

**UNEA-7 Highlights:
Monday, 8 December 2025**

The seventh session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-7) began on Monday. After an opening plenary, delegates convened in a Committee of the Whole (CoW) and spent the day discussing resolutions pertaining to nature and climate and governance and law. In the evening, they addressed resolutions and decisions related to circular economy, chemicals, waste, and pollution, and strategic, budgetary, and governing bodies matters.

Opening Plenary

UNEA-7 kicked off with a cultural choral performance by the Kenyan Boys Choir. Opening the meeting, Abdullah Bin Ali Al-Amri, UNEA-7 President, noted that this session takes place at an important juncture: at a time when all communities of the world are facing the impacts of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. He referred to the UNEA-7 theme, stating that in order to “advance sustainable solutions for a resilient planet,” delegates must deliver on implementable resolutions guided by science and supported by resources for implementation. He urged renewing coherence among multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) to ensure interconnected systems and build a resilient planet.

In a video message, Amina Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary-General, welcomed delegates to Nairobi, noting that the city embodies “the promise of our shared future.” She outlined the stark findings of recent UN reports, including that: we will surpass 1.5°C in global warming within the decade; 3 billion people are affected by the degradation of 20-40% of land on Earth; 1 million species are at risk of extinction; and 9 million people die prematurely every year from pollution.

Inger Andersen, Executive Director, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), recalled UNEA’s consistent track record of success and emphasized that this history of unity must be drawn on to deliver solutions for a sustainable, resilient future. She stressed this is the time to step down from “the ramparts of individual positions and meet on common ground” in the face of accelerating environmental challenges and turbulent geopolitical waters. Andersen further highlighted the second MEAs day to be held on Wednesday, 10 December.

Zainab Hawa Bangura, Director-General, UN Office at Nairobi (UNON), reiterated UNON’s support for UNEA-7, underlining that delegates should recall that the health, survival, and sustainable growth of the planet is dependent on peace, equality, and justice for all. She called for tangible resolutions to assure that future generations inherit a world that is greener, safer, healthier, and just, where all people are treated equally and with dignity and respect.

Deborah Mlongo Barasa, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Forestry, Kenya, welcomed delegates

to the vibrant city of Nairobi, a beacon for environmental multilateralism. She called on UNEA-7 to approve UNEP’s 2026-2029 Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) and the 2026-2027 Programme of Work (PoW) and budget, which will shape global environmental action in the years to come. She urged the Assembly to spark sustainable solutions, strengthen resilience, and champion inclusive environmental governance.

Organizational Matters

The Assembly adopted the agenda (UNEP/EA.7/1 and [Add.1](#)) and organization of work (UNEP/EA.7/INF/1). The Assembly then established a CoW, electing Joyelle Clarke, Minister of Sustainable Development, Climate Action, and Constituency Empowerment, Saint Kitts and Nevis, as the CoW Chair; and Nino Tandilashvili, First Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Georgia, as the CoW Rapporteur.

General Statements

The EU underscored that delegates at UNEA-7 are united by a common expectation: that UNEA, as the world’s leading environmental authority, will take steps to address the triple planetary crisis for the benefit of people, planet, and prosperity. They underscored the roles of science and multi-stakeholder engagement in guiding robust environmental action and driving accountability; and encouraged a sense of urgency and compromise in the return to the negotiating rooms.

Eritrea, for the AFRICAN GROUP, expressed concerns related to the negotiations, including: the slow pace of negotiations, urging the Chair to find more streamlined modalities for result-oriented resolutions; the use of the term “on mutually agreed terms” regarding technology transfer, which weakens commitments agreed under other MEAs; and the promotion of citizen science, which is not grounded in professional expertise.

Brazil, for the BRICS (Brazil, Russian Federation, India, China, and South Africa), called for UNEP’s enhanced cooperation with other related MEAs, including the three Rio Conventions. They noted that Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) is agreed language of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and expressed concerns at attempts to artificially differentiate either component.

Colombia, for the GROUP OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (GRULAC), said UNEA resolutions must promote multilevel and multisectoral actions that are inclusive and consider the plight of small island developing States (SIDS). The group also cautioned against holding more than two parallel negotiation sessions due to the difficulties facing small delegations. Fiji, on behalf of the PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (P-SIDS), stressed that P-SIDS are experiencing the triple planetary crisis in real time, with climate change reshaping their coastlines, ocean acidification degrading fisheries, and plastics entering their food systems. P-SIDS emphasized, among

others, that ambition at UNEA-7 must be matched with resources for implementation.

The AFRICAN GROUP, GRULAC, and the BRICS also called for acknowledging the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, as well as for strengthening UNEP, including through the adoption of the MTS and PoW.

Stakeholder Engagement

General Statements: BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY stressed that the UN's scarce resources must be deployed efficiently, underlining that "the same issues are discussed by the same people, just in new locations." They called for transitioning away from reinventing the wheel and moving toward ambitious, science-based resolutions.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH highlighted key messages from the Youth Environment Assembly held in the lead-up to the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR), including a call for continued collaboration and compromise among Member States to deliver on the real potential of the resolutions under discussion to strengthen environmental governance.

FARMERS decried setting a precedence whereby those feeding the world are reduced to silence while decisions are made without them. They underscored that a resilient planet is impossible without resilient farmers and urged for accountable governance. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THEIR COMMUNITIES stressed the failure of these negotiations, which enable mechanisms favoring colonial, extractivist systems that view nature as exploitable and lead to the marginalization, criminalization, and death of environmental defenders. They urged for the rights of Indigenous Peoples to be upheld at UNEA-7, and for the prioritization of the collective health of people and planet over profit.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES called for equitable financing and recognition of the role of cities in the implementation of UNEA resolutions, adding that territorial justice and inclusion are inseparable conditions of a just transition towards environmental sustainability. NGOs called for the recognition of: the rights of nature; ecocide as a crime against nature; and peace as a prerequisite for sustainable development. They called for a moratorium on deep-sea mining, until the sustainability of these activities is established.

The SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COMMUNITY noted that the world is beginning a new and unprecedented period of rapid transformative change in technology, including generative artificial intelligence (AI), which is running far ahead of good governance. They also noted that citizen science is growing rapidly, expressing concern that some governments will be left behind.

WOMEN called for recognizing that women's health and environmental health must be achieved concurrently. They referred to the first Global Women's Environment Assembly, held prior to UNEA-7, consolidating the voices of women to ensure impactful resolutions in UNEA-7. WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS stressed workers' fundamental rights to decent work and safety, calling for environmental policies that recognize their role in addressing the triple planetary crisis.

MAJOR GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDERS FOR THE ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION called for protection of civic space, expansion of early warning systems, and transforming environmental finance and governance. RAPPORTEUR OF THE SEVENTH CITIES AND REGIONS SUMMIT highlighted the event's open dialogues, underlining that multilevel governance and empowering local and regional leaders is critical for implementing global agendas.

Report of the OECPR

OECPR-7 Chair Sultan Hajiyev (Azerbaijan) reported on the outcomes of OECPR-7. He noted that the draft decision on the management of trust funds and earmarked contributions (UNEP/EA.7/L.2) was transmitted to the Assembly for adoption. He also reported that 15 draft resolutions and two draft decisions were transmitted to UNEA-7 for further consideration, alongside non-papers forming the basis of discussions on preambular paragraphs, and non-papers reflecting outcomes of informal discussions held over the weekend. The Assembly deferred adoption of the decision on the management of trust funds and earmarked contributions to the closing plenary scheduled for Friday, 12 December.

Committee of the Whole (CoW)

CoW Chair Clarke called for constructive work over the two-and-a-half day schedule to finalize the 15 resolutions and two draft decisions to be adopted by the Assembly. Delegates adopted the provisional agenda ([UNEP/EA.7/CW/1](#)). CoW Chair Clarke underscored that the Committee must finalize its work by the Committee's closing plenary, scheduled for Wednesday evening, 10 December. She highlighted that delegates would work in two contact groups, addressing the resolutions and draft decisions under the four clusters overall. She highlighted that a stocktaking plenary on Tuesday evening, 9 December, would approve finalized resolutions and decide how to allocate the remaining time. Further, she noted that the draft resolutions and non-papers forwarded by the OECPR would form the basis of work, with negotiations beginning with the operative paragraphs. CoW Chair Clarke underscored that delegations should refrain from introducing new ideas and concepts at this advanced stage, and highlighted the work schedule, as agreed by the joint OECPR and UNEA Bureaux.

SAUDI ARABIA, TÜRKIYE, IRAN, QATAR, BAHRAIN, COLOMBIA, ALGERIA, and UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE) emphasized convening only two groups in parallel to ensure effective participation for small delegations. RUSSIAN FEDERATION, supported by BAHRAIN and UAE, noted an understanding was reached during OECPR-7 that any extension of work beyond 10 pm would be agreed by the group. They also underscored that each Member State should be given the floor before a resolution can be approved.

Supporting the Chair's proposed organization of work, SWITZERLAND, NORWAY, AUSTRALIA, URUGUAY, the UK, the EU, and CANADA noted that two contact groups working in parallel was general practice and noted that informal-informal sessions always report back to the contact group for inclusivity and transparency. TUVALU called for clarity on the organization of work, noting that the contact group could meet in parallel with an informal group if they were dealing with different resolutions/decisions. AZERBAIJAN proposed that each cluster decide on its work programme.

CoW Chair Clarke confirmed that work beyond 10 pm would need to be agreed by consensus, and no informal sessions would convene in parallel with the two contact groups, noting that delegates could reconsider this arrangement during the stocktaking plenary.

Cluster A on nature and climate: These discussions were co-chaired by Kanako Okano (Japan) and Marie Haraldstad (Norway). Delegates opened consideration of the draft resolution on *strengthening global response on management of fires*, led by Co-Chair Haraldstad, based on a non-paper resulting from informal-informals held over the weekend. Delegates opened consideration on a set of requests to UNEP Executive Director. On a request to reinforce a list of activities by the Global Fire Management Hub, delegates: approved language referencing

knowledge-sharing platforms on best practices concerning integrated fire management; and were unable to agree on language referencing training and capacity-building programmes.

Delegates were unable to agree on language in requests to support Member States to: develop and implement national and regional action plans; and mobilize and/or access resources. Delegates heard a proposal for a new paragraph urging developed countries to mobilize financial resources to assist developing countries with their national plans. They also disagreed on language encouraging Member States and others to promote and enhance international and regional cooperation for integrated fire management and promoting resilience to wildfires.

The group then debated a Co-Chairs' proposal for streamlined preambular paragraphs. Co-Chair Haraldstad announced that deliberations would continue in an informal-informal discussion.

The group turned to the draft resolution on *strengthening the global response to the massive influx of Sargassum seaweed blooms*, led by Co-Chair Okano, basing their discussions on the outcome of informal-informal discussions.

Delegates debated compromise language which, among others, calls on Member States to recognize the massive influx of Sargassum seaweed blooms as a crisis in the wider Caribbean region and West Africa, and that it may also be a challenge in other regions. They engaged in a lengthy debate over whether these blooms constitute a "crisis" or, as one delegation opined "a serious environmental challenge." Several affected Member States explained the devastating and unmanageable impacts they are facing. Co-Chair Okano appealed to delegates to accept the compromise text resulting from informal deliberations, and other delegates stressed that affected countries should be allowed to determine the magnitude of the impacts they face. A compromise proposal to refer to an "emergency" rather than a crisis received mixed responses. Discussions will continue.

Delegates thereafter approved Co-Chair Okano's streamlined proposal for a provision encouraging Member States to enhance international cooperation and collaboration for the sustainable monitoring, management, and use of Sargassum seaweed. Co-Chair Okano will prepare a non-paper for further deliberations, including on other elements of the draft resolution.

Taking up the draft resolution on *active protection of deep-sea ecosystems*, led by Co-Chair Okano, delegates focused on a provision calling for UNEP to collaborate with Member States and international organizations on a global stocktake/assessment that synthesizes scientific information and identifies knowledge gaps on deep-sea ecosystems. A number of delegates, including a group of States, expressed reservations over the resolution. Other delegates, including a regional group, indicated their support for continued negotiations on the resolution. The proponent explained that their proposal had been significantly changed following bilateral consultations and indicated that they would submit a revised textual proposal. Discussions will continue.

Cluster B on governance and law: This cluster was co-chaired by Sara Elkhoully (Egypt) and Martin R w (Germany). Discussions focused on the draft resolution on *environmental sustainability of artificial intelligence (AI) systems*. Some delegates supported streamlining the text, but as soon as they proposed leaner language a plethora of edits were immediately suggested. One delegate lamented that no new ideas should be added after a whole week of OECPR negotiations.

Delegates discussed provisions on: framing the environmental action on AI, data-sharing approaches, and on the requests to UNEP Executive Director. On requests to UNEP Executive Director, delegates debated whether to ask for a report or technical input, as well as whether to ensure gender balance at the multi-stakeholder workshops to assess the risks, opportunities and

benefits of AI systems. Views also diverged on whether to include a provision on the UNEP Executive Director facilitating the operationalization of the Global Environmental Data Strategy.

Reticent to hold late-night informal-informal discussions, delegates mandated Co-Chair R w to prepare a non-paper containing new language on the requests to the UNEP Executive Director.

On the draft resolution on *enhancing the meaningful participation of youth in environmental processes*, delegates reopened almost-agreed language on youth participation. A group of countries reintroduced a reference to youth participation in decision-making, which was previously removed and replaced with a more general reference to "participation in environmental processes" during the weekend informal consultations. Several countries expressed strong objection, stating they would reject the resolution as a whole, unless "decision-making" is removed. Delegates eventually compromised, agreeing to youth "participation in environmental matters and processes."

Views also diverged over a paragraph on education, with some Member States suggesting development of green skills, while others preferred "skills needed to promote sustainable development" as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goal Target 4.7 (ensure all learners gain knowledge and skills for sustainable development) and UNEA [resolution 6/8](#). Delegates also could not decide on whether to reference the Education for Sustainable Development 2030 Framework.

In The Breezeways

"Words into action" was the unified messaging as UNEA-7 got off to a brisk start. But what does this mean in practice? For many, it means ensuring the resolutions that will eventually be adopted are implementable. And for this to happen, consensus must be a top priority throughout negotiations.

This weighed heavily on the minds of delegations as they reignited negotiations on the highly contentious resolutions they still had to address. "We need to be assured that this resolution (on AI) does not impinge on any existing agreement's mandate," cautioned one delegate. But another shared, "we seem to be tiptoeing around the issue so as not to ruffle any feathers."

On the other side of the breezeway, delegates were frustrated to find that the delicate compromise they believed had been found on Sargassum seaweed blooms, acknowledging that they constitute a crisis for some regions, appeared no longer to hold. As one delegate underlined, it is "an insult that the situation we are living now for years is being questioned." An observer, meanwhile, stressed that recognizing the crisis is, "a matter of environmental justice, not just terminology."

Several Member States, following the past week's OECPR, had already laid down their expectations, non-negotiable issues, and points of contention. Pleas to find convergence rang out throughout the afternoon and into the evening, as the Co-Chairs of the cluster groups urged delegates to be more flexible. But on Monday, this flexibility was not always evident, as delegations sometimes dug their heels in, reiterating well-known arguments about "overstepping mandates." "We really don't have time for this," sighed one delegate, whose proposed resolution was unrecognizable after a round of insertions and deletions. "We will not allow delegations to roll back the progress we made over the weekend," insisted another, frustrated at attempts to cancel the collaborative efforts made during the weekend's informal sessions.

With a heavy agenda before them, delegates worked into the night to make progress, which will be shared during Tuesday's stocktaking plenary.

Follow daily coverage and photos of OECP-7 and UNEA-7



enb.iisd.org



subscribe at bit.ly/enbupdate



[@enb.iisd.org](https://twitter.com/enb.iisd.org)



[/earth-negotiations-bulletin](https://www.linkedin.com/company/earth-negotiations-bulletin)

