



UN Major Group for  
**Children and Youth**  
the space for children and youth in the United Nations

## Part 1 of Submission from the Major Group for Children and Youth to UNEP toward

### *First Informal Substantive Consultation Meeting on UNGA Resolution 73/333*

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The Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP (UNEP - MGCY) is pleased to make this submission on the implementation of the GA resolution 73/333. Constituted in 2014 through the UNEA Rules & Procedures, UNEP - MGCY serves as the formal engagement mechanism for youth and young organisations in the processes of UNEP and allied avenues.

As we lead into the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Conference on Human Development, it is crucial for us examine our progress in achieving Agenda 2030, how (over 600+) MEAs are “delivering”, what gaps need to be addressed, and how can we further mainstream engagement of children and youth while doing so. The submission therefore captures our views on implementation of GA resolution 73/333 in follow-up of report from resolution 72/277 processes.

The youth constituency also takes this opportunity to further reassure the Presidency, the co-chairs of the CPR, and the Secretariat of our continued support in the lead up to UNEA-5 and other engagements.

*- submitted on behalf of the constituency by -*

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## **General comments**

As we move toward UNEA-5 and Stockholm+50, there are four key areas we want to draw focus on.

- The political declaration mandated for UNEA-5, the follow-up to GA res 73/333 and the Stockholm+50 process need to be addressed in conjunction and not on different tracks
- Focus must be laid on how to increase the relevance of the UNEP system as a whole. Work of UNEP, including UNEA needs to be communicated better to the external audience - both to advance the focus on pertinent issues and to also increase further standing of UNEP within the common public
- Mainstreaming MEAs of UNEP and stakeholder groups associated with them needs to be a key priority, both in the lead-up to Stockholm+50 and when consolidating instruments as part of the GA res 73/333 implementation
- In light of COVID 19, with several of international negotiations postponed - including those under auspices of UNEP, such as the BRS COP, the SAICM meeting, etc, - we underscore the importance of keeping all options on table for UNEA-5, including its postponement to a more suitable date during 2021. An inclusive and participatory UNEA is foundational toward the success of UNEP and its custodian institutions.

### **On engagement with Major Groups and Stakeholder constituencies :**

- MGCY supports expanding the outreach to bring a diverse range of groups on the table, however, this outreach and engagement need to be done together with the right-holder Major Groups and Stakeholders, which should have early and structured engagement in the lead-up to and at the Stockholm+50 commemoration
- This includes suggestions such as hosting a large MGOS Forum (similar to ones in UNEA) in lead-up to Stockholm+50, providing space for regional and thematic consultations self-organised by constituencies, including virtual ones
- Engagement of different actors needs to be inclusive and right-based by design, and not by chance, so the government of Sweden and Kenya must work together with MGS to step up support and their involvement

### **On youth engagement:**

- MGCY, through its diverse range of member organisations, proposed to take lead on developing a consolidation of environmental laws and policies (both national and intergovernmental in nature) that focus on children and youth issues
- Specifically on Stockholm+50, we are committed to hosting youth preparatory event before the main event and consultations (including virtual) in the lead-up
- We further advocate for evolving narrative of engagement of young people from just being a stakeholder group, to being agents of change and the group that needs to be empowered and included in the implementation process early and in a structured way.

## RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRE

### I. Guiding questions concerning the preparatory process

#### 1. The outcome reads: “Forward these recommendations to UNEA for its consideration”.

- a. *Under which agenda item should UNEA 5 consider these recommendations?*
- b. *One option being under the inclusion in the already established item 5 of the provisional agenda entitled “International environmental policy and governance issues” or by recommending the establishment of a new item?*

UNEP-MGCY welcomes that this important topic is receiving increased attention by UNEP and the member states. We suggest that recommendations are best to be handled under a **separate agenda item**, especially due to their interlinkages with a.o. topics like education, decision making, and youth engagement which are not addressed directly within scope of “policy and governance issues” in the current provisional agenda. Item 5 already has lot of issues presented by member states for consideration under it, therefore it would be best to distinct consideration on this.

#### 2. The outcome mandates: “to prepare, at its fifth session (...) a political declaration (...):

- a. *What level of detail should a text have in order to be considered by UNEA 5?*

Final iteration, or penultimate, must be finalised before the OECPR. The OCEPR could be used to work through another round, while UNEA 5 should focus most on ministerial consensus and any final edits that might be needed.

- b. *When should the “preparation of a political declaration” begin and what should be the recommended format, leadership and timeline of the preparatory process before UNEA 5?*

The processes should begin in 2020 and contain a first draft (or elements of draft) presented to the Co-Chairs and Secretariat before the bureau meeting at the end of Q2 of 2020. The stakeholder online consultation and conferences (still tbd) which will take place in parallel to the Bureau meeting in June 2020 in Oslo, provides a meaningful setting to gather meaningful input from the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (given that participation of a large number of CSO representatives is anticipated at Oslo). The updated version of the draft political declaration can then be presented to the CPR after the summer break and followed by an online consultation with the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders. The consultations should be “lead” by the UNEP Secretariat, UNEA 5 Presidency and co-chairs of CPR.

- c. *How can accredited stakeholders be involved, and member States without representation in Nairobi participate, in the process?*

It is crucial to involve all Major Groups of Stakeholders; specifically the youth and Indigenous peoples representatives in the processes. This includes not only the negotiations at UNEA-5 but all preparatory steps, and also goes beyond accredited stakeholders (given that a lot of groups, including Fridays for Future are informal groups).

We should look into avenues from now until UNEA-5 that could provide space for consultations -

- Bureau meeting in Oslo, June 2020
- UNEP Regional Coordination Meetings (RCMs) of CSOs which are organised in 5 regions with support from respective regional office of UNEP
- Holding informal dialogues / consultative sessions at events such as Regional Climate Weeks, Oceans Conference June 2020, CBD14, etc.
- Youth constituency would be willing to consult children and youth representatives on their views a
- The above “in-person” consultations should be further compounded with online consultations (such as this one). It is important that these consultations are broadcasted within the MGOS and member states.
- Finally, a “**paper-smart**” **portal** should be developed for tracking this process that could have all submissions and related documents at one place. A good example is the portal of the UNEP Marine Litter and Microplastics ad hoc Working Group - <https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/adhoc-oeeg>

## II. [Guiding questions related to the a “United Nations high-level meeting \[...\] in the context of the commemoration of the creation of UNEP](#)

### 3. **The outcome speaks about “a United Nations high-level meeting, subject to voluntary funding, in the context of the commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (...)”.**

- a. *What is meant by “a United Nations high-level meeting, subject to voluntary funding, in the context of the commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment”?*

The youth constituency highlights the text in this paragraph can have multiple interpretations of this. To our understanding, this High-level meeting would be convened during the commemoration, and 50 year anniversary of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (“Stockholm+50”). This High Level meeting would be a convening of the Heads of States and representatives from MGOS, and would form a key part of Stockholm+50. The mandate of this special meeting would be to consider elements from the 73/333 outcomes, and to further link these with broader picture. The meeting should provide for **strong youth representation**, and representation of marginalised groups as well.

In addition to this, MGCY has conducted a few internal consultations on how the anniversary can become a meaningful conference. Youth constituency expresses concern over the fact that commemoration events often tend to deliver less substantial

outcomes. We, therefore, appreciate the interpretation of the conference as a milestone to also consider the shortcomings. We urge the member states to use the remaining time to prepare a substantial draft outcome document and then use the conference for the development of practical solutions in commemoration of how in 1972 a concrete Action Plan was developed which was way ahead of its time. Core of the pledges to strengthen multilateral environmental agreements should be the effort to align all existing framework and to provide consistent and comprehensive cooperation.

*b. Who is expected to convene the UN high-level meeting? What should its format be?*

Our understanding is that this “UN High-Level meeting” would be convened within the auspices of the commemoration. Ideally, the convening of this meeting should be led by UNEP in partnership with the host government(s) convening the commemoration, and the Presidency of UNEA. Several elements can only be determined as we progress, depending on -

- When and where UNEA 6 takes place, and who is the Presidency.
- As per options presented by Sweden in the latest submission on Stockholm+50, there is also an option of holding a special session of UNEA to mark the commemoration.

However, the youth constituency believes that it is abundantly clear that the UNEP Secretariat should play a major role in its convening.

Regarding the format, it depends again very much on the format of the commemoration itself, however to as initial views - the youth constituency suggests that -

- It should be at least 2 days in duration
- It should produce an inter-governmental outcome relevant to, or key towards, the outcome of the broader commemoration convening
- It should be done in mix of plenary, and breakout sessions
- It should further provide spaces for MGOS activities, events, and spaces for representation
- Youth constituency would be very much willing to support youth engagement and participation at such a meeting.

### **III. Guiding questions regarding the content of the political declaration and the support by the UNEP Secretariat**

**4. The outcome also signals that the objective of the political declaration is “with a view to strengthening the implementation of international environmental law and international environmental governance, in line with paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled ‘The future we want’”.**

- a. *what 'elements' or 'building blocks' in the objectives guiding the recommendations and in the substantive recommendations contained in the Annex to Resolution 73/333 could be identified for inclusion in the political declaration to achieve the overall objective of "strengthening the implementation of international environmental law and international environmental governance, in line with paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development"?*

Most important elements are: upholding existing obligations and commitments; strengthening of implementation along with enforcement policies and processes; and supporting the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda as relates to IELL, and mainstreaming youth engagement. The Declaration should identify and commit to taking specific actions to improve and strengthen what is being done in regards to each of these objectives.

- b. *How should the political declaration relate to the five objectives guiding the recommendations and to the thirteen substantive recommendations of the ad-hoc open-ended working group established pursuant to UN General Assembly resolution 72/277 and endorsed in UN General Assembly resolution 73/333?*

- The declaration should enhance the implementation of existing obligations and commitments under international environmental law by establishing a comprehensive action plan outlining means and mechanisms that member states are asked to engage in. Furthermore, the action plan should develop clear cooperation and support mechanisms allowing a joint approach of member states. Cooperation on NDCs in the framework of UNFCCC has provided interesting lessons learned on effective cooperation mechanisms to support the implementation on the national level.
- The declaration should recognize the important role of discussing the principles of international environmental law. This can be enhanced through regular opportunities to discuss the implementation of the declaration among member states but also with civil society in order to allow for collective learning and ownership.
- The declaration should promote policy coherence across environmental instruments at all relevant levels, identify and address implementation challenges. To this end the cooperation with a variety of multilateral organisations should be encouraged in order to tackle cross-cutting issues from an interdisciplinary perspective. This cooperation should also be used to access the expertise of the different organisations and thereby support member states with scientific knowledge.
- The declaration should stress upon the need to ratify existing Multilateral Environmental Agreements and effectively implement them. In order to achieve this objective the declaration should refer to as many environmental agreements as possible and thereby summarize them in one overarching declaration.

- The declaration should encourage the **active and meaningful engagement of all relevant stakeholders at all levels** in the different fora related to the implementation of international environmental law and environment-related instruments. Specifically important is the involvement of civil society in order to create societal support within member states. Stakeholder involvement, however, should contain as many active elements as possible and encourage dialogue with the member states during formal negotiations and informal events.
- Furthermore, we would like to emphasize that Major Groups are often represented by volunteers, especially when considering the composition of the Major Group of Children and Youth. Funding is therefore crucial in order to provide accessibility of the events to different social backgrounds and specifically representatives from the Global South.

*c. Should there be a substantive connection between the political declaration and the commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment?*

Yes, the youth constituencies believe that this substantive linkage is key. Linkages must also be explored toward HLPF and other collective avenues.

*d. How should the political declaration be in line with paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development?*

The declaration should focus on ...

- addressing issues connected to trans-border environmental pollution
- structural and strategic transition to renewable energies
- translation of international agreements into national plans and legal implementation
- global waste avoidance strategies
- creating a legal framework making circular economy mandatory
- the abolishment of hazardous substances and toxic waste
- management and restoration of water cycles
- recycling and reuse management systems
- green entrepreneurship
- effective technology transfer
- simplify approbation processus on finance for local projects
- and finally but importantly, build upon and strengthen the role for CSOs and youth that the 1972 conference had mandated.

*e. What kind of inputs should the Secretariat prepare in order to best assist member States in the preparation of the political declaration?*

- A guidance note detailing timeline of the events, and key documents. We reiterate our suggestion on having a paper-smart portal for this.
- Secretariat should consider holding informal briefings at different avenues, in addition to formal negotiations or consultations to further gauge understanding

and cooperation among the member states, and to develop potential elements of the draft declarations.

- Secretariat should consider making available documents related to MEAs overview (a new document may not be needed - currently available resources together with reports from UNEP such as GEOs can be used), that could aid substantive understanding and discussions among the member states.
- The Secretariat facilitates such that the first draft of elements of declaration is made available until May 2020 in order to give the bureau and the Major Groups the opportunity to provide feedback in the framework of the bureau meeting on the 3rd of June. This first draft should on reflect the work of the ad-hoc working group, and submissions received from this questionnaire.
- Furthermore, the Secretariat and the Co-Chair should supervise the integration of the comments from the bureau meeting and all Major Groups consultations online and through conferences, and facilitate regular dialogues between member states and MGOs.