-Facilitator Michal Novotn y (Czechia) stressed that more work was needed on the three resolutions under this cluster, noting very limited progress in resolving divergent views.

On strategic, budgetary, and governing bodies matters, Co-Facilitator Nader Al-Tarawneh (Jordan) announced that the group had finalized discussions on the draft decision on the *management of trust funds and earmarked contributions status*. He lamented limited progress on the rest of the cluster's work.

Colombia, for GRULAC, underscored that the OECP-7's work at this meeting did not begin from "ground zero," recalling the vast efforts made intersessionally. They urged against "reiterating national statements" and vetoing discussions and called for good-faith constructive engagement.

Business and Industry Major Group, on behalf of all nine MAJOR GROUPS, expressed their concern at the lack of progress made on draft resolutions. They urged for prioritization of those resolutions and decisions where consensus is achievable.

Organization of work: Pointing to the [proposed schedule](#) circulated online, Chair Hajiyev imparted wisdom, quoting an African proverb, "if you wish to go fast, go alone, but if you wish to go far, go together."

IRAN cautioned against convening more than two sessions in parallel. CUBA urged for prioritization of resolutions that are most likely to achieve consensus to accelerate progress. CHILDREN AND YOUTH MAJOR GROUP called for inclusive deliberations that are informed and reflective of the realities of communities worldwide. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THEIR COMMUNITIES underscored that Indigenous Peoples are distinct rightsholders and negotiations must uphold these rights, and stressed embedding free, prior, and informed consent as a safeguard, rather than a procedural formality.

Preparation of Decisions and Outcomes of UNEA-7

Delegates met in two informal Working Groups to discuss four clusters of issues.

Cluster A on nature and climate: These discussions were co-facilitated by Kanako Okano (Japan) and Marie Haraldstad (Norway). Co-Facilitator Okano led the group in discussions on the resolution on *strengthening a global response to the massive influx of Sargassum seaweed blooms*.

First addressing language requesting UN Environment Programme (UNEP) to assist Member States or countries affected by the Sargassum blooms, significant disagreement arose on whether to direct this support to "developing countries," or to "countries with capacity constraints" arising from the blooms. These discussions were directed to an informal-informal session.

Delegates also diverged on whether this assistance would include the development and implementation of "regional" measures or action plans as well as national ones. Many delegations, including several from the Caribbean region, which is impacted by the blooms, stressed the transboundary nature of the issue, and others added that collective action is required. This discussion was also referred to the informal-informal session.

The group turned to language originally requesting the organization of an open-ended working group or workshop, with a view of promoting coherence among existing initiatives on Sargassum to ultimately lead to a coordinated global response framework. The resolution proponent tabled alternative language to reflect that technical and expert work on the matter has been exhaustive, pointing to efforts under the Cartagena Convention. They highlighted the importance of synergies and coherence, noting that countries differ in their approaches and capacities for management, monitoring, and prevention of Sargassum blooms.

Several delegations stressed the need to ensure this process is intergovernmental, not solely under UNEP's direction. Regarding the driving factors and impacts of the Sargassum blooms, a few delegations called for more science and understanding on these. Many others emphasized the existence of sufficient data and scientific evidence indicating climate change and ocean pollution as primary drivers.

Representatives of major groups, among other things: encouraged focus on participatory science to improve monitoring and response efforts; urged addressing land-based pollution sources contributing to the blooms; and cautioned against Blue Economy initiatives that reproduce harmful dynamics, particularly on Indigenous and coastal communities.

Cluster B on governance and law: This cluster was co-facilitated by Elkhoully and R w. Led by Co-Facilitator Elkhoully,

delegates continued discussions on a draft resolution on *maximizing existing resources through enhanced coherence and synergies among multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and their implementation*. They returned to a paragraph encouraging Member States and stakeholders to consider/facilitate synergies, cooperation, and collaboration when developing and implementing policies, projects, and activities at the national, regional, and local levels, leveraging whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches.

On the list of areas for which synergies could be leveraged, some delegations opposed references to “citizen science,” while others queried the term “strong scientific findings” on cooperation and interlinkages. Several delegations supported deleting the long list to streamline the text, while others preferred retaining references to synergies within synergies to enhance harmonized reporting frameworks, as well as cooperation around “aligned planning cycles and integrated monitoring frameworks.” In a bid to streamline the text, Co-Facilitator Elkhoully suggested that she would prepare an alternative text, to be circulated as a non-paper, for consideration at a later point.

The group also considered a call for UNEP to regularly update both the Assembly and the CPR on the proposed measures relevant to UNEP’s work from the three work streams of the UN80 initiative (namely climate, nature, and chemicals and pollution action) and relevant work packages of the UN80 Action Plan, as well as in the context of the broader environmental agenda. Several delegations stressed these updates were crucial, while others supported more generic updates on the UN80 initiative, with some in the latter group noting that this would be more cost effective. Others opined that this may be a cross-cutting issue and preferred deleting the paragraph altogether. Co-Facilitator Elkhoully requested delegates to engage in informal discussions to resolve the impasse.

Delegates further debated the merits of a paragraph inviting regional and subregional bodies to facilitate multilateral and multi-stakeholder cooperation for promoting synergetic policies, solutions, and practices, with a view to accelerating progress in line with national/nationally determined sustainable development priorities.

The group also considered whether to encourage UN entities, MEA secretariats and relevant inter-agency platforms to strengthen collaboration with the UN Environment Management Group. Some considered this request as beyond UNEA’s mandate, while others underlined the importance of these strengthened collaborations. One stakeholder group underlined the need to include references to intergenerational equity in the resolution.

Cluster C on circular economy, chemicals, waste and pollution: These discussions were co-facilitated by Ontumetse Ontumetse (Botswana) and Novotný. Co-Facilitator Ontumetse facilitated discussions on *[advancing options for [international instruments on] enhancing environmentally sound management of minerals [and metals and guidance for mineral resources], including through circularity*.

Delegates focused on a paragraph on establishing a mechanism to enhance international cooperation in this area. The core question was the nature of the structure to be established.

Options included an *ad hoc* open-ended working group, an expert group, or a technical platform. Delegations differed on whether a subsidiary body should be created, raising concerns about workload and mandates. Some preferred a cooperative space, potentially building on UNEP’s Digital Knowledge Hub, while others supported a more formal working group. Some delegations supported an alternative paragraph on promoting dialogue and sharing national experiences, without creating a new body. Delegates agreed to continue discussions in an informal-informal session to resolve diverging perspectives on the scope.

Co-Facilitator Novotný facilitated discussions on the *sound management of chemicals and waste*, in which several delegates supported a new paragraph encouraging further work on addressing asbestos contamination, building on an options paper titled, “assessment of the economic costs to society of asbestos production and use” (UNEP/EA.6/INF14), requested by UNEA at a previous session.

Delegations then discussed strengthening the text on science-policy cooperation. There was general support for a request to enhance synergies between the new Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution (ISP-CWP), related scientific panels, MEAs, and the Global Framework on Chemicals (GFC). An additional paragraph was also proposed to

promote the effective operationalization of ISP-CWP and closer collaboration with the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals.

Cluster D on strategic, budgetary, and governing bodies matters: Co-facilitated by Tobias Ogweno (Kenya) and Nader Al-Tarawneh (Jordan), discussions focused on strengthening the role of UNEP headquarters and the dates and venue of future UNEA sessions.

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]*, delegates aired strong opinions regarding inviting UNEA to consider Nairobi as host of all future MEA secretariats. Those opposing stressed that choosing the location of a secretariat is the responsibility of the parties to the MEA, while proponents stressed the need to operationalize paragraph 88 of the Rio+20 outcome document, *the Future We Want*, on strengthening the role of UNEP.

For similar reasons, views diverged on inviting UNEP and all MEA secretariats to strengthen programmatic and scientific cooperation, including through joint technical work, shared data systems and coordinated scientific assessments. Several Member States agreed that UNEP needs to be strengthened administratively and underscored the need to improve efficiency. In this regard, they proposed an independent external review for UNEP in line with the UN80 initiative. Some Member States, agreeing with the need for a review, stressed that UNEA cannot prejudge the outcomes of the UN80 initiative and opposed any linkages to broader UN reform.

One delegation, supported by many, proposed new text, “recognizing the importance of recruiting staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible, with due regard to the recruitment of nationals of underrepresented and unrepresented Member States.” Others suggested that the UNEP Executive Director reports on hiring, and that this applies to “all Nairobi headquarters.” Discussions will continue.

On a draft decision on *the provisional agenda, dates, and venue for UNEA-8*, the group discussed how to revert UNEA to a February meeting cycle, beginning in 2029, with the main debates revolving around dates for the 2027 UNEA-8. The Secretariat presented three options based on the 2027 MEA calendar, and taking into account major religious holidays. The dates proposed were 3-14 May, 4-15 October, and 29 November – 10 December. They explained that the October dates would only be possible if the Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer was also held in Nairobi, due to the availability of interpreters.

Many Member States stressed that the May dates are not possible due to Eid Al Adha. One group was hesitant to agree to the December dates, noting these would not fit well with the transitional nature of UNEA-8. On a suggestion from one Member State, the opposing group agreed to explore potential options for dates in July or August 2027.

In The Corridors

The mid-week check-in made it clear that progress was slow, at best. In some groups, reports that only 10% of the resolutions’ content had found some level of compromise sparked alarm. “This is the risk of being too ambitious,” shrugged one delegate, “but the core question of whether we will be able to actually finance and implement any of these resolutions still hangs in the air.”

Even decision-making on seemingly simple matters seemed elusive, as was the case in discussions on when to hold the next UNEA. Every month must be painstakingly examined: when do religious holidays fall? Other MEA meetings? Or annual European “summer” months of leave? When it is warm in the Northern Hemisphere, it is cold in Nairobi. “The weather should not even be a consideration when work is on the table,” sighed one delegate. But Nairobi “winter” may just present a win-win to those not wishing to skip their sunny holidays, as it is still warm enough and also “offers a jump-off point to some idyllic destinations,” one observer winked.

With delegations meeting from the early morning until late at night in working groups, and filling their mealtimes with informal-informals, the exhaustion began to show. In several cases across the meeting venue, just as progress was being made, a bracket or brand-new text was introduced, throwing the room into a tailspin. “We may soon have to make some difficult decisions about which resolutions will actually make it to the end,” opined one delegate, yawning after a particularly challenging session.