



**First informal substantive consultation meeting on UNGA Resolution 73/333
21-23 July 2020**

EU & MS Opening Statement

Dear Co-Facilitators,
Distinguished delegates and colleagues,

I have the honour to deliver this opening statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. Serbia and Ukraine align themselves to this statement.

The European Union and its Member States would like to thank the co-facilitators for preparing their outline document and the UNEP secretariat for organising this present substantive consultation on the follow-up to General Assembly Resolution 73/333.

We welcome that we will now focus on the substance of the political declaration to be prepared. While the Covid-19 crisis affecting the world has brought to the spotlight a multitude of social and economic issues, the environmental challenges the world is facing remain at least as pressing as they have been before: Collective action is required to address environmental challenges that are of global concern. The European Union and its Member States stress the potential role of this process in raising the profile of environmental issues on the global, regional, and domestic levels in order to increase political will and ambition to protect the environment.

We envisage as outcome of this process a political declaration that is ambitious and really fulfils the mandate of strengthening the implementation of international environmental law and international environmental governance as set forth by General Assembly Resolution 73/333. To reach this aim, we believe that the political declaration should address all of the recommendations and provide concrete and action-oriented responses to fulfil them. We would not see merit in repeating or reformulating the already agreed recommendations. Responses to fulfil the recommendations, which are formulated in an actionable way and provide for a follow-up mechanism are most likely to add real value for the environment.

The European Union and its Member States want to stress the need for the political declaration to further the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. We would like to see the declaration highlight the importance of the environmental dimension of the SDGs and the need

for enhancing synergies among the environmental, economic and social dimensions. We think this process can constitute a positive contribution to the international environmental governance by strengthening UNEP and UNEA. Further, we hope it will encourage coordination and cooperation between multilateral environmental agreements and with UNEP and UNEA, in turn, while maintaining the independence of the multilateral environmental agreements.

We also hope the process will result in strengthening the implementation of international environmental law. It should foster mainstreaming of environmental policy into all relevant sector policies and programmes and support and strengthen national administrations in their efforts to implement international environmental law. We are keen to discuss the extent to which principles of international environmental law can help in the implementation of environmental law. We would also like to look into ways to strengthen the financial base of UNEP and the MEAs, like looking at new approaches to resource mobilisation and at innovative finance mechanisms.

We are hoping for a fruitful meeting that will provide a solid basis for the co-facilitators to work on substantive building blocks for the future declaration. We would like to draw your attention to the written input of the EU and its Member States in response to the questionnaire provided by the co-facilitators.

In terms of the process, the European Union and its Member States would like to reiterate the offer by the government of Sweden to host a UN high level meeting in Stockholm in 2022. This meeting, which is to commemorate the 1972 Stockholm Conference, could provide an opportunity to adopt the political declaration.