

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.

Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives Aiming to Finish Resolutions

On Monday, March 4th, the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR) started its discussions and negotiations in preparation for the 4th UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-4).



In the plenary session, the national delegates considered a number of reports from the UN Environment Secretariat as well as UN Environment's budget and program performance, including the implementation of previous UNEA resolutions. In addition, there were consultations on the ministerial declaration in the plenary.

UNEA-4 has the highest number of draft resolutions (more than 30 divided into five clusters) ever presented, plus a draft Ministerial Declaration.

The negotiations are still ongoing on all resolutions, and Member States continue to have different opinions on many bracketed texts of the resolutions. In addition, some countries question if UNEA is the suitable forum to discuss certain issue areas, such as geoengineering, which is put forward by the resolution of Switzerland. Although a number of parallel informal meetings have been set up to speed up the negotiations, it is possible that the delegates have to work over weekend to finish the work that need to be delivered to the ministers next week.

Major Groups Overcomes Challenge of Participation at UNEA-4

On Tuesday, March 5th, negotiations on the Gender and Environment resolution at UNEA-4 were suddenly interrupted by the request from the African Group that all accredited observers leave the room. The Women's Major Group representatives had just asked the Chair for the floor to make a statement of support for this important resolution. The request of the African Group surprised several Member State Delegates, and a legal expert of UNEP was called in to explain the rules and procedures for informal meetings such as this meeting.

Despite the Chair's eventual decision to remove the Observers from the negotiations, this incident served to clarify the rules that allow the participation of major groups in UNEA. Informal meetings are open to observers and it is always at the discretion of the Chair to invite them to take the floor. The UNEP legal expert also recalled that observers are not negotiators, and their interventions should be general in nature. He further recalled that if there is a strong objection by a member state, then the Chair can ask Observers to leave.

The Women's Major Group also had a chance to speak with the African Group, and later in the day, the African Group pulled back on their objection. Accredited Observers are again actively contributing to discussions and offering valuable perspectives from major groups.

The Major Groups are thankful to the Member States that this confusion was quickly resolved. Having a shared understanding of the rules is necessary for effective participation in UNEA-4 and its associated meetings.

18th Global Major Groups and Stakeholders' Forum Day One Reflections

On Thursday, March 7th, Global Major Groups and Stakeholders' forum opened with a reflection on the situation for Major Groups and Stakeholders since the 3rd UN Environment Assembly to present with a look toward the future. This reflection continued into the afternoon before the breakout sessions with a focused discussion on the engagement at UNEA-4 by the MGS. Inviting a dialogue with the UN Environment Executive Director was another point of discussion by the Major Groups and Stakeholders.



The Forum highlighted the following issues, including the:

- critical role of Major Groups and Stakeholders for innovation and change,
- Major Groups and Stakeholders as key actors implementing UNEA-4 resolutions on the ground;
- importance of ensuring broad and inclusive participation by stakeholders and the responsibility of the participants in the room to represent those who were not able to come; need for increased political attention to biodiversity;
- overall challenges of the implementation of resolutions;
- limited financial resources for supporting civil society participation and the smaller number of civil society participants in UNEA-3 than UNEA-4;
- trend of rolling back the role of women as human rights and environmental defenders in UNEA resolutions;
- environmental challenges of poverty;
- importance and role of local governments in cities; and

- eco-innovation as a strategic approach to influence the entire value chain. The day included an address by Mr. Siim Kiisler, the Estonian Environment Minister and UNEA President. Mr. Kiisler who in his address thanked the Major Groups committee for facilitating the meeting. According to Mr. Kiisler, the voice of civil society



matters, particularly as its role is increasingly being recognized and valued. The work of the Major Groups and Stakeholders will make a difference. It is easy for Governments to make general statements, but concrete commitments and deadlines are complicated. For Mr. Kiisler, meaningful gains in environmental change are defined by collaboration that in turn requires active participation, and consistent funding is essential.

The afternoon session considered solidarity, the economy and community initiatives. This included a discussion on union attitudes to transition to a more sustainable future; community initiatives, and the way in which associations develop out of community groups to bring pressure and develop initiatives; efforts in India to address needs and consequences of menstrual products; inclusive multilateralism as a means of bringing change, and the need for better means of to facilitate knowledge exchange based on experience and learning from implementation; the need to support smallholder farmers in their efforts to grow food in a sustainable way; and finally marine and coastal protection via the focused involvement of local groups.

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