

**UNEA-7 Highlights:
Tuesday, 9 December 2025**

The seventh session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-7) continued its work, with the Committee of the Whole (CoW) holding a stocktaking plenary in the evening to assess progress. Delegates worked throughout the day and into the night on resolutions related to nature and climate; governance and law; circular economy, chemicals, waste and pollution; and strategic, budgetary, and governing bodies matters.

Committee of the Whole (CoW)

Cluster A on nature and climate: These discussions were co-chaired by Kanako Okano (Japan) and Marie Haraldstad (Norway). In the final scheduled contact group meeting on the draft resolution on *karst ecosystems for global water, biodiversity, climate resilience, and economic development*, the proponent clarified that a proposed center of knowledge aimed to encourage voluntary cooperation and leverage existing centers of excellence rather than create a new bureaucratic platform. However, with multiple delegations calling for deletion of the paragraph, they agreed to remove the text.

A Member State proposed adding a new sub-paragraph to strengthen cooperation with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, due to the connection of karsts to wetlands and groundwater. Those opposed to this inclusion pointed to the fact that they are not a Party to this Convention, while others questioned its relevance.

In a sub-paragraph on implementing sustainable practices and managing potential environmental impact in karst areas, delegates debated whether to limit to a few key sectors and activities that may impact these areas. Some opposed cherry-picking and proposed retaining the original list consisting of tourism, water management, agriculture, mining, and infrastructure. Discussions on this issue and the resolution will continue informally.

On technology transfer, a delegation stressed maintaining agreed language on means of implementation (MoI). Co-Chair Haraldstad noted that MoI is currently being discussed as a crosscutting issue.

Delegations continued negotiations on the draft resolution on *accelerating global action to promote the climate resilience of coral reefs*, based on an alternative text proposed by Co-Chair Okano, to request the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Executive Director to collaborate with the International Coral Reef Initiative and others to develop guidance to support conservation, monitoring, restoration, and sustainable use. Several considered this compromise text as balanced, contingent on ensuring the

preambular section adequately reflects that this guidance will support national policies. Some preferred broader references to climate, biodiversity, and environmental policies within the paragraph.

Regarding mobilizing resources for coral reef conservation, restoration, and sustainable use, views differed on referencing funding from all sources, highlighting developing countries, including least developed countries and small island developing states as recipients, and developed countries as sources of support. They agreed that these references would be resolved following completion of negotiations on MoI.

In the preambular paragraphs, delegates refined references to previous UNEA resolutions. Some countries called for specifying cold water and warm water corals. While this was broadly accepted, one delegate informed that cold water corals are not reefs. The group debated whether to use a broader reference of coral ecosystems, or to refer to coral reefs and ecosystems.

Language highlighting Indigenous Peoples and stakeholders was parked pending broader discussions on cross-cutting issues. Discussions on the resolution will continue.

Cluster B on governance and law: This cluster was co-chaired by Sara Elkhoully (Egypt) and Martin Röw (Germany). On the draft resolution on *enhancing the meaningful participation of youth in environmental processes*, delegates debated how to request the UNEP Executive Director to engage youth, with several delegations opposing youth inclusion in science-policy processes and assessments. Similarly, while delegates agreed to promote the hiring of youth by UNEP, several delegations opposed gender considerations in the hiring processes, preferring “equal representation of women and men” or “female representation” instead. Co-Chair Elkhoully requested interested delegations to consult and find convergence on this issue.

On the draft resolution on *maximizing existing resources through enhanced coherence and synergies among multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and their implementation*, views diverged on encouraging Member States to enhance synergies when developing and implementing projects and policies, including by reducing the reporting burden. Some delegations stressed separate MEA mandates, emphasizing that UNEA cannot modify reporting obligations. Others noted that with growing reporting burdens, streamlining is necessary to improve the quality of the reported information. Delegates also could not agree on the reference to the UN Environmental Management Group (EMG), despite efforts by some delegations toward compromise text that would request the UNEP Executive Director to report on the EMG’s activities, without mentioning synergies.

Delegates did manage to bridge some divides on this draft resolution. Consensus was achieved on the provision inviting “regional and subregional cooperation bodies to facilitate multilateral and multi-stakeholder cooperation for promoting synergies, cooperation or collaboration in line with nationally determined priorities.” Similarly, after informal consultations, delegates agreed to recognize the MEA day, “as a valuable forum for enhancing cooperation, by exchanging best practices, tools, success stories, and lessons learned.” Co-Chair Elkhoully informed she will prepare a non-paper on the preambular paragraphs.

Cluster C on circular economy, chemicals, waste and pollution: These discussions were co-chaired by Michal Novotný (Czechia) and Ontumetse Ontumetse (Botswana). Delegates resumed work on the draft resolution on *strengthening international cooperation on the environmentally sound management of minerals and metals*, led by Co-Chair Ontumetse. They considered a request to the UNEP Executive Director to convene a dialogue or dialogues ahead of UNEA-8. Following prolonged discussions and a ballooning text, one delegate proposed to request UNEP Executive Director to convene dialogues among national focal points and relevant stakeholders pursuant to UNEA [resolution 5/12](#), without a mandate to establish a new negotiation track, and to compile their submissions prior to UNEA-8 while ensuring developing-country participation to exchange views.

On this proposal, delegates discussed, among other things, whether the dialogue(s) would be convened among Member States and/or national focal points, and how to include countries that do not have focal points.

The group then debated on a list of items outlining the scope of the work, addressing international cooperation on sustainable management of minerals and metals, resource recovery from mine tailings with a view to reducing environmental impacts, and promoting a dialogue. A proposal for an additional item to identify approaches for developed countries to provide MoI to developing countries for national policy strategies on the environmentally sound management of minerals and metals was opposed by several developed countries.

Another delegate tabled a new provision, opposed by a regional group, to request the UNEP Executive Director to compile an evaluation of the implementation of this draft resolution together with [resolutions 4/19](#), [5/12](#), and [6/5](#). Noting that discussions will continue, Co-Chair Ontumetse encouraged bilateral consultations.

The group then turned to the draft resolution on *sound management of chemicals and waste*, led by Co-Chair Novotný. Delegates began streamlining a request to UNEP Executive Director to support Member States in identifying their gaps, needs, and priorities related to lead, cadmium, arsenic, and organotins. A debate ensued when one delegate called for limiting the text to pollution from these substances, to be consistent with UNEP pollution-related mandate. Many delegates disagreed, urging that work should be conducted on these substances in general, including on pollution, and on waste containing or contaminated with these substances.

The group parked consideration of the provision due to countries reintroducing preferred language even when agreement had been achieved on most of the text. Discussions will continue, with divergence remaining on the necessity of addressing needs in

addition to gaps and priorities; and on language requesting a report on findings before UNEA-8.

The group turned to a paragraph requesting the UNEP Executive Director to facilitate the effective operationalization of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution. After a lengthy discussion, delegates provisionally approved requesting UNEP to promote cooperation and collaboration between the Panel and other scientific panels, relevant MEAs and intergovernmental bodies related to chemicals and waste. Some reservations were retained pending further discussions. Delegates also agreed to qualify that the requested work should be conducted within existing mandates and resources, while avoiding duplication of work. Discussions will continue.

Cluster D on strategic, budgetary, and governing bodies matters: This group was co-chaired by Tobias Ogweno (Kenya) and Nader Al-Tarawneh (Jordan). Regarding the draft decision on the *2026-2029 Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) and 2026-2027 Programme of Work (PoW) and Budget* led by Co-Chair Ogweno, delegates based their discussions on a non-paper from informal-informal discussions held over the weekend. The discussion immediately turned to the crux of countries’ discomfort: concern that language in the MTS encourages actions beyond UNEP’s mandate; concern regarding the non-intergovernmentally-negotiated nature of the MTS, resulting in Member States’ priorities or red lines not being reflected in the document; and the question of how UNEP relates to other UN entities.

One delegation, supported by several, stressed that while the MTS is not a binding document for Member States, it is for UNEP, and severely cautioned against any influencing by the UNEP Executive Director of UN bodies such as the UN Security and Human Rights Councils. Another delegation emphasized that UNEP is to “serve as an authoritative advocate for the global environment” according to the “Future We Want,” the Rio+20 outcome document.

The Secretariat clarified that the content of the MTS solely implements UNEP’s existing mandate and cannot exceed it. One group proposed new preambular language to recall UNEP’s mandate explicitly, which was widely supported. A delegate suggested, supported by many, merging text to express that the MTS and PoW and Budget are documents drafted under UNEP’s authority, and that certain elements of these are non-consensual or intergovernmentally agreed, and these should not prejudice any ongoing or future negotiation positions or processes. Many delegations strongly opposed this harsh language, remarking that it is standard practice across the UN that the MTS is not negotiated and that it is not UNEP’s role to reconcile differences between Member States.

Despite a last-minute suggestion to address these concerns by textually acknowledging the persistent divergence on the contents of the MTS, and wide reflection by delegates that these extensive deliberations were constructive, hopeful, and illuminating, delegations could not agree on a way forward.

Co-Chair Nader Al-Tarawneh (Jordan) then led discussions on the draft decision on the *provisional agenda, dates, and venue for UNEA-8*. Delegates eventually agreed to convene UNEA-8 on 6-10 December 2027, and OECP-8 on 29 November – 3 December 2027. Despite coming close to agreeing on the last Monday in February, divergence nonetheless persisted on

establishing a statutory date for UNEA sessions starting from UNEA-9, with one delegation preferring this begin from UNEA-11.

Several delegations reiterated their concern with scheduling UNEA sessions too close to one another, and a suggestion to limit the number of resolutions proposed at such sessions received strong opposition. Some delegates cautioned against limiting Member States' sovereign right to propose resolutions and queried how this selection would be decided. Delegates also disagreed on retaining a theme for UNEA-8. Discussions will continue.

Stocktaking Plenary

CoW Chair Joyelle Clarke (Saint Kitts and Nevis) opened the stocktaking plenary. Co-Chairs of all four clusters reported the work achieved in contact groups, noting limited progress and requesting more time to complete negotiations.

On the organization of work, CoW Chair Clarke presented a way forward for the contact groups to allow progress on the draft resolutions and draft decisions. She proposed the following modalities of work:

- contact group discussions prioritize resolutions where agreement and consensus can be achieved;
- contact groups continue negotiations until midnight on Tuesday, and 9:00 pm on Wednesday;
- the CoW closing plenary on Wednesday be delayed from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm;
- additional informal-informal sessions take place during the breaks and alongside contact group meetings, so long as they are not on the same issue under discussion at the time;
- informal informals report back to contact groups with non-papers circulated for transparency;
- contact groups do not reverse any agreements made during informal consultations held on Saturday, 6 December, and delegates draw on agreed language from past UNEA sessions for consensus;
- Co-Chairs develop short streamlined non-papers for draft resolutions for which there has been difficulty in achieving full agreement by consensus, and circulate them by 9:00 am on Wednesday;
- these non-papers form a basis for Wednesday's negotiations on a take it or leave it basis; and
- Co-Chairs report back on progress to the CoW closing plenary on Wednesday with the aim of transmitting as many draft resolutions as possible to UNEA-7.

Many delegations, including Mozambique for the AFRICAN GROUP, SAUDI ARABIA, TÜRKIYE, EGYPT, PAKISTAN, IRAN, MOROCCO, SOUTH AFRICA, BOTSWANA, and MALAWI opposed meetings after 10:00 pm, noting, among others, that more time will not yield more progress, particularly on issues with fundamental disagreements over substance. TÜRKIYE also emphasized that evenings were essential for rest and for consultation with capitals for instructions on difficult issues. PERU, echoed by NIGERIA, lamented that in some instances the principle of consensus was used as a veto by some delegations.

Several delegates, including SAUDI ARABIA, TÜRKIYE, SWITZERLAND, RUSSIAN FEDERATION, BRAZIL, and the UK, opposed the take it or leave it approach.

Additionally, TÜRKIYE, RUSSIAN FEDERATION, EGYPT, IRAN, and BAHRAIN noted that priority should be on resolutions where compromise can be reached. Several others, including UK

and CANADA, suggested building on already agreed language as a way forward, with CANADA expressing their trust that proponents will prepare balanced non-papers.

NORWAY stressed that all resolutions deserve equal consideration and, with TUVALU, URUGUAY, the EU, AUSTRALIA, and COLOMBIA, supported the Chair's proposed organization of work.

CUBA requested that delegations who cannot attend informal consultations be allowed to submit written input. IRAN and TÜRKIYE called for ensuring that extension of contact group time be by consensus.

In conclusion, Chair Clarke confirmed that meetings will be held until 10:00 pm, and may be extended to midnight by consensus, and withdrew the proposed take it or leave it approach. Delegates agreed to the proposed organization of work as amended.

In The Breezeways

With a day to go before the CoW is scheduled to close, delegates worked in "pressure cooker condition" to reach agreement on 15 resolutions and two decisions that have all proved contentious. Overcoming various levels of sleep deprivation, delegations soldiered on, convening in contact and informal groups into the night.

In some rooms, delegates could feel the heat, both literally and figuratively. Moving into "cozier" negotiating rooms meant delegates sat shoulder-to-shoulder, sweating it out as they addressed sometimes difficult matters, under enormous time pressure. After a proposal to "hug it out" fell short, delegates returned to the big conference rooms to hash out their positions. With disagreements over the MTS decision growing more heated, one delegate shared that, "one cannot shoot sparrows with cannons, which is what we seem to be doing here." Others noted the existential crisis for UNEP if delegates do not adopt this decision. "I don't believe anyone around the table wants UNEP to no longer function," said one delegate, half-jokingly, but that this is "precisely what would happen if we cannot break this impasse."

Elsewhere on campus, at a press conference, UNEP launched the seventh edition of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO-7). A collaboration of over 287 multi-disciplinary scientists from 82 countries, this report has been billed as "the most comprehensive scientific environmental assessment ever carried out." The report outlines whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches to transform the economy, finance, materials, waste, energy, food, and environment. It speaks of the potential gains that could come from these approaches, including economic gains of USD 100 trillion per year from 2070 onward. However, a summary for policymakers was not approved earlier this year, leaving many questions on how it will impact the uptake of the report by policymakers around the world.

With only a day of negotiating time left, the stocktaking plenary left many wondering whether progress could still be made on the "tough resolutions," with some suggesting that these should be removed from the agenda altogether, instead of "wasting precious time." Delegates are set to work overtime as they strive to fulfil the goal of advancing sustainable solutions for a resilient planet. But a heavier schedule awaits them on Wednesday.

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/iisd-earth-negotiations-bulletin)

