

UNEA Monitor

UNEA Monitor is a daily newsletter powered by Major Groups during the UN Environment Assembly. The newsletter tracks the most important negotiations and events and delivers the daily news through the lens of civil society.

Major Groups Statements at the opening Session of UNEA 5.2

The nine major groups delivered individual statements at the opening session of UNEA 5.2 on the 28th of February, 2022.

The statements welcomed the resolutions agreed upon during OECPR and initiated work to reach an ambitious text agreement addressing the resolutions currently under negotiations during UNEA 5.2. Statements also covered other environmental issues on the global agenda such as environmental governance, environmental damage caused by armed conflicts, environmental defenders, citizen science, and effective engagement of Major Groups.



Ingrid Rostad delivering NGO MG Statement



Ajay K Jha delivering Farmers MG Statement



Prem Singh Tharu delivering Indigenous peoples and their communities MG Statement



Frezer Yeheyis delivering Women MG Statement



Sunshine Dunstan-Moore delivering Children and Youth MG Statement



Mohamed Abdelraouf delivering S&T MG statement



Margaret Munene delivering Business and Industry MG Statement



Maria Soledad Mella Vidal delivering Workers and Trade Unions Statement

Stories from the Green Room (28 February 2022)

The Green Room is the designated Civil Society space at UNEA-5. The UNEA Monitor is covering some of the Green Room events throughout the week of the Assembly. For the agenda of the Green Room during the UNEA 5 week, kindly visit this link: <https://www.unep.org/events/green-room/unea-52-green-room-events>

1- MGs Dialogue with UN Chief Scientist

Major groups had an open dialogue session with UNEP chief Scientist Dr. Andrea Hinwood. The main topics covered in the dialogue are:

Science communications:

- Scientists need communication training. They need to be at the table, but also need to know how to effectively translate the science in an open and accessible way to reach a broader audience and influence policies—especially among people on the ground.
- UNEP is promoting restoration, which has positive impacts in other ecosystems. Actions taken in the next few years have the opportunity to substantially effect change. The UN also produces a number of flagship reports among the nine major groups. In the past, there was one publication exclusively focused on the youth, but we are looking at ways to represent all MGO updates in each UNEP report.
- We need to continue to be deliberate about understanding our audiences in all communications outreach. Amplifying key messages that resonate most strongly with each individual community is critical. The digital transformation UNEP is preparing to launch will help to address this by, 1) providing a hub to enhance our intelligence and early warnings in the political space, and 2) serving as a space for users to share and consume information. While digital tools will be critical in making information available in real time, we must be mindful not to incite fear in our communities.

Collaborating with business and industry:

- UNEP has collaborated with many groups throughout our process, but we need to enhance mechanisms to broaden engagement with a more diverse range of

decision makers—including business and industry—to broaden usage and embed sustainability in business.

- The partnerships UNEP creates present an opportunity to influence neutrality in scientific work, but the data must be strong. Science must be a safe space which is not influenced by business relationships. We can continue to work on how to achieve both sound science and strong business partnerships simultaneously.
- Industry has expressed a continued desire to stop attacking plastic, claiming it has made our lives better and easier. Instead, they wish to increase awareness and training to better handle plastic waste. The plastics problem is multifaceted, but we have a single-use disposable culture in our society. Responsibility must go back to the plastic producers and their contribution to GHG and climate change. It is still important to reduce, reuse, and recycle, but the responsibility cannot lie on the consumer or other countries where waste is dumped. We must make sure we are not producing plastics that are designed to be used only once.



Social science and UNEP:

- Among the many environmental issues and programs addressing each one, we must look at behavioural and social sciences to see what's effectively creating

community and environmental change. How can we make the global situation tangible at the community level? One major issue is a lack of data representing the environmental impacts on women.

- While we respect the importance of the process, we all experience the frustration and slow pace of multilateral negotiations. Following the process ensures that all parties are represented and in agreement with the approach. We continue to strive for diversity in the viewpoints of our stakeholders, and continue to enhance tools to exchange viewpoints.

2- Protecting Earth protectors - How to ensure that environmental defenders can play their role freely and safely



More than 1000 environmental defenders have been killed in the last 10 years, with many more being under threat in many places around the world. Individuals and groups who strive to protect the environment and to defend human rights relating to the environment are regularly harassed and silenced, subjected to intimidation lawsuits, restricted by repressive regulation and orders, arrested, attacked and even killed.

Global Witness Present Its latest Report which documented the killing of 227

land and environmental activists in 2020 for defending their land and the planet, the highest number ever recorded. Carmen Capriles, Co-Chair of the MGFC, shared about the situation of defenders in South America. We heard from Jonas Vannar, a Sami Indigenous activist from Sweden. David R. Boyd, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, sent a powerful video message addressing the systemic drivers of violence against defenders.

David Magraw laid out recommendations ranging from strengthening UNEP's environmental rule of law work to agreeing on due diligence obligations for companies throughout value chains. Georgina Lloyd from UNEP laid out the programme's work and initiatives and Yves Lador from Earthjustice introduce the new rapid response mechanism for defenders under the Aarhus Convention.

3- Sustainable Solutions to Risky Mine Tailings Management



The event presented perspectives on how to improve mine waste management to prioritize safety in alignment with environmental and social best practices. A diverse panel provided firsthand experiences from local communities and Indigenous Peoples on the impacts of dangerous mining practices, and discussed practical steps to

improve safety and ensure respect for human rights.

The panel opened with Dr. Marcos Orellana, the Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights highlighting the nexus between mine waste disasters and human rights. Chief Judy Wilson from the Union of BC Indian Chiefs spoke about the environmental and cultural impacts of the Mt. Polley mine waste disaster in what is called British Columbia and Elisa Estronioli from the Movement of People Affected by Dams in Brazil presented numerous examples of mine waste destroying ecosystems and violating human rights. Dr. Steven Emerman shared what can be done to improve dangerous practices. The event concluded with an appeal from Hassen Lograt from Bench Marks Foundation in South Africa for the need for community participation in mineral governance and decision making.

The panel's message was clear. Regulators and international agencies need to hold mining companies accountable and ensure safety. Governments, international agencies and standard setters must require community participation and consent in mining projects, and must mandate the use of safer technologies.

4- Animal welfare, environment and sustainable development nexus

The event discussed why the welfare of animals is crucial to protect the environment, achieve sustainable development, and One Health.

For each hour a cow experiences physical discomfort, each cow's daily milk production reduces by 1.5 liters, explained Prof. Xavier Manteca from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, as he elaborated on the effects of animal welfare on food security. His presentation took place as part of a lively discussion on the nexus between animal welfare, environment, and sustainable

development on the margins of UNEA 5 where the first resolution explicitly referencing animal welfare is tabled.



Elaborating on the role of animal welfare for sustainability, Professor Linda Keeling provided key insights from an evaluation of the interconnectedness between achieving the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs) and animal welfare. The results of the study, carried out with veterinarians, animal scientists, and biodiversity researchers, illustrated a close mutually reinforcing relationship between animal welfare, human welfare (good health, reduced poverty and hunger), and biodiversity conservation. See paper.

Also at the event, Dr. Andrea Gavinelli introduced the audience to the European Commission's plan for a fair, healthy, and environmentally-friendly food system. Outlining the EU's Farm 2 Fork Strategy, he stated "better animal welfare improves animal health and food quality, reduces the need for medication, and can help preserve biodiversity". In this regard, he explained the Commission's plans to revise animal welfare legislation, including on animal transport and slaughter, to align it with the latest scientific evidence, broaden its scope, make it easier to enforce, and ultimately ensure a higher level of animal welfare.

Article

Towards a Global Plastics Treaty

Plastic pollution is found everywhere and has an enormous climate impact. It is harmful to human health, destroys ecosystems, and serves as a carrier for potent toxicants that cause cancer and other serious illnesses.

Addressing this requires an international framework because plastic pollution does not respect borders. Fossil fuels, plastic polymers and additives, plastic products and packaging, and plastic waste are all widely traded internationally. In particular, limitations on plastic production require international cooperation to prevent production from one country to another.

Currently, existing treaties cover only a few aspects of the plastic crisis. A new legal instrument, covering the entire lifecycle of plastic, is required to tackle this planetary crisis.

A plastics treaty should focus on three core goals:

- Reducing the total quantity of plastic produced.
- Improving circularity in plastic
- Eliminating plastic pollution in the environment.

Recommendations:

A new treaty must cover the full lifecycle of plastic, from fossil fuel extraction, through production, use and disposal.

Many of plastic's worst impacts, such as greenhouse gas emissions and toxic air emissions, occur primarily during the production phase. Other problems, such as the transfer of toxic compounds into food, happen in the use-phase while non-recyclability of most plastics is an end-of-life issue.

As such, the envisioned treaty should have an open mandate to address any issues relevant to plastic. This will allow it to incorporate new concerns and devise new solutions as science develops.

Moreover, the treaty must be legally binding to ensure compliance and stimulate national policy. It must be well-supported through clear and transparent reporting as well as financial and technical assistance.

By Carissa Marnce, Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternative (GAIA).

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