29.2.2024

UNEA-6 HLS opening session
Thursday 29 february 2024

Draft Opening statement
on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

Madame President of the Assembly, Madam Executive Director, distinguished delegates.

It is my privilege to speak on behalf of the European Union and its 27 Member States.

[alignment clause]

2 years ago, UNEA-5 made a lasting mark with the celebration of UNEP@50 and its game changing outcome on the need to end plastic pollution. Since then, landmark agreements on the Global Biodiversity Framework, the High Seas Treaty, the Global Framework on Chemicals, and a first recognition of the need to a transition away from fossil fuels have demonstrated the collective power of nations working together towards a more sustainable future. These are truly significant examples of what environmental multilateralism is capable of.

Unfortunately, this is not the full story.

From the Middle East to the Sahel, from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine to the Horn of Africa, from Haiti to Afghanistan, crises are morphing, and proliferating. Regardless of how conflicts or crises start or end, the environment is always a casualty. EU and its MS remain determined to support UNEP in strengthening its role and mandate in supporting affected countries to respond to environmental consequences of conflicts and natural disasters.

We regret that last Monday the EU and its Member States were the target of accusations based on an incorrect and misleading narrative. The EU and its Member States strongly reject these false accusations. Let us now move on, with the intent of keeping the focus on the work of UNEA and UNEP.

Distinguished delegates

UNEAs theme “effective, inclusive, and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution” could not have been chosen more timely. The urgency to address the triple planetary crisis we face as a global community has never been greater. Only the collective power of all of us working together towards a more sustainable future will suffice. It is what is driving our efforts to agree on the many important resolutions tabled before us. It is also why the first MEA day, which underlined the need of increased cooperation, more synergies and more concerted action on the ground is so important to us.

We are standing at a crossroads. We are facing not one, but a triple environmental crisis: climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. These interconnected threats pose a monumental challenge, demanding bold and immediate action on a global scale. UNEA cannot afford to be a passive bystander.

We have the power to lift it to a higher ground and maintain it as the beacon, showing the direction for the future, where clean and healthy environment is enjoyed by all.

We can unite and deliver meaningful resolutions and uphold a necessary ambition in a forward-looking Ministerial Declaration. A Ministerial Declaration that serves as the key impetus from the environment community to the Summit of the Future later this year.

The need for the Nairobi Spirit to guide our actions has never been greater. For people and for the planet.

I thank you