

Civil Society Statement from Europe for UNEA4 :

Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production

Tallinn, 3-4 September 2018

1. Context

1.1 Our region's responsibility for overconsumption and planetary harm

Our region plays a fundamental role in generating and sustaining global inequality through its model of production and consumption. We have an economic model that is causing global environmental degradation, which takes a heavy toll on human and animal health and welfare, as well as on ecosystems, and which acts as a barrier to the attainment of sustainable development.

Humankind is currently using 1.7 Earths per year. We use more natural resources than the Earth can regenerate, and emit more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than its systems can absorb. The extraction of primary materials has more than tripled in 40 years. The European region and its highly industrialised countries contribute massively to resource depletion and waste generation. A main challenge for our region is to consume substantially fewer natural resources. We also need to achieve an absolute decoupling of resource use and our economic activities.

Addressing this model will require more than technological innovation alone. It will require profound societal change, driven by targeted change and led by in-depth analyses of root causes. Innovation should utilise also the knowledge and experience of the societies as base for the transition. The economic and developmental diversity of our region also underscores the importance of grounding societal innovation on the knowledge and needs of local communities.

1.2 Progress in a challenging political environment

Global environmental challenges require coordinated global responses. Yet we continue to witness disruption to the international order as states pursue their own agendas at a cost to the planet and to us all. We have seen core principles of environmental protection undermined and widespread and ongoing failures to respect, protect and fulfil environmental human rights. Knowledge-based decision-making has been rejected in the face of political expediency, while political pressure and cuts in funding have reduced the space for civil society to perform its vital functions.

This year the global political climate makes UNEA's role more vital than ever. Although we welcome the steps that continue to be made towards achieving the ambition of an agenda setting forum for global environmental challenges, much remains to be done. This includes procedural initiatives, for example to ensure stronger coordination on the environmental dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). But this also requires that UNEA set the global environmental agenda. We also urge states to use the Assembly to push forward meaningful initiatives on environmental rights defenders, environmental security and steps towards a global instrument on plastics.

1.3 The future of the UN Environment Assembly

The delivery of this agenda will require greater emphasis on the role of civil society organisations. It is not just states, international organisations or the private sector that will implement the outcomes. More than ever we need UNEA's outputs to be tailored towards those implementing them at the local level: civil society, including local authorities, grassroots organisations and individuals. These are the people who can build and sustain the societal change that people and planet require, yet UNEA does not do enough to translate and communicate its resolutions and decisions to a broader audience. Those local groups also require support to build its capacity to deliver change. Enhancing public participation will also provide more grassroots solutions for environmental challenges.

An agenda-setting Assembly must also ensure that its agenda is fully implemented. UNEA's resolutions should not just be the responsibility of UN Environment to implement: they are mainly the responsibility of its Member States. Commonly we see engagement during negotiations, then little in the way of follow up. Resolutions are left to UN Environment to implement, and few carry with them specific budgets for their delivery. It is critical that ownership is shared and that states demonstrate leadership, particularly where public and private stakeholders are also expected to play their part. We would prefer quality, not quantity, and for commitments to be properly funded and effectively delivered - an objective that is vital for UNEA's credibility. Where appropriate, this should include funds dedicated to building the capacity for their national and local implementation.

We urgently need a monitoring framework for the resolutions adopted by UNEA and we UNEA should also address methods to monitor the legal implementation of existing multilateral environmental agreements.

The increasing focus on business at UNEA and the change from a Science Policy Forum to a Science Policy Business Forum should be reversed to ensure that the forum prioritises public, rather than private interests. UN Environment is uniquely positioned to promote the science-policy interface and the Forum is one of the mechanisms through which UN Environment can be a driving force in ensuring that the science-policy interface is strengthened globally for public interest.

In our consultation, we chose to interpret the final decision over UNEA-4's theme as proof of states' political investment in the Assembly and its outcomes. However, if it is to add value and contribute towards addressing the challenges we collectively face, the understanding of innovation and the approach to sustainable consumption and production require fresh thinking and action from governments; not just business as usual.

2. SCP as leverage to systemic change

Sustainable consumption and production (SCP) is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For its realisation we need a fundamental change of the production chain to make it sustainable and fair. Our current economic system is based on the unsustainable extractivism of natural resources, the exploitation of cheap labour and low environmental and social standards.

We urge governments to build on the progress already made under the 10 YFP on SCP and to reiterate their support for the programmes through national policy changes and the allocation of resources.

A wide range of instruments are necessary to achieve the transition towards sustainable consumption and production. These include financial and regulatory instruments, behavioural changes inspired through education and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles, a focus on well-being instead of GDP growth, redistribution of wealth, and the equitable sharing of environmental space. For that we need a new narrative on human well-being and economic development, which goes beyond the paradigm of infinite growth and the promise that innovation and technology will allow us to decouple our high levels of consumption from resource use and environmental degradation.

Unsustainable production and consumption are the root cause of environmental degradation and environmental conflicts in our region and around the world, where local communities suffer disproportionately from environmental degradation, pollution, resource depletion or land-grabbing and dislocation. One example from our region has been the growth in mining activities in areas of Central Asia, the Balkans, Caucasus and within the EU itself, which is linked to the ever-expanding demand for raw materials. We have also seen other large scale projects for agricultural, industrial and energy production lead to conflict and environmental degradation.



3. Innovative solutions beyond technical fixes

Innovation is not just the design and production of new things, new products or new means of consumption. Technological or product innovation alone will not decouple us from the excessive resource use that breaches our planetary boundaries. Innovation is not a panacea or magic bullet. Nor will innovation alone lead to the social and economic changes that humanity desperately needs: comprehensive societal innovation that engages all stakeholders at all levels and which identifies and utilises the best existing historical or cultural practices, as well as looking to the future. Even where innovation is limited to new technologies, it must not be restricted to new products, but must also address how they are produced, and their entire lifecycle.

Societal solutions must be built from the bottom up, making use of local and indigenous knowledge, and built through meaningful engagement and the development of trust. There are no easy solutions. Advocating novel solutions to environmental challenges should proceed on the basis of a simple test:

- Firstly, does the innovation do no harm to the environment, humans and animals, now and in the future? (precautionary principle)
- Secondly, does it benefit society as a whole, and not create or exacerbate inequalities?
- And finally, does the proposed approach already exist? If so, first apply transfer of technology to the groups needed, and/or upscale it via policy measures and/or financial investments.

Furthermore, it is not enough just to identify and promote an idea without also addressing the societal conditions or infrastructure that it needs to flourish. We require holistic approaches, informed by and sympathetic to the local context, and not quick fixes and magical thinking.

4. Other emerging issues and ongoing processes

4.1 The Global Pact for the Environment (GPE)

While we welcome the proposed Global Pact for the Environment, we view it as both a risk, and an opportunity. The norms and principles that form the bedrock of international environmental law have been hard fought. In line with the principle of non-regression, it is vital that these standards are not watered down to the lowest common denominator in a new and legally binding instrument. The global political climate is not conducive to the progressive codification of the law at present, and both UN Environment, and those states committed to the project should provide undertakings that they will fight any weakening of the norms that so many depend on. The process towards the Pact should be based on majority voting, and not the consensus model, even if this requires a longer road to universalisation. Space for civil society in any process towards the Pact should be guaranteed, and should mean meaningful procedural and substantive engagement throughout. We are ready to engage in negotiations towards the Pact and have high expectations for its outcome.

4.2 Treaty on Business and Human Rights

Voluntary measure and corporate social responsibility schemes have failed to provide a solution for the negative social and environmental impact of corporate behaviour. Sustainable consumption and production can only be ensured if we strengthen the legal framework for corporate re-

sponsibility and accountability. We call on governments to enshrine mandatory due diligence to avoid the negative effects of business practices on human rights and the environment. In August 2018, a zero draft for a Legally binding instrument to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises was presented by a Human Rights Council working group. We call on governments to engage constructively in this process and to ensure that the international legal framework for corporate accountability is strengthened.

4.3 Environmental security

We welcome the leading roles that the EU and regional Member States continue to play in promoting environmental security themes at the UN Security Council and in their development and assistance policies. For countries affected, whether this is managing conflicts over resources, addressing the direct environmental damage caused by hostilities, or the collapse of the state's capacity for environmental governance and oversight, the consequences for people and ecosystems can be profound. Technological and policy innovation are vital for addressing environmental security. New tools and methodologies for the remote collection of environmental data in insecure settings are already informing humanitarian and environmental response, while innovative approaches to the sustainable and equitable management of natural resources offer potential for building and sustaining peace. UNEA has emerged as a leading forum for addressing the environmental dimensions of armed conflicts, and UNEA-4 is an opportunity to showcase innovative approaches for addressing the resilience and environmental security of communities.

4.4 Environmental defenders

In situations of environmental conflict, such as those over mining, the lives of environmental defenders are placed at risk. Nearly 200 environmental defenders were killed in 2017 - and the annual death toll has risen fourfold since civil society and the media began compiling data in 2002. Many more environmental defenders suffer from threats, defamation, strategic lawsuits against them or simply cuts in funding or restrictions on the receipt of funding. We welcome UNEP's recent efforts to support environmental defenders and call on governments to ensure the safety of those fighting to safeguard the environment and environmental rights, and to provide an enabling environment for their activities.

Concretely, it is alarming that many countries are using different versions of "anti-terrorist legislation" (or anti-development) to prevent environmental organisations from accepting donations from abroad or even speaking up on behalf of the environment. UNEP should negotiate a resolution to discourage member states from enforcing this kind of legislation on environmental grounds.

Concrete proposals on:

I. Sustainable consumption and production

Key requests:

- *Only products that can be safely and sustainably reused, repaired, recycled or composted, can be produced*
- *True cost accounting in every part of the production chain*

All kind of economic activities are using natural resources and/or are emitting waste or greenhouse gases (GHG). Fossil fuels are still the main base for any production and the main source of CO2 emissions. As we have to deal with planetary boundaries, there is no escape from regulation of the use of those resources and limit as much as possible waste and GHG emissions. We need to make a transition from fossil fuels to renewables.

The following **instruments and principles** are needed to achieve sustainable production:

- Taking the 'good governance' principle seriously and ensuring comprehensive involvement of environmental authorities, stakeholders, and the scientific community
- Enforcing all the existing multilateral Environmental agreements and implementation of UNEA resolutions
- Implementing clear regulations, legal frameworks and rule of law, corporate and governmental accountability and transparency
- Implementing legal strategies to incentivize limiting the total environmental impact of our production system, such as Integrated and Extended Producers Responsibility schemes, by making the manufacturer responsible for the entire life-cycle of the product and especially for funding the take-back, recycling and final disposal.
- Redefining the shareholder value law/regulation to avoid production based on 'maximise profit' and instead to promote production based on 'societal benefit and environmental benignity'.
- Applying the precautionary principle. Regulation of the market: banning environmental damaging products in the market from entering it in the first place. If there is no proof of their compatibility with environmental regulation, "No data, no market".
- Internalising social and environmental costs (at the source) and apply fair pricing.
- Using financial instruments: tax shift from labour towards environmental use / global taxes such as the border adjustment tax to tax products from those countries that try to fight climate change.
- Invest in Education for Sustainable Development programmes in regular and non-regular education.
- Level playing field: high ambitions, no double standards between developed and developing countries.

Moving towards a **Circular Economy** that must be toxic-free and fossil-free (absolute decoupling / from efficiency towards sufficiency) measured and enabled through:

- Energy and resource management at all levels of production

- Defined set of indicators should be enforced in their use
- Promoting the development of full and standardised life cycle analyses to assess environmental performance and develop a correspondent indicator of products, services and new technology developments; this should be facilitated through guidelines, training and public domain software
- Development of guidelines to develop a standardised 'Material flow analysis' that will consider a total material footprint, including notably extraction and related unused material
- Sector strategies associated with targets for resource productivity and circularity
- Reporting of enterprise level indicators (resource productivity and pollution intensity) as a tool for monitoring the environmental performance of enterprises
- Preferring products with certain safely recycled content over products from primary raw materials through procurement or other measures
- Avoiding exploiting geographic externalities: in weaker economies with weaker standards, lower labour costs should not be disproportionately burdened by environmental harm
- The circular economy cannot be used as rationale for externalizing costs of proper waste management by export to weaker economies for unsustainable or sham recycling.
- Standardising products, setting up basic/minimal environmental criteria for products, including information on the products and the implementation of the right to know
- Including mainstream resource efficiency and eco-innovation in national SME support strategies and programmes, including financing mechanisms

Maximising the prevention of waste and hazardous characteristics:

- Truly promoting the waste hierarchy, starting with prevention (including through refuse and redesign), reduction, reuse, before recycling and recovery; and finally, when waste is unavoidable, responsible recycling and recovery.
- Supporting the development of waste valorisation - value-added creation of waste streams - starting with high-ranked valorisation routes (such as high-end waste-biobased products like pharma products, biopolymers), disinsentivising lower-ranked routes such as landfilling and incineration.
- There is a need for clear common definitions of waste and recycling practices of end of waste criteria (i.e. from the Basel Convention)
- Understand that 'wastes' as defined by the Basel Convention are 'resources' as a way to enable bioeconomy strategy that reconciles food security with the sustainable use of renewable resources for industrial purposes, and to develop industrial ecology. For instance, manage biowaste to produce soil improvers, promote industrial symbiosis.
- When waste is recycled, workers shall be protected from exposure to hazardous substances and recycled products shall be free from toxic substances.

In particular, we have identified the following key sectors to implement sustainable production:

Energy

We need an energy transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy. The goal is to achieve a 100% **sustainably produced renewable and accessible energy** to each city and each business, without recurring to unsustainable types of biofuels and dangerous hydropower plants. This transition should go hand in hand with an **overall reduction** of energy use in absolute amounts, using

energy quotas, and a **phase out of subsidies for fossil fuels** and nuclear energy. National plans for energy transition and energy management shall be put in place.

Electronics

The production of electronic products relies heavily on water, oil, chemicals and metals. Electronic products should be **designed** and produced to eliminate the human and environmental exposure to hazardous chemicals across the products' lifecycle. Additionally, all manufacturers should assume that at end-of-life all plastics will not be openly burned as is the common end fate in developing countries, and avoid the use of halogens and harmful additives.

Countries shall implement clear regulations and incentives for ecodesign, including individual producer responsibility (IPR), long term warranties, leasing/service models, and end-life-product responsibilities, in order to ensure a long life of products and combat planned obsolescence. For their realisation we should consider incentives (such as tax or others) for business models based on sharing, reusing and repairing, such as 0% VAT on repair work. Further repair should be a commercial and consumer right, with manufacturers required by law if necessary to make **repair** data and manuals available and avoid designs that are difficult to repair or recycle. Products should be designed to utilize post-consumer waste in the products.

When an electronic product is at the end of its life cycle, it should be recycled or disposed of in the country where it was used, in an **environmentally sound manner**, and not sent to developing countries via false claims of "repairability or recycling or bridging the digital divide".

The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal and its Ban Amendment obligations and requirements must apply for all transboundary shipments unless the equipment is tested and first proven to be fully functional.

Chemicals

Countries need to prevent and minimize the adverse impacts of chemicals on human health and the environment across their lifecycle. This should be achieved by adopting and implementing legislations that **prohibit or control** chemicals **before** they are placed in the market, such as the REACH Regulation. Countries shall implement the **right to information** on hazardous substances and wastes: information on chemicals shall be publicly available and accessible, enabling people to make informed choices.

As noted by the UN Special Rapporteur on Toxics, one worker dies every 15 seconds from exposure to toxic substances at work: countries and businesses shall protect workers and people's health by implementing strict control on **occupational exposure** or all toxic substances. Companies exposing their workers to toxic substances should be held accountable.

Countries should adopt and/or review and systematically update the Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers.

We call on countries to implement the existing conventions on chemicals and waste, and to constructively engage in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) beyond 2020 process. We also call on the phasing-out of hazardous pesticides.

Plastics

Despite the attention gathered by the 'plastics crisis', the global rate of the production of plastic is growing. Better waste management systems and recycling will not be sufficient to address plastic pollution. We call on countries to **limit the use of single-use plastics and the overall production of plastics**. This can be achieved through measures such as: better regulation to phase out avoidable single-use products, minimization of packaging (through taxation) and promotion of products in bulk-packaging free, increase the recycling content on plastic products and consider include use of biobased materials from waste resources (e.g. crop residues, avoiding land

competition between food and crops for bioenergy/bioproducts), and environmentally safe recycling of unavoidable plastics when prevention and reuse cannot be implemented.

We call on countries to finally adopt a mandate for the creation of a new and effective multilateral framework on plastic pollution at UNEA-4.

We need new production and material solutions to avoid **microplastics** from wear and tear of car tires, paints, cosmetics and technical clothing.

In order to reduce plastic pollution, countries should control trade in plastics by placing plastics on Annex II of the Basel Convention requiring prior informed consent (PIC) prior to export.

Food and agriculture

Since intensive livestock systems contribute to many problems affecting health, food security, the environment and animal welfare, we need sustainable food systems. We need to promote production systems using **closed cycles** (circularity, agroecology, organic agriculture), and which **treat animals ethically**. The **polluter pays principle** shall be used for agricultural inputs to restore damaged eco-systems, a ban should be introduced on hazardous pesticides and fertilizers, as well as the termination of current subsidies for resource-depleting and environmentally damaging practices and products.

Our food systems should be made **resource-efficient**, thereby encouraging the reduction of meat and dairy consumption, using organic fertilisers (e.g. manure, other by-products), using biobased products such as biopesticides, and using techniques such as crop rotation to promote nitrogen and carbon cycles. We call on countries to promote **small-scale production**, thereby improving the livelihoods of the rural population, food security and even economic development as opposed to industrial farming, environmentally damaging trade practices (such as livestock fed by imported soy or palm causing deforestation, pollution of water, products containing unsustainably sourced palm oil) shall be eliminated, as well as subsidies for environmentally damaging production methods (like fertilizers).

Companies should **minimize the amount of packaging** used for the production of food and provide a clear and honest labelling with information about environmental footprint and method of production. In order to move to a sustainable agricultural model, **patents** on living organisms such as seeds **should be avoided** and instead there should be a promotion of seed exchange among farmers.

We call on countries to establish **independent training** and extension services for farmers and processors on sustainable production methods.

To ensure safe reuse of wastewater, **agricultural pollution of water sources has to be halted at source**, by fully closed cycles and transition to agro-ecological practices that exclude synthetic pesticides and fertilizer.

II. Societal innovation

Key request:

- *To unleash the potential of human interaction and creativity, governments must create the conditions for which social innovation can flourish within, removing the barriers that prevent the co-creation of new ideas that are designed, implemented and enforced by diverse and representative communities.*

Societal innovation is the process of creating and implementing effective policy solutions that address the societal and systemic change we need to solve the environmental issues we are facing today. We believe that ahead of UNEA-4, greater emphasis should be placed on the deep, societal change that address the root causes of the problems. Societal change should be recognised as a key leverage for achieving sustainable lifestyles.

We believe that discussions so far ahead of UNEA-4 have focused too much on new technological innovation. Whilst this is extremely important, it will not transform on its own the economic systems. We must review the concept that innovation always needs to be forward thinking, full of creations and ideas towards a future society that do not exist today. Social innovation can and should include reviewing policies and cultural behaviours of the past. Whilst we need to address the profit-driven nature of societies, social innovation must focus on ending the mass over-production and depletion of natural resources.

We hope that one of the outcomes of UNEA-4 will include an agreement from member states on the importance of creating and facilitating an enabling environment needed for societal innovation to flourish. These include but are not limited to:

- Enshrining environmental safeguarding throughout all public procurement processes across all levels of governance, from supranational to the local. As well as traditional procurement for goods and services, this must also include public procurement decisions on public planning, development and infrastructure decisions. Initiatives, products, ideas and organisations which enforce higher sustainable practices must be prioritised within this procurement evolution.
- Ensuring that individuals can access environmental data and information throughout the whole production chain. This is a key factor for social innovation and a necessary tool for empowering citizens. Governments must be bold and promote awareness on the products and goods that have the biggest negative impacts on our environment, such as the intensive factory farming of livestock.
- Citizen education is an important tool for social innovation that must be recognised by governments. Education plays a critical role in providing the skills needed for citizens to effectively empower themselves to lead on finding and supporting new ideas for the protection of our environment.
- Governments must continue to introduce more incentives that promote and encourage sustainable practices from the bottom up. Public policies should be introduced throughout all levels of governance which encourage the consumption and production of goods/services that are more sustainable and ethical.
- Access to funding and resources must also be shared equally throughout society. For social innovation to flourish, a level playing field must be created for sustainable businesses and citizens' initiatives of all sizes wishing to access funding and upscale their initiatives.

- Acknowledging the fact that we all have a responsibility to change our consumption and production, shifting from our current 'throwaway' culture towards more circular economies and acknowledging that these responsibilities differ depending on the role we play within society. To facilitate social innovation that is multi-stakeholder and cohesive, clear guidance and support should be given to all actors on their responsibilities within society and how they can take the necessary steps to act more sustainably - including individuals, small and medium businesses, local municipalities, community groups, multinational corporations and national governmental departments.

III. UN Environment's corporate partnerships

Key request:

- *It is important that UN Environment put strong focus on sustainable social-ecological initiatives coming from the field. Cooperating with small and medium enterprises, start-ups and civil society organisations will provide a huge leverage for achieving social innovation that will lead to sustainable lifestyles.*

There is little transparency on UNEP's partnerships with the private sector. The list of partnership agreements is not easily accessible to the governments or civil society. For example, rumours have been heard that UNEP has spent lots of money on paying a global car company (Volvo oceans race) and has a partnership with Coca Cola - one of the biggest contributors to plastic-bottle pollution worldwide. Neither Volvo nor Coca Cola are an example of positive sustainable development action. Corporations are aimed at maximizing profit for their shareholders. Since the United Nations' aim is to work for people and planet, let's keep that focus clear.

Large corporations have been evading taxes and not paying for the environmental harm caused by their production. Instead of providing such corporations with the benefit of positive marketing by 'partnering' with UNEP, there should be a policy to hold corporations accountable for damage done and stop tax evasion.

Therefore, UNEP should only engage in honest partnerships and first and foremost:

- **Demonstrate** where a proposed or existing partnership adds value and is not incoherent as measured against the 2030 Agenda; and show that the UN values espoused by the partnership are communicated and internalized.
- **Promote** a holistic approach to SDG implementation, and safeguards against collaboration that advances a particular goal at the expense of another - for example, partnerships that reduce CO2 emissions, but increase toxic emissions, should not be eligible.
- **Focus** on innovative, truly environmentally sustainable, socially responsible start-ups including initiatives by NGOs and local groups that need the partnership with UNEP to be of benefit to people and planet.

We recommend that UNEP partnerships should be based on principles including

- Ambitious transformative and clear goals
- Transparency and full disclosure of investor relations
- Truly environmentally and socially sustainable objectives
- Fair power relations between partners

Unequal distribution of political power is often problematic in partnerships, e.g. between global corporations and small businesses. Less financially powerful partners need to be given an advantage point and need support from by UNEP e.g. in creating larger groups and supporting financially intermediate organisations such as EREK network (European Resource Efficiency Knowledge Centre).

At UNEA-4 positive partnership development activities could include:

- Matchmaking for innovative social environmental start-ups/initiatives.
- Focusing on socially responsible start-ups and local businesses that are in-line with SDGs. At UNEA-4, extend the EXPO and great matchmaking marketplace to bring start-ups in connection with impact investment funds.
- Showcasing best practice and examples from previous existing partnerships. For instance, the global beauty brand The Body Shop, worth hundreds of millions of dollars, has partnered with the campaigning NGO Cruelty Free International, recognising the collective skills and experiences both bring to the partnership. The result is an **8 million signature petition** calling for an end to cosmetics animal testing. This indicates that consumers worldwide are increasingly aware about their sustainable purchasing collective power.
- Focusing on start-ups and initiatives on SCP themes relevant to the negotiations, for example local start-ups that produce alternatives to
 - single-use plastics such as non-plastic bags and packaging (so that SUP ones could be banned) such as
 - menstrual/absorbant products which are reusable and reduce plastic waste.
- Focusin on problem statements e.g. sourcing zero waste solutions (i.e. organise a hackathon to look at solutions).
- Directing funding to increase the ability to lobby. Funds should be directed through funding pool with independent decision-making body will help to reduce greenwashing and influence on policy decisions by corporations.

Local partnerships embedded in local best practices could include:

- Using existing initiatives (10YFP SCP / One Planet Network, innovation labs, Blue Economy, Civil Society initiatives etc.) to ensure environmental sustainability.
- Local green public procurement - lead by example. E.g. No plastics, no asbestos, no pesticides...
- Local innovation funds for groups, start-ups (more flexible) - combination of innovative labs, private sector, NGO funding to very local practical solutions (i.e. local landfills, recycle plants, businesses). This should also be done in developing countries (e.g. currently Nordic impacts funds go to Nordic start-ups in developing countries).

4. Environmental Issues facing EECCA countries

Civil society organisations in the EECCA region endorse all proposals written above but want to express their special concern on the low level of governance in their countries and especially with regards to environmental management. Insufficient levels of development of democracy predetermines a high level of corruption, pressure of oligarchs, insufficiently effective environmental management and weak implementation of international environmental conventions.

They also worry about loss of respect for human rights and civil society activity in the region, the weakening of “normal” NGOs in favour of “project” NGOs, the strengthening of GoNGOs by the states to neutralize or ignore the impact of ‘normal’ NGOs, the introduction of new regulatory rules creating obstacles in environmental rights protection and a lack of reaction by the authorities on public signals on violation of environmental rights. We call on UNEP to make an analysis of the situation in EECCA related to environmental rights and environmental civil society in general.

- We call on UNEA to formulate the principle of integrating basic human interests into the making of any decisions and documents. Citizens and their environment should be at the centre of all changes and the measure of any process.
- We urge UNEA to take a strong role in the dialogue between the countries that are part of the One Belt, One Road (Silk Road) initiative - between China and the EECCA region - to ensure that sustainable production and the diffusion of green technologies are central to this initiative and do not lead to environmental harm. The Silk Road activities in the EECCA / European region should be in line with the environmental conventions under UNEP and UNECE to which Parties have ratified. Civil Society organizations should be more strongly involved in this dialogue. Asian Investment Bank and other international financial institutions should work on transparency and sustainable development principles.
- There is a need to support the national statistical committees of the EECCA region in the development and implementation of statistical indicators and data collection systems.
- UNEA-4 should encourage Governments to give high priority to continuing education and public education for sustainable development (ESD), in particular on sustainable production and consumption issue. We express our concern about the decline in ESD activities in the EECCA region and therefore call upon UNEA to organize a platform for inter-sectoral dialogue (with the participation of the Ministers of the Environment, Education, Economics, Education) for the EECCA region to develop targets and tools for their achievement.
- We underline the particularities of ecosystems of the extreme regions (vulnerable and non-self-restorative ecosystems like mountains, deserts and arctic zones). This subject has been repeatedly mentioned in the documents of the UN or UNEP. Nevertheless, these regions have not become an object of special policy in the UNEP programs. Special attention should be paid to the land-locked mountain countries. Mountains are the areas where water resources are formed and areas of rich diversity of valuable and endemic cultivated plants, including habitats of wild relatives of cultivated plants. To create favourable conditions for the preservation of local varieties is of high importance. In this regard, the promotion of indigenous knowledge and traditional sustainable lifestyles is of importance. Mountains are often rich in minerals, including metal ores. The governments mostly are not complying with environmental requirements related to mining activities. As a result, subsoil exploitation has an extremely negative impact on the environment – biodiversity, air, soil, water resources, and also on human health, and not only in mountain ranges, but also in regions located lower in height.

- To revise “green” approach towards hydropower infrastructure
- The region required extra support to improve CSOs capacity building and engagement related to UNEA-4.
- UNEP offices on EECCA countries (Moscow, Almaty...) should be more proactive in co-operating with NGOs and develop grants programmes to support NGOs activity related to UNEA/UNEP activities.

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