

## OECP-7 Highlights: Thursday, 4 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 convened in clusters related to: nature and climate; governance and law; circular economy, chemicals, waste and pollution; and strategic, budgetary, and governing bodies matters.

In the evening, delegates also engaged in informal discussions on the ministerial declaration to be adopted by UNEA.

### Preparation of Decisions and Outcomes of UNEA-7

Delegates met throughout the day and into the night 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 Haraldstad re-opened discussions on the draft resolution on *strengthening the global response on the management of fires*.

On integrating fire risk reduction into national frameworks, delegates debated linking national climate change response strategies, national biodiversity strategies and action plans, voluntary land degradation neutrality targets, and disaster risk reduction frameworks. Some preferred a simplified reference to national strategies, plans, programmes, and policies.

Delegations also weighed the value of including citizen science as a validated methodology. Following a brief discussion, the group agreed the issue fits better under a paragraph on knowledge-exchange.

On a requests to the UNEP Executive Director in collaboration with other organizations, delegates agreed on the key role of the UN Forest Forum. Regarding the request for UNEP to reinforce the activities developed by the Global Fire Management Hub, delegates debated whether it should be guided by science-based evidence-based decision-making, or both.

Discussions on the *active protection of deep-sea ecosystems*, led by Co-Facilitator Okano, proceeded despite some reservations centered on whether UNEP has the mandate to lead work in this area. Those expressing reservations argued that deep-sea issues fall under the frameworks of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the International Seabed Authority (ISA). Concerns also included duplication of and undermining the work done under these processes, and the creation of inconsistencies that stretch UNEP beyond its mandate. Those supporting the resolution recalled the broad nature of UNEP's mandate.

Debate on a proposed paragraph further reflected these opposing views. Those in support of the new wording welcomed an option requesting UNEP to initiate collaboration with Member States, relevant UN system bodies, scientific communities, and partners to synthesise global knowledge on deep-sea ecosystems. Delegates debated whether the synthesis should be a global stocktake or assessment. There were diverging views on whether the paragraph should specify relevant UN bodies such as the ISA, the UN Division on Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (UNDOALOS), the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC-UNESCO), and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

As a way forward, delegates proposed clarifying the mandates of these bodies in deep-sea protection in the preambular section while keeping the operational paragraphs focused on cooperation within relevant areas. Reservations on the resolution remained.

**Cluster B on governance and law:** This cluster was co-facilitated by Sara Elkhoully (Egypt) and Martin R ow (Germany). In the morning, discussions focused on the draft resolution on *maximizing existing resources through enhanced coherence and synergies among multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and their implementation*.

Many delegations supported a compromise text presented by Co-Facilitator Elkhoully, inviting Member States to consider building synergies in the implementation of MEAs, and streamline the process including, among others, through national reporting. Several proposed removing the reference to national reporting.

Views diverged on the paragraph related to the UN Environment Management Group (EMG) and enhancing synergies with MEAs and system-wide collaboration in their implementation. Two delegations objected to inclusion of the EMG in the text, suggesting the paragraph should only focus on reporting on synergies between UNEP and MEAs. Many others stressed the role of the EMG to provide system-wide coherence within the UN on environmental aspects of sustainable development. Opposition remained even after the Secretariat's explanation on the recently endorsed workstream on synergistic implementation of MEAs by the EMG.

One delegation, supported by many, proposed alternative language that would invite the UNEP Executive Director to report on promoting synergies and enhancing collaboration and cooperation under the EMG mandate, without explicitly mentioning MEAs. No agreement was reached, and discussions will continue.

In the afternoon, this group focused in on a resolution on the *environmental sustainability of artificial intelligence (AI) systems*, led by Co-Facilitator R ow. The proponent clarified that the resolution does not intend to touch on AI regulation or governance but rather focuses on: improving understanding of AI systems' environmental dimensions and how AI can be used for environmental goals; and enhance capacity-building and knowledge sharing. In this light, many delegations preferred deleting language urging Member States to take required actions to ensure accountability and responsibility of AI companies regarding their behavior and actions across the AI lifecycle.

Delegates debated a paragraph encouraging the adoption of water efficiency for AI infrastructure alongside other considerations for reducing the water and energy-related impacts of AI systems. Many noted the language was overly prescriptive, calling for further work to ensure such actions are future proofed. Others underlined that while AI may be an emerging technology, it is not new and impacts on both water and energy are well documented.

Deliberations over a paragraph seeking to operationalize or implement the Global Environmental Data Strategy (GEDS) was left unresolved, as some delegations wished simply to "take note" of the GEDS, and others to "welcome" it. Several delegates recalled that developing the GEDS was a request made at UNEA-4.

A proposal to merge all requests to the UNEP Executive Director into a single paragraph was well received by the group.

Deliberations slowed as delegates considered the proposed language, with several expressing concern, among others, at a request to develop a global outlook and engage in information sharing on this. After drawn-out discussions, the Co-Facilitator's suggestion to produce a report to be finalized by UNEA-8 garnered some support, and one delegation emphasized that any report produced should incorporate a summary of the requested multi-stakeholder dialogues.

Regarding these dialogues, on assessing environmental benefits, risks, opportunities, and impacts of AI systems across their "value chain," a few delegations noted this term varies in its interpretation and requested its deletion. Debate then narrowed in on the nuance between use-cases demonstrating environmental applications or environmentally sustainable applications of AI systems, with some preferring to refer to both, and others stressing that UNEP's core mandate is an environmental one.

An informal Friends of the Co-Facilitator group was established to address a paragraph on promoting the development and implementation of standards, norms, and/or policies supporting end-to-end environmental sustainability of AI systems. Discussions will continue, including on means of implementation to support the use of AI systems for environmental purposes.

**Cluster C on circular economy, chemicals, waste and pollution:** These discussions were co-facilitated by Michal Novotný (Czechia) and Ontumetse Ontumetse (Botswana). Discussions resumed on the resolution addressing *environmental dimensions of antimicrobial resistance (AMR)*.

Among a list of requests to UNEP, some delegates preferred streamlined language to promote or encourage research and knowledge sharing on the environmental dimensions of AMR, while one delegate called to retain language on enhancing better understanding of possible AMR sources and catalyzing actions to address key sources. A group proposed the development of standardized protocols, indicators, and thresholds.

Concerning a request addressing the provision of financial resources and technology transfer, Co-Facilitator Novotný explained that language on technology transfer was being addressed as a crosscutting issue. Delegates then proposed insertions on, among others: international and/or regional cooperation, capacity-building, technical assistance, and access to best practices.

Discussions then turned to language on multisectoral national action plans on AMR, with several referencing the [2024 UN General Assembly Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting on AMR](#). Delegates debated alternative textual proposals for urging Member States to develop, update, and implement multisectoral national action plans on AMR by 2030. A number of delegations highlighted insufficient means of implementation to undertake this work and opposed the prescriptive language and 2030 deadline. Among proposals to address these concerns was alternative language encouraging Member States to share their experiences, best practices, and lessons learned in addressing AMR in an annual dialogue, and caveating any commitments as conditional upon the provision of financial support to developing countries.

Divergence also ensued over terminology specifying the countries that are to provide the financial resources and the recipients of these resources. One delegate proposed inserting a paragraph on strengthening international cooperation to build capacity in developing countries.

Delegates then turned to the resolution on *sound management of chemicals and waste*. They opened discussions on mobilizing resources for implementation of chemicals and waste management instruments, with proposals to either specify the list of MEAs and instruments or keeping it more general. Areas of divergence included: whether these would be new resources and whether they would be mobilized from all sources; a list of actors to be invited to provide this support; and whether to indicate as recipients developing countries, countries with capacity constraints, or "significant" capacity constraints. Others called to specify the need for technical assistance, institutional support, and capacity-building to developing countries, among others.

One delegate, supported by many and opposed by some developed countries, proposed new text urging developed countries to cease export of hazardous waste and other wastes destined for disposal operations in developing countries, ensuring

that a declaration of a State's ability to manage such waste in an environmentally sound manner is a prerequisite to become a destination for them.

Several delegates also supported new paragraphs: deciding that developed countries shall take full responsibility for the sound management of hazardous chemicals and waste exported to, or generated in, developing countries; and calling on developed countries to take the lead in funding and implementing solutions to the global proliferation of hazardous chemicals and waste, recognizing their historical responsibility. Opposing these insertions, a delegate suggested alternate language to urge parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, and Minamata Convention on Mercury to ensure compliance, and to encourage ratification for those who are not parties.

**Cluster D on strategic, budgetary, and governing bodies matters:** Co-facilitated by Tobias Ogweno (Kenya) and Nader Al-Tarawneh (Jordan), this group met in the morning, and in a late evening session.

In the morning, discussions focused 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*. Delegates deliberated on the preambular paragraphs.

Several delegations raised concerns over the lack of consensus on the MTS, stressing that it contains many of their red lines, including on the UNEP Executive Director engaging with UN Security Council and UN Human Right Council on environmental matters. Some responded that UNEP has a mandate related to system-wide coherence and advocating for the environment, and therefore it is only beneficial for it to provide expertise on environmental matters within the UN system.

A few delegations also queried the process of endorsing the MTS by the Committee. The Secretariat clarified that this is usually done in the OECPR plenary. Not satisfied, delegates pointed to their concerns over the current MTS and asked to explore an alternative endorsement route unless the usual one is prescribed by the rules of procedure.

Despite other delegations trying to find acceptable language to reflect concerns over the MTS consultation process, agreement remained elusive. Co-Facilitator Ogweno reminded delegates that they would need to agree on the decision by the end of the day and invited them to a consultation on the way forward.

### *In The Corridors*

One day remains to conclude, as far as possible, negotiations on a raft of resolutions and decisions that will set the tone for action in the world of environment for the next two years. On Thursday, delegates were "almost running on fumes," with some having worked late on Wednesday in an attempt to untangle some of the many remaining knots impeding agreement.

In some cases, tensions ran high, as delegations who insisted on being heard made points of order, which are, as per the rules, not applicable in informal meeting settings. Beyond these procedural hiccups, delegates remained deadlocked on several substantive points. Does the OECPR just rubber stamp the MTS, or should States subject it to a negotiation? Calls to remember that OECPR-7 was not starting from scratch, and that the Strategy had undergone almost a year of intersessional consultations seemed to fall on deaf ears. More work remains to bridge the sharp divides on the contents of the MTS before it can be adopted by UNEA.

In other cases, delegates struggled to find a place for UNEP action within a sea of other MEAs. Is UNEP, by playing a role in High Seas issues, perceived as overstepping its mandate, and stepping on the toes of UNCLOS and the ISA? If that is the case, then should UNEP carry out any work on climate, or would this undercut the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change? What about biodiversity, given the numerous conventions operating in that realm? And dare it expand to new frontiers like AI?

"It may be a question of surgically delineating the relevant mandates and finding ways to cooperate," opined one seasoned advisor, referring to the stalemate on the draft resolution on deep-sea ecosystems. A delegate perhaps more pragmatic, pointed to the enormous cost of carrying out any activities (even monitoring) in the deep sea, suggesting that new work aligns to UNEP's current resource realities.