

## Assessment and lessons learnt from UNEA-3

### Key messages by the European Union and its Member States

The EU and its Member States (EU+MS) welcome the opportunity to assess the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-3) and share views on lessons learnt as a way of improvement of future UNEA sessions.

- On the **UNEA-3 outcome**:
  - UNEA-3 was a success and its results and the preparatory process set a good foundation for UNEA-4.
  - Through the choice of the theme, the Assembly succeeded in attracting public awareness and media coverage. UNEA-3 contributed to reinforce the role of the Assembly as the world's highest-level decision-making body on the environment.
  - The focus on a single theme contributed to improved communication around UNEA and made it more attractive for the press and media.
  - The outcome underlined UNEA's important contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
  - The Ministerial Outcome Declaration (MOD) contributed to the UNEA-3 success story as it sent a strong message about the political will and commitment of UN Member States (MS) to effectively tackle pollution.
  - The role of the leadership and the open process put in place by UNEA President were key in achieving agreement on the MOD and proved to be a good practice for future UNEA sessions.
  - The adopted resolutions provide further guidance on how to proactively address pollution in its different dimensions and show that relevant information and science-based assessments, as well as enhanced cooperation between MS, are essential element to effectively tackle pollution.
  - Communicating UNEA's results to the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) and other UN fora contributes to enhance the environmental dimension of sustainable development, and requires additional coordination efforts between relevant UN bodies.
  - The high number and quality of voluntary commitments, as well as the high level of attendance, illustrate the commitment of UN MS to the Assembly, and showcase the need for choosing relevant and appealing themes for upcoming UNEA sessions.
  - Voluntary commitments made UNEA-3 more action-oriented and contributed to its success, and they should therefore be adequately highlighted and communicated during the implementation period after UNEA-3.
  - Further information from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) about the monitoring and follow-up process on UNEA-3 outcomes (including voluntary commitments from Members and all relevant stakeholders, including the private sector),

as foreseen also by the MOD, would be welcome. This said, double reporting for voluntary commitments previously announced at other fora (e.g. UN Oceans Conference and Our Ocean Conference) should be avoided.

- On the **UNEA-3 preparatory process**:

- The early selection of the theme of UNEA-3, as well as the comprehensive and inclusive processes of developing the background report were fundamental to the success of UNEA-3.
- UNEP efforts to involve all Members, including those who are not represented in Nairobi, in the preparatory process should be supported and continued.
- The consultation process for the MOD, driven by the UNEA-3 President and his team, was very inclusive, transparent and well targeted.
- The early provision of documents, including Executive Director reports, High-Level Segment concept note etc. remains an important element and in this regard UNEA-3 was an improvement as regards previous sessions.
- The late submission of some draft resolutions was unhelpful and did not contribute to a smooth process and constructive discussions. Without prejudice to the rules of procedure, in particular rule 44, late submission should be discouraged. Early submission of draft resolutions will inter alia enable early discussions about co-sponsoring or even merging of similar draft resolutions.
- The number of draft resolutions at UNEA-3 was - also thanks to the choice of one main theme – reduced in relation to UNEA-2. In the future, earlier contacts between Members could help achieve an even more limited number of resolutions that are action-oriented and relevant to the UNEA theme.
- In future early discussions an agreement should be made to ensure that proposing MS liaise and have early consultations with UNEP before tabling any resolutions, in order to secure adequate steering and financing possibilities and therefore paving the way for effective implementation.
- The UNEA Bureau should play a more active role in some occasions, for example with regard of merging draft resolutions and consultations on resolutions with the UNEP
- UNEP's Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) should be further involved in the follow-up of previous sessions of the Assembly and the work programme and budget of UNEP, rather than on the preparation of the resolutions for future UNEAs.

- On the **organization and logistics**:

- UNEA-3 was a one-off exercise implementing the agreed change of cycle, which justified having the 3rd session of the Open-Ended CPR (OECPR-3) organized back to back.
- Having OECPR-3 back to back with UNEA-3 helped keep up momentum as well as saving on money and travel.

- On the other hand, having a back-to-back OECPR and UNEA added to the challenge of preparing documents (including translations) for UNEA-3, but timely submission of resolutions should ease this.
  - In light of UNEA-3 experience and the short time between UNEA-3 and UNEA-4, the back to back model should also apply for UNEA-4.
  - Whether a back-to-back model is appropriate for future UNEA sessions after UNEA-4 is something that should be assessed and decided in due course after UNEA-4.
  - While the EU+MS continue supporting paperless meetings, connectivity and good WiFi service must be ensured at all times during meetings.
- On the **stakeholders engagement**:
    - The strong private sector representation at UNEA-3 was very helpful for establishing a dialogue with industry on policy topics. The United Nations Environment Programme should elaborate a more in-depth strategy for future UNEA sessions in order to engage the private sector in a more structured manner in its activities and in environmental protection in general
    - UNEP should be requested to provide an assessment of the private sector engagement at UNEA-3. Such an assessment should *inter alia* look on how a balanced engagement with both private sector and civil society could be ensured in the future.
    - The timing of the Global Civil Society Forum should be closer to UNEA session in order to maximize the use of the available resources and increase MS participation.
- On the **programme of UNEA-3**:
    - The programme was tight and diverse, covering the most important topics to be addressed towards pollution free planet.
    - The Leadership Dialogues and the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue gave opportunities for interaction with different stakeholders and this should be further elaborated and strengthened.
    - The side events were in general interesting and appealing to Ministers, although unfortunately on a number of occasions they were still organised in parallel with each other.