



Council of the
European Union

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6)
(Nairobi, Kenya, 26 February – 1 March 2024)
- Information from the Presidency and the Commission

Delegations will find in the Annex an information note from the Presidency and the Commission on the above subject, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Environment) meeting on 25 March 2024.

**Sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6)
(Nairobi, Kenya, 26 February – 1 March 2024)**

- Information from the Presidency and the Commission -

The sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6) took place from 26 February to 1 March 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya, under the theme of “Effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.” Draft resolutions, decisions and a ministerial declaration were discussed at the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR), convened from 19 to 23 February 2024. Informal discussions prolonged over the weekend and the most of UNEA week.

UNEA-6 registered a record number of participants and delegations (more than 5600 delegates from 190 countries, and more than 170 Ministers). The EU and its Member States were very well represented with some 302 delegates overall. The Assembly included plenary sessions, high level dialogues on cooperation with Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), leadership dialogues and a multi-stakeholder dialogue. Numerous side events¹ and associated events² took place in parallel, including a Ministerial Breakfast co-organized by the Presidency and the Commission under the theme: “Biological resources and the circular economy: towards a win-win approach”.

UNEA-6 was a very challenging meeting. It was very difficult to reach agreements between widely diverging views in the context of difficult geopolitics, deepening crisis of the multilateral system, together with increasing demand for financial support, and an ever stronger alliance of some of the non-European countries.

¹ <https://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/unea6/side-events>

² <https://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/unea6/associated-events>

At the occasion of the marking of two years of Russian full-scale invasion in Ukraine, the EU and its Member States continued to raise together with other partners³ the issue of the environmental consequences of conflict and disasters and called upon the Russian Federation to immediately cease its hostilities and withdraw all its troops from the territory of Ukraine.

A large number of – extensive – proposals (originally 23 resolutions/decisions) also made negotiations extremely difficult. The Assembly ultimately adopted a Ministerial Declaration, 15 Resolutions and 2 decisions⁴.

The text of the Ministerial declaration fell short of the EU and its Member States' expectations as generally lacking ambition. The declaration does not explicitly refer to the objective to end plastic pollution⁵ nor to the need to address the full life cycle of plastics in the upcoming negotiations of an international legally binding instrument. Moreover, there is no reference to the publication of the Global Resource Outlook 2024⁶ by the International Resources Panel, although the report had been requested by UNEA and by clearly identifying increasing resource use as the “main driver of the triple planetary crisis” and calling for “far-reaching and truly systemic shifts (...) to be implemented at an unprecedented scale and speed”⁷, which makes an important contribution to the debate. Moreover, the messages from the Youth Assembly held prior to UNEA-6 were insufficiently reflected.

However, UNEA-6 achieved some positive outcomes notably with the adoption of the following resolutions:

³ Joint statement from like minded countries delivered on 26 February 2024 by Australia, Canada, Chile, Georgia, Japan, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the European Union and its Member States, and the United States of America.

⁴ <https://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/unea6/outcomes>

⁵ [UNEA resolution 5/14 “End plastic pollution: towards an international legally binding instrument” \(unep.org\)](https://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/unea6/outcomes)

⁶ Full Global Resource Outlook (GRO) 2024 report available here: <https://www.unep.org/resources/Global-Resource-Outlook-2024>

⁷ GRO Summary for policy makers page 9: https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/44902/GRO24_Summary_for_Policy_makers.pdf?sequence=3

- UNEP/EA.6/L.16 - Effective and inclusive solutions for strengthening water policies to achieve sustainable development in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution (*tabled by the EU and its Member States as well as Sri Lanka, whose proposal was merged with the proposal of the EU and its Member States*):

The resolution calls notably upon Member States, inter alia, to implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate and invites them to scale up means of implementation to promote and implement it, in particular in developing countries. It also strengthens UNEP's role by requesting it to, inter alia, scale up action on the protection, restoration, conservation, and sustainable management of water-based ecosystems, to present at UNEA-7 a set of strategic priorities for how freshwater will connect across and accelerate the implementation of UNEP's 2026–2029 Medium-Term Strategy, and for how it engages with the UN system-wide strategy on water and sanitation (i.e. new Freshwater strategy), as well as to enhance coherence between its freshwater activities and other activities across UNEP's divisions.

- UNEP/EA.6/L.18 - Strengthening ocean efforts to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution (*tabled by the EU and its Member States as well as Costa Rica*):

It encourages Member States to consider signing and ratifying the agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) at the earliest possible date. It also requests UNEP, subject to the availability of resources to strengthen, without prejudice to and within UNEP's mandate, the regional seas program to further support regional seas conventions and action plans.

- UNEP/EA.6/L.12 – Sound management of chemicals and waste (*tabled by Switzerland and co-sponsored by EU and its Member States, Mexico, Norway, Peru and Nigeria*):
It acknowledges in particular the voluntary, multi-stakeholder, multisectoral Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste, and invites UNGA to do the same at its 79th session. It further requests UNEP to support the implementation of the Framework.
- UNEP/EA.6/L.8 - Environmental aspects of minerals and metals (*tabled by Switzerland and Senegal and co-sponsored by Armenia, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gambia, Haiti, Sierra Leone, Chad and Ukraine*)
It encourages Member States to promote Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) and establishes a digital knowledge hub to compile, inter alia, existing good practices. It also requests UNEP to develop capacity building and support enhanced cooperation among Member States.

Reflecting the strong focus of UNEA-6 on Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), three resolutions were adopted, respectively on the promotion of synergies, cooperation or collaboration for the national implementation of MEAs and other relevant environmental instruments, the increased cooperation between UNEA, UNEP and MEAs, and the role and viability of regional forums of environment ministers and UNEP regional offices.

Other resolutions adopted focused inter alia on air quality, highly hazardous pesticides, sand and dust storms, land degradation, as well as on environmental assistance and recovery in areas affected by armed conflict.

The following draft resolutions did not get enough support to be finally adopted at UNEA-6:

- Effective, Inclusive and Sustainable Multilateral Actions towards Climate Justice (*Sri Lanka*)
- Development of criteria, norms, standards and guidelines for nature-based solutions (NbS) to support sustainable development (*Cameroon*)
- Mother Earth Centric Actions (*Bolivia- withdrawn on 23/02 and merged with the resolution on sustainable lifestyles*)
- Solar Radiation Modification (SRM) (*Switzerland and Monaco- withdrawn on 29/02*)

It is the second time that a resolution on geoengineering, this time focusing on SRM, was tabled at UNEA without consensus on the way forward. The views appeared too divergent on the framing of SRM, the nature of intersessional work and the role of UNEP.

The EU and its Member States decided not to continue discussions on the proposed resolution on ‘Stepping up efforts to accelerate transitioning domestically, regionally and globally to circular economies’ (tabled by the EU and its Member States) to avoid stepping back on previous UNEA commitments. Although the topic of circular economy was widely discussed and its importance underlined in the many side events, high-level dialogues and the EU ministerial breakfast, and is also the subject of existing alliances in different world regions, there was a strong push in the negotiating room to decrease the level of ambition, which was not acceptable. The EU and its Member States were however pleased to see some circular economy elements reflected in the resolutions on the sugar cane agroindustry (*Cuba*), and on sustainable lifestyles (*India*), although the scope and direct impact of these specific resolutions are limited. Moreover, the promotion of sustainable consumption and production in the resolution on environmental aspects of minerals and metals was a positive development.

As regards the next session, it was agreed that exceptionally, the seventh session of the OECPR and UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-7) will take place on 1-5 December and 8-12 December 2025 respectively. The Assembly also nominated the following UNEA-7 Bureau representatives:

- H. E. Abdullah Bin Ali Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority of Oman, as President
- 8 Vice Presidents:
 - H. E. Fitsum Assefa Adela, Minister of Planning and Development of Ethiopia
 - H. E. Collins Nzovu, Minister of Green Economy and Environment of Zambia
 - H. E. Ali Gholampour, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran
 - H. E. Anikó Raisz, Minister of State for Environmental Policy and Circular Economy of Hungary
 - H. E. Nino Tandilashvili, First Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia

- H. E. Juan Carlos Castro Vargas, Minister of Environment of Peru
 - H. E. Zakia Khattabi, Federal Minister of Climate, Environment, Sustainable Development and Green Deal of Belgium
 - H. E. Johanna Lissinger Peitz, Senior Advisor, Ministry Climate and Enterprise, Government Offices of Sweden.
 - Rapporteur: H. E. Joyelle Clarke, Minister of Environment of Saint Kitts and Nevis.
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