

Intervention at the Environmental Law cluster of
*First informal substantive consultation meeting on United Nations
General Assembly resolution 73/333*

22nd July, 2020

Thank you very much, co-chair. I am Christianne Zakur from Trinidad and Tobago, and I speak here on behalf of the children and youth major group to UNEP.

Environmental rule of law is central to sustainable development.

As the UNEP report on environmental law in 2019 states, “It reflects universal moral values and ethical norms of behaviour, and it provides a foundation for environmental rights and obligations”.

Without environmental rule of law and the enforcement of legal rights and obligations, environmental governance may be arbitrary, that is, discretionary, subjective, and unpredictable.

We are approaching the 50th anniversary of the UNEP and it is crucial to highlight that it was only in 2013 at the Governing council meeting that the environmental rule of law was defined for the first time in an intergovernmental document.

We have a long way to go.

The youth constituency offers following suggestions:

1. First, member states must encourage UNEP to consolidate existing indicators and reporting frameworks on environmental issues across the UN system. This should include MEAs, the Rio Conventions and the relevant SDG targets.
2. Secondly, UNEP must create a handbook, which should have not only best practices but also capture views of different member states and stakeholders in it, including those of the major group constituencies.

3. Third, creating publications is not enough. We need proper dissemination and awareness. Therefore, given the positioning of the UNEP, member states must encourage UNEP to coordinate and disseminate the information about this, in coordination with the broader UN system, including the UN Country teams.
4. Co chairs, we also highlight that above points are in no way a new mandate or program of work being given to UNEP, but simply a reinforcement of UNEP's mandate and should be welcomed as such.
5. The Children and Youth Major Group, through its diverse range of member organisations, proposes to take the lead on developing a consolidation of existing environmental laws and policies that focus on children and youth issues to be prepared as a report toward UNEA-5. We welcome support from interested member states on this.

Given the nature of this topic, the youth constituency also takes this opportunity to express deep concern and disappointment on inappropriate legal actions that have been taken by some governments against peaceful school children and youth who have been striking for their future.

Colleagues, children and youth - especially those from Indigenous groups, migrant youth, health of children, continue to be at the frontline of environmental problems and climate change impacts. Those that are suffering the most have the least voice in the system. This is very much the right time to address this issue.

We are committed to working with all of you.

Thank you very much.

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