Resumed Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5.2)

Concept Note for the Leadership Dialogue with the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)

Tuesday, 1 March 2022, 3 – 4:30 p.m. (Nairobi time)
Conference Room 1

I. Introduction

In line with the approved draft structure of the resumed session of UNEA-5 (UNEA-5.2), a Leadership Dialogue with the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) will take place for 90 minutes on the second day of UNEA-5, which is convening under the theme "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the SDGs". The Leadership Dialogue with the MEAs is intended to bring together relevant stakeholders including from across governments, civil society, and the UNEP-administered MEAs (see Annex). The participants are invited to exchange views and elaborate on current and possible future developments contributing to enhanced environmental governance, with a particular focus on promoting coherent and integrated implementation of the MEAs. As stated in the report of the Executive Director entitled *Nature at the heart of sustainable development* (UNEP/EA.5/2) submitted to UNEA, "The success of the fifth session in catalysing action depends on collective leadership, creativity, determination and a willingness to deliver on the commitments already taken. A successful fifth session is bound to generate ripple effects across established cooperative frameworks such as MEAs". The Leadership Dialogue will aim to contribute to this effort to catalyse action and partnership in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

II. Format and approach

The Leadership Dialogue will be held in hybrid format and will be interpreted in all six official UN languages, using the platform "Interprefy". Participants or their assistants or representatives will be required to ensure connection to the platform prior to the Leadership Dialogue and to familiarize themselves with the platform in advance (by participating in one of the dedicated training sessions offered by the Secretariat).

The proposed conference room arrangements for those attending in person are illustrated in the image below:



III. Participation

The Dialogue is open to participation of representatives of Member States, members of specialized agencies, United Nations entities and other intergovernmental organizations and regional economic integration organizations, as well as to representatives of accredited major groups and stakeholders organizations.

a) The Leadership Dialogues will involve the participation of pre-registered Contributing Ministers and representatives of the UN system, including MEA secretariats, and major groups and stakeholders. Those wishing to take the floor during the Dialogue will be invited to register by sending an email to the Secretariat of Governing Bodies indicating so, at their earliest convenience, but not later than 11 February 2022 (communication from the Secretariat of Governing Bodies was sent to Member States on 3 February 2022 with the instructions on how to register for the dialogues). Considering the duration of the Dialogue (90 minutes), participation of up to 10 Contributing Ministers and other speakers are envisaged. They will each have three minutes and will be selected from those registered, according to "first come-first served" basis and taking into consideration balanced gender and geographical representation. Although in-person participation is recommended, contributing speakers may join and participate virtually.

IV. Dialogue Scope

Despite the efforts of the international community, the unprecedented environmental degradation continues in all sectors – from air and land to freshwater and oceans. Environmental challenges are inherently interlinked and reinforce each other – for example, chemicals and waste accelerate biodiversity loss, while biodiversity loss amplifies the toxic effects of pollution on both ecosystems and human health. As reflected in the aforementioned report of the Executive Director, the health of humans, animals and the planet are also intertwined. Environmental degradation such as desertification and air pollution cause higher mortalities and diseases, while marine litter affect the entire food chain. Actions that protect the environment and the wildlife, on the other hand, provide a buffer against antimicrobial resistance and other public health threats. The inseparable linkages between nature and human and animal health have been demonstrated by the recent dramatic emergence of zoonotic diseases and brought to the fore the importance of integrated approaches such as the "One Health".

There is an increasing need to strengthen the implementation of and compliance with the MEAs, including through enhanced funding. This should be paired with improvements in environmental governance through the development of new tools that address the drivers and impacts of environmental degradation more efficiently at all levels. Such integrated approaches are especially crucial in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which are "interlinked, integrated and indivisible".

> "The multiple interactions between environmental problems mean that uncoordinated single-issue solutions are inefficient and likely to fail. An integrated approach that addresses the underlying root causes of interlinked environmental problems and pays attention to unintended consequences of actions is both more cost-effective and more likely to be successful than treating the issues as if they were independent of one another. It further allows synergies to be identified and exploited, while steering away from the worst trade-offs."
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> Source: The first UNEP synthesis report entitled: *"Making Peace with Nature: A scientific blueprint to tackle the climate, biodiversity and pollution emergencies" (2021).*

As the leading global environmental authority, UNEP is well placed to facilitate dialogue, cooperation and action to address the triple planetary crisis in an integrated manner. This includes leveraging the latest science and knowledge to maximize impact on environmental policymaking, including on nature-based solutions. The ongoing processes to finalize the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the strategic approach for the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 also provide timely opportunities to promote cooperation and collaboration.

Guiding questions

1. What concrete steps can governments take to promote implementation of the MEAs at the national level in an integrated manner? What are the key challenges and how can UNEP support?

2. How can governments, through UNEP and the MEAs, work together to catalyse greater uptake of the scientific evidence and other support to facilitate coherent and effective implementation of the MEAs?

3. How could the convening power of UNEA – with its universal membership – be utilized to promote coherent action on global environmental commitments?

V. Proposed Programme

Moderator by H.E. Franz Perrez, Ambassador, Head of International Affairs Division, Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland

- Juliet Kabera, Director General, Rwanda Environment Management Authority
- Judith Torres, Officer of International Environmental Affairs, National Environmental Directorate, Uruguay
- Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, CEO and Chairperson, Global Environment Facility (tbc)
- Elizabeth Mrema, Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity
- Rolph Payet, Executive Secretary, Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions

VI. Outcome of Leadership Dialogue

The Dialogue is expected to highlight concrete ways to strengthen coherent and effective implementation of MEAs at both national and international levels. It will enable elaboration on the type of action governments could take through UNEP and the MEAs to address the interlinked environmental challenges, including by utilizing scientific evidence to promote cooperation and coherence across the global environmental agenda. The Dialogue will result in a summary of the discussion that is expected to be reflected in the proceedings of UNEA 5.2.

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Annex: UNEP-administered Multilateral Environmental Agreements

Global MEAs

1. Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
2. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
3. Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)
4. Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal
5. Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade
6. Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants
7. Minamata Convention on Mercury
8. Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer

Regional Seas Conventions

9. Convention for Cooperation in the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern African Region (Abidjan Convention)**Error! Bookmark not defined.**
10. Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention)**Error! Bookmark not defined.**
11. Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention)
12. Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Western Indian Ocean (Nairobi Convention)
13. Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea (Tehran Convention)

Other Regional Conventions

14. Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa
15. Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Carpathian Convention)