

Input on the Ministerial Declaration of UNEA-5 From the Center for Environmental Concerns – Philippines

The current COVID-19 pandemic has shown that inspite of the advanced technology and previous experiences, there is a lack of focus on people’s health, welfare and the environment. This has exacerbated the existing dire situation of the poor and vulnerable sectors with many dying of the disease and experiencing hunger. The ever-rising profit-oriented unsustainable resource extraction and destructive activities have exposed us to emerging infectious diseases. Moreover, the people in the frontlines of environmental defense are still being attacked. There are cases of killings, arrests, harassments and vilification that hinders environmental defenders from protecting the environment, a job that is primarily the responsibility of the State. They are have been working for the achievement of many Sustainable Development Goals such life on land, life below water and climate action, among others.

With this, we see that the Environment Assembly needs to take decisive measures to hold governments and the business sector accountable for their actions affecting the environment. This includes not only legal action but also compelling them to rehabilitate the environment and provide just compensation for the communities that they affected. Aside from these, there should be changes in neoliberal policies that allow these kinds of operations. Furthermore, the recognition and protection of environmental defenders should be ensured by establishing policies and mechanisms that they can utilize to prevent and address attacks against them. All of this is in the essence of environmental justice and human rights.

