

**UNEA-7 Highlights:
Thursday, 11 December 2025**

The High-level Segment (HLS) of the seventh session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-7) opened on Thursday. Delegates attended a leadership and a multistakeholder dialogue, while also delivering national statements in a parallel segment. Throughout the day, negotiators also met in informal sessions to address outstanding resolutions.

Opening of the HLS

UNEA-7 President Abdullah Bin Ali Al-Amri (Oman) opened the session, and underscored that the theme, “Advancing sustainable solutions for a resilient planet,” is an invitation to redraft the relationship between people and nature, redress balance, and reaffirm our collective responsibility to overcome the environmental and political crises of our times. President Al-Amri noted the draft Ministerial Declaration is aiming to “make resilience our compass,” creating synergies to achieve climate stability and biodiversity recovery, and end pollution. He urged transitioning from fragmentation to integration in global environmental goal implementation, and stressed investing political and financial will in the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) 2026-2029 Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) to enable UNEP’s empowerment of Member States.

Via video message, President of the 80th session of the UN General Assembly, Annalena Baerbock (Germany), cautioned against admiring the solutions for a resilient future without investing in them. Regarding the severe backdrop of compounding human-induced environmental crises, she underscored this is “not the time for alarm, but for actions that match our convictions.”

Noting that interconnected environmental crises are eroding development gains and widening inequalities, Lok Bahadur Thapa, President of the UN Economic and Social Council (Nepal), urged strengthening implementation of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and delivering more integrated support to Member States.

Via video, António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, stressed that UNEA-7 marks an opportunity to invest in resilience, commit to justice, and “remember what we are fighting for,” urging efforts to transform “broken systems,” unite policy with science, and equitably share solutions. Highlighting that Africa, as the birthplace of UNEA, is already leading the way, he underlined that the world must rapidly scale solutions to address challenges ranging from water management and climate resilience, to mining, metals, and the environmental footprint of artificial intelligence (AI).

Stressing that the world expects UNEA-7 to demonstrate determination and solidarity, to make the multilateral system work, and to align words with actions to protect the most

vulnerable, Inger Andersen, UNEP Executive Director, urged delegates to “look beyond the storm” and fix their eyes on the horizon. She highlighted progress at UNEA-7 on coral reefs, the sound management of minerals and metals, sports, and Sargassum seaweed blooms.

William Samoei Ruto, President of Kenya, underlined that a strengthened UNEP working closely with the broader UN system will deliver more coherent, cost effective, and inclusive global environmental governance; and urged Member States to match their presence at UNEA-7 with financial and political support for UNEP. Reiterating Kenya’s full commitment to an international legally binding instrument (ILBI) that addresses the full lifecycle of plastic, President Ruto indicated the country’s readiness to host the resumed meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee in Nairobi.

Credentials: The Assembly took note of the oral report on credentials, which noted that the Bureau had accepted the formal credentials of 73 Members, and credentials information from 94 others. Delegates heard that 26 States had not communicated any information on the credentials of their representatives.

National Statements

Prosper Bazombanza, Vice President of Burundi, Vice President of Burundi, underscored UNEP’s role in strengthening and accelerating the implementation of existing commitments on, among others, biodiversity, climate, and circular economy, alongside driving innovative science-based solutions to the triple planetary crisis.

Sara Aagesen Muñoz, Third Deputy Prime Minister of Spain, stressed that today’s urgent environmental crises are our common responsibility, and result from our historical irresponsibility. Highlighting achievements over the last decade since the Paris Agreement, she nonetheless underlined that the triple planetary crisis is compounded by climate denial, misinformation, and attacks on science that distort our reality and increase harm.

Shina Ansari, Vice President of Iran, underlined the severe environmental consequences of armed conflicts and underscored the potential of UNEA to strengthen multilateralism in support of enhanced environmental cooperation.

The EU, also for Serbia and Ukraine, called for global solidarity to course-correct the pressures on environmental multilateralism. They urged recommitting and reenergizing international cooperation, based on mutual trust, to implement practical solutions to build resilience for people and planet.

Fiji, for the SIXTH FORUM OF MINISTERS AND ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORITIES OF ASIA PACIFIC, reported the Forum’s key messages, including calls to recognize the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. They underlined the importance of the International Court of Justice’s

2025 Advisory Opinion on the Obligations of States in Respect of Climate Change, stressing it is a legal affirmation of small island developing States' (SIDS) right to a secure future.

Namibia, for the AFRICAN GROUP, said that greater political will, flexibility, and commitment should be the beacons of collective efforts to reach shared results, and highlighted the importance of: upholding the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, means of implementation, and respecting UNEP's mandate.

FIJI highlighted the resolution on coral reef ecosystems that they sponsored, noting these ecosystems are on the frontlines of climate impacts, and their survival is inseparable from that of Fiji's communities. NAMIBIA pointed to their incorporation of traditional ancestral knowledge to improve climate predictions and promote adaptation and resilience. ARMENIA welcomed delegates to the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to be held in 2026 in Armenia, where Member States will review collective progress in implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE) emphasized the importance of water security and welcomed delegates to the 2026 UN Water Conference to be hosted by UAE and Senegal. They further reported the 2024 launch of UAE's [Mohamed bin Zayed Water Initiative](#) tackling water scarcity. QATAR discussed their fully fledged national roadmap for sustainable development that strengthens social, economic, and environmental pillars.

The UK underlined their commitment to securing an ILBI to end plastic pollution and welcomed delegates to the 12th Session of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES 12) to be held in the UK in 2026.

BELGIUM underscored that decisions made at UNEA are the core of ecosystem protection and environmental security and announced a contribution of USD 60 million to the UNEP Environment Fund for 2025-2028. DENMARK committed USD 30 million to the Fund, noting that "even in difficult times, we can stand together." FINLAND reported nature-positive national actions and noted that effective multilateralism is essential to tackle the shared global environmental crises, urging support for UNEP's 2026-2029 MTS and Programme of Work (PoW) and budget for 2026-2027.

NORWAY underlined UNEP's broad mandate to work on the entire environmental agenda, allowing for co-benefits while working across issues, and called for a strong, agile UNEP. THE NETHERLANDS reported on circular economy initiatives, particularly related to waste management and better resource management, and called for agreement on a plastics treaty.

STATE OF PALESTINE called for environmental justice considering the ongoing genocide and highlighted the genocide's negative impacts on the environment and people, including restrictions on natural resources and attacks on farmers. SOUTH AFRICA called for moving from commitments to implementation based on the Rio Principles, and stressed scalable finance, technology transfer, and other means of implementation.

SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS rejected any disruptions to UNEP's mandate and stressed recognizing the special circumstances of SIDS. SLOVENIA called for centering scientific transparency and access to data in decision-making and underlined the need for transformative change to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while building on the UN80 Initiative.

BURKINA FASO highlighted the role of youth and children in decision-making and underlined differentiated responsibilities. GEORGIA stressed the need for a peaceful, predictable, and secure environment, noting that peace is a process, policy choice, and commitment.

BARBADOS highlighted a 0.25% tax on personal income to strengthen climate resilience, and the need to improve the international financial system. They welcomed the resolution on massive Sargassum bloom influxes, stressing it as a crisis for the many countries in the region.

TÜRKIYE reported on strengthened early warning systems in response to the 2023 earthquake, and highlighted efforts in building sustainable homes to ensure reduced disaster risk and contribute to climate goals and a circular economy. Calling for the establishment of a UNEA fund for nature, PAKISTAN underlined the need to "do funding differently" by passing the baton to young people to work on solutions to environmental challenges.

Please find additional statements [here](#).

Leadership Dialogue: Why Addressing Environmental Crises is Essential for Human Health

This dialogue was moderated by Antoinette Taus, singer and UNEP Goodwill Ambassador. UNEP Executive Director Andersen illustrated the interlinkages between human, planetary, and economic health, underscoring the known comorbidities of climate change and ecosystem collapse, from food insecurity and air pollution to forced displacement and premature death.

In a keynote address, Queen Mary of Denmark, UNEP Patron of Biodiversity, illustrated the natural world's well-documented benefits to physical and mental health. She lamented that young generations today are born into a climate and biodiversity crisis they are not responsible for, and urged swift, collaborative, and effective action to build a safer, more equitable, and resilient planet.

Steven Victor, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, and the Environment, Palau, drew attention to the traditional practice "bul," which prohibits resource extraction when resources are scarce, thus allowing for recovery. Aluki Kotierk, Chair, UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), highlighted Indigenous food systems as vital to ensuring food security, nutrition, and culturally appropriate food, as well as being better for the environment. IPBES Chair David Obura drew attention to the findings of the Nexus Assessment on biodiversity and health, emphasizing that the more health is integrated with other sectors, the more co-benefits can be generated.

SPAIN noted the development of programmes on One Health, called for investments in nature and environmental health, and urged focusing on emerging diseases. KENYA highlighted a need for evidence-based tools and sound data to guide economic and sectoral policies for preventive action.

UAE highlighted, among national initiatives: comprehensive early warning systems; advanced satellite soil mapping; and AI-enabled climate modelling. HUNGARY pointed to nature-based solutions as cost-effective ways to mitigate health impacts and improve air quality and wellbeing. The UK drew attention to national strategies on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) informed by One Health. AZERBAIJAN detailed plans to implement strengthened climate information and multi-hazard early warning systems.

INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE (IUCN) stressed the human health consequences of activities harmful to the environment. They highlighted nature-based solutions as efficient, multi-beneficial tools. The CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE EXCELLENCE AND

CONSERVATION stressed appropriately valuing farmers' labor, noting their economic distress in current systems, and underlined the multiple links between healthy food, disease reduction, and reduced hospitalization costs. SOUTH AFRICA outlined national efforts strengthening science-based preventative action and policies, including through deepened collaboration among relevant institutions, industry partners, and sectors.

WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH outlined their collaboration with UNEP on animal health systems, and integrating animal health into environmental and climate policies. OFFICE OF THE UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS noted that phasing out fossil fuels delivers clear health and environment co-benefits.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES urged mechanisms that allow solutions to be adapted to each territory, and highlighted inter-municipal mentoring programmes. UN OFFICE FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION said that the World Health Organization Pandemic Agreement exemplifies how global governance can prioritize prevention.

JAPAN emphasized the critical role of disseminating scientific findings to scale efforts and outlined initiatives and partnerships contributing to this nationally and regionally. ALGERIA stressed the wide-ranging geographic, socioeconomic, environmental, and health impacts of sand and dust storms, and highlighted a national reforestation strategy to combat this. KAZAKHSTAN underlined the multiple dimensions of the Aral Sea catastrophe and highlighted their country's recent signing of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.

Multistakeholder Dialogue: Resilience through Inclusive Partnerships

The session was co-moderated by Felix Dodds, University of North Carolina, and Joost van den Broek, UN Deputy Permanent Representative of the Netherlands.

UNEP Deputy Executive Director Elizabeth Mrema underscored that diverse voices bring legitimacy to UNEP's work and that inclusive partnerships are essential to address interconnected global environmental challenges.

Heni Unwin, speaking for Indigenous Peoples, emphasized Indigenous Peoples are not stakeholders but rights-holders, noting that many have centuries-long, not just 5-year plans, and have mechanisms to give back to nature in honor of what is taken. Magash Naidoo, ICLEI, stressed that municipalities are living laboratories for climate and pollution impacts, and that thorough local insights can translate these to MEAs for linkages with policy.

Jennifer Hegewisch, Women and Science and Technology, highlighted the importance of cooperation and synergies to implement UNEA resolutions, providing the example of the quadripartite alliance on One Health following UNEA-5.2, which has, at UNEA-7, enabled a resolution on a highly neglected issue: AMR.

Amanda Ife, Brooke Action for Working Horses and Donkeys, called for integrated governance, community-led design, and stronger animal health systems to build resilient partnerships. Mosese Bulitavu, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Fiji, illustrated stakeholder engagement in developing solutions and building resilience, stressing the need for equitable access to finance.

Mary Creagh, Minister for Nature, UK, stressed that stakeholders hold governments accountable, and highlighted planned efforts to disseminate the IPBES 12 business and biodiversity assessment following its approval. Kristi Klaas, Ministry of Climate, Estonia, stressed accessibility of reliable data and enhanced green skills as a basis for stakeholder engagement,

and noted the need to engage multiple stakeholder networks from the earliest stages for holistic policy outcome.

Jessika Roswall, EU Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy, highlighted that for effective scaling-up of local solutions, we need fast-track replication funds and partnerships with shared ownership of risks and benefits. Sonja Leighton-Kone, Deputy Executive Director, UN Office of Project Services (UNOPS), stated the need to invest in resilience and stressed that communities on the frontline of climate crisis are not recipients of aid, but experts.

SAUDI GREEN BUILDING FORUM called for business to be part of the solutions, enabled through policy space. ANGLICAN COMMUNION noted that the triple planetary crisis is actually one of greed, selfishness, and apathy; stressed the potential of faith-based communities to address these; and lamented the deletion of this work track from the MTS.

Informal Discussions

Negotiators convened in a series of informal discussions throughout the day to reach consensus on outstanding resolutions and decisions, in hopes of forwarding them to UNEA for adoption. The outstanding texts relate to the:

- preservation of glaciers and the broader cryosphere, in particular in mountain regions;
- environmental sustainability of AI systems;
- environmental dimensions of AMR;
- sound management of chemicals and waste;
- 2026-2029 MTS and PoW and budget for the biennium 2026-2027; and
- provisional agenda, dates, and venue of UNEA-8.

In The Breezeways

On the penultimate day of UNEA-7, delegates had a chance to reflect on the year. 2025 brought the adoption of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution, completing the trifecta of science-policy panels on climate, biodiversity, and pollution. This year also drew the world that much closer to the entry into force of the new agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ).

In speeches throughout the day, delegates celebrated these successes. But they were also reminded of the work that remains to confront other global challenges: like the pervasive pollution at all stages of the lifecycle of plastic, the threats and opportunities posed by AI, and the myriad environmental crimes that threaten people and planet. "This is why we are here – this is why UNEA matters," said one delegate, with UNEP Executive Director Andersen adding that, "we are here to write ourselves, and our planet, a happy ending."

With this in mind, and with only one day left, negotiators scrambled to find solutions to outstanding resolutions. "We can't give up," shared one seasoned observer, but "are we too late," wondered another, frustrated by the seeming inability to resolve differences on the "simple resolution" on the dates and venue of the next session. At this late hour, one delegate felt as if they "were teetering on the edge," without a clear way forward on decisions with consequences for the functioning of UNEP. Regardless of the mounting time pressure, delegates running from one negotiation to the next were indefatigable – with one musing that among the questions remaining, is "how will UNEA-7 be remembered?"

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of UNEA-7 will be available on Monday, 15 December 2025 at enb.iisd.org/unea7-ocpr7

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