

The European Union and its Member States
general comments to the zero draft of the Ministerial Declaration for the seventh session of the
United Nations Environment Assembly

General remarks:

The European Union and its Member States would like to thank His Excellency Abdullah Bin Ali Al-Amri, President of the UN Environment Assembly and Chair of the Environment Authority of Oman, for preparing the zero draft Ministerial Declaration for the seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7), following the consultations held thus far.

The purpose of the Declaration should be to advance sustainable solutions that contribute to the effective promotion of a resilient planet, acknowledging scientific assessments on climate change, environmental and land degradation, pollution and options for reducing impacts and potential risks, considering also the resilience of people, civil society and key industries and economic sectors (energy, transportation, construction, textiles etc). This document should allow for a focus on concrete examples and solutions.

We believe the document is a good start for further work. Nevertheless, it would benefit from streamlining and the reordering of paragraphs in order to make the text clearer, more logical and concise. There are a few repeating elements scattered throughout the text, that in order to prevent repeated negotiations regarding every related bullet point could instead be addressed exclusively in separate dedicated bullet points: cooperation, integrated approaches, disaster risk management and digital solution/AI – which should be highlighted as crucial cross-cutting issues that have relevance in most topics. Instead of repeating climate, biodiversity, pollution, land degradation and/or other sorts of issues in different bullet points, they should also be addressed in a common one at the beginning of the text. There should also be a distinct differentiation and prioritization between topics of overarching relevance and issues that are rather specific in nature. Transboundary pollution for one, seems to be a topic too specific to be used as an introductory bullet point. We would rather suggest a reference to the importance of the implementation of Agenda 2030, its SDGs and relevant MEAs as an introduction, and a more-encompassing bullet point on all kinds of pollution would be welcomed.

At the same time we may have some suggestions for topics to add.

Remarks to the text:

We think that the Declaration should embody a strong commitment to environmental multilateralism, multi-stakeholder engagement, and to the politically recognised human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. With multiple environmental crises mounting we cannot slide back on the ambitions in environmental protection for many ecological assets, in particular climate, nature land, water and oceans. In that sense, we welcome the current language on the importance of international cooperation; on synergies, cooperation and collaboration to advance MEA's implementation; as well as on the importance of integrated and coordinated approaches to address environmental challenges related to climate change, biodiversity loss, land and ocean degradation and pollution, as well as

chemicals at all stages, from early warning systems, disaster prevention and risk assessment to collective action, as well as slow-onset events such as sea-level rise.

The EU and its Member States welcome the reference to the seventh Global Environment Outlook report (GEO-7) and to its findings, noting the importance of UNEPs work to support countries in addressing environmental issues and to provide clear pathways for national implementation, we believe as one of the major outcomes of UNEA, the declaration should also refer to the UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy for 2026-2029 and Programme of Work for 2026-2027.

In line with the theme of the UNEA-7, the Declaration should send a strong message regarding the need to accelerate sustainable solutions and effective responses to the multiple and interconnected environmental crises and related global challenges, as highlighted in the 2030 Agenda, its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Pact for the Future and its annexes, while bringing forward the interlinkages between environmental protection, social development and inclusive sustainable development for many ecological assets, in particular climate, nature land, water and oceans and, with a view to limited available public resources, strive to unlock new and additional finance from private sources and by broadening the donor base. It should recognise that building healthy and sustainably-managed ecosystems ensures a resilient planet with ecosystem services benefiting everyone amongst others in accordance with a *One Health approach* and highlight the need to promote nature-based solutions as defined by UNEA resolution 5/5.

In the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, previous UNEA Resolutions and UNEA-7 outcomes, it is critical without delay to reorient consumption and production patterns towards sustainability, strengthen the circular economy and promote the sustainable extraction, use and management of resources as well as a sustainable blue economy in order to halt and revert where possible natural resource depletion and to fight environmental deterioration, including climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution including through the sound management of chemicals and waste, as well as deforestation, land and ocean degradation, malnutrition and environmental health-related issues. In line with the UNGA Resolution 79/202, the transition to a circular economy should be recognised as a driver of environmental, social and economic resilience, highlighting i.a. the importance of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns. To this end we need to decouple growth from resource use and its impacts by stimulating technologies and business models that make it possible to reduce resource demand at all production and consumption stages. As highlighted by the results of the IRPs Global Resources Outlook 2024 and in line with UNEA resolution 5/11, Member States are encouraged to integrate circular economy approaches into national and regional strategies and action plans. Therefore the Declaration should also acknowledge the UN SG Critical Energy Transition Minerals Panel and its principles and actionable recommendations.

The development of innovative solutions is particularly important. It should also be noted that reliable, high quality and interoperable data is essential to establish sound environmental policies and regulatory frameworks that facilitate the implementation of circular, resource-efficient and low-impact solutions and business models. Data should also be used for comprehensive risk assessments. These elements should be highlighted in view of the development of UNEP's Global Environmental Data Strategy. Promoting scientific research, science-based standards and policies to limit environmental impacts are key elements for the sustainable development and sound use of technological innovations, digital technologies and artificial intelligence, which in turn need to be used

to advance sustainable development, with due consideration to the precautionary approach and their potential adverse impacts, including environmental and other effects Relevant reports (of IBPES, IPCC, IRP etc.) as well as traditional knowledge should also be drawn upon and environmental education emphasized.

Expressing serious concern that 2024 was the warmest year on record and that impacts from climate change are rapidly accelerating, the Declaration should send a strong signal of will to implement deep, rapid and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in line with 1.5°C pathways: all countries must contribute in a nationally determined manner, according to economy-wide approaches, to avoid recurrence of the global peak of greenhouse gas emissions this year, and rapid cut of greenhouse gas emissions by 43% by 2030 and 60% by 2035 relative to 2019 level. We have to contribute to the efforts set forth in the outcomes of the first Global Stocktake adopted at the 28th UN Climate Change conference in Dubai in order to achieve net zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2050, transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems in a just, orderly and equitable manner, triple renewable energy capacity and double the global annual rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030. Stronger international cooperation and support, including through enhanced mobilization of climate finance from all sources, capacity building activities and technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, will be essential to meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

The EU and its Member States further underline the need for the Declaration to recall the urgent need to implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM GBF) to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030, and call for countries to update their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans in line with the KM GBF and work for significant results in the global review of collective progress in the implementation of the KM GBF which will be conducted during the next biennium. Stronger international cooperation and support, including through enhanced mobilization of biodiversity finance from all sources as well as the creation of synergies between climate and biodiversity finance, where adequate, should be pursued where appropriate.

Building on UNEA Resolution 6/13 „Effective and inclusive solutions for strengthening water policies to achieve sustainable development in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution“, the Ministerial Declaration would benefit from a stronger signal on the need to strengthen international cooperation on water at all levels, and to strengthen sustainable water resources management, which will be critical to achieve a resilient planet, especially in the view of the 2026 UN Water Conference as well as the UN System wide Strategy on Water and Sanitation, The Declaration should send also a strong message about the importance of stepping up efforts at all scales to enhance resilience and promote efficiency in managing water resources in order to limit the variability of the global hydrological cycle and the effects of extreme events such as floods and droughts.

Similarly, the Declaration should send a stronger message on ocean, including by emphasizing the pressing need for the swift entry into force of 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) and its effective implementation as well as highlighting the importance of the work of the BBNJ Preparatory Commission. Reference should also be made to the outcomes of the Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC) taking place in Nice, France, in June 2025. Additionally, the Ministerial Declaration should follow up on UNEA-6 Resolution 6/15 and highlight the key role of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans in ocean governance for example

by confirming the commitment of States with respect to this process. This, also in consideration of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2022-2025 achievements and in view of its update in the next cycle.

Pending the negotiations on an ambitious international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, the INC process - The Ministerial Declaration should also include a stronger call for effective implementation.

We also would like to emphasise the importance of effective protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts and encourage States, international organizations and other relevant actors to take measures to prevent, mitigate and remediate environmental harm related to all stages of armed conflict.

The contributions of women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and local communities to the achievement of Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals should be highlighted also recognizing that women play a pivotal role in sustainable development, including by providing environmental solutions. In general, we would like the Ministerial Declaration to recognize the importance of gender equality and need for full, equal, effective and meaningful participation, representation and leadership of women and girls, as well as persons with disabilities, in the protection of the environment and ensuring that all actions are gender-sensitive.