

Joint meeting of the Bureaux of UN Environment Assembly and
Committee of Permanent Representatives
11 September 2020
4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Online meeting

Note from the UNEA President on the Ministerial Declaration
Joint Bureaux Meeting 11 September

About this note

The purpose of this note is threefold. Firstly, to summarize the status of the consultation process on the ministerial declaration for the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5). Secondly, to provide insights on the main issues raised by Member States during the two rounds of inputs; and finally, to propose a roadmap of next steps to ensure the continuation of an inclusive and transparent consultation process towards the successful finalization of the ministerial declaration.

Overview of the two rounds of inputs

Preparations for the UNEA-5 ministerial declaration were initiated through a letter from the UNEA President, dated 24 April 2020, inviting Member States and Major Groups and Stakeholders to identify key elements and messages from ministers to address the theme in an impactful manner. The UNEA President also requested inputs on how UNEA-5 can make a significant contribution to strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at a global scale. By the (extended) deadline of 26 May 2020, the President had received rich inputs in writing from more than 80 Member States and more than 50 from Major Groups and Stakeholders.

On this basis, the President developed an "**Outline Document**" for the ministerial declaration which was discussed by the two bureaux at their meeting on 9-10 June 2020 and subsequently invited views of all Member States and Stakeholders on the paper in a letter dated 29 June 2020. In this second round of inputs, the President has received further inputs from more than 56 Member States and 21 Stakeholders. All input received thus far is available at a dedicated [website](#).

Main takeaways

The inputs received so far underscore that the ministerial declaration will be one of the most important outcomes from UNEA-5. The two rounds of written inputs from Member States and Major Groups and Stakeholders demonstrate a high level of engagement to ensure a relevant and strong declaration. The inputs reaffirm a high level of support for the theme for UNEA-5, "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals", as well as the initial vision of the ministerial declaration which highlights that "*urgent and transformative actions to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services are fundamental to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and rebuild a resilient and sustainable post-pandemic world*".

Many inputs also highlight the concerns Member States and Stakeholders have with respect to the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our societies and the environment, especially in developing countries, and on the heavy burden that the pandemic poses to our ability to achieve the SDGs by 2030. However, several inputs also highlight that our collective response to the pandemic provides both challenges and opportunities to build greater resilience and sustainability and to better protect and sustainably manage ecosystems. In this context, many Member States have emphasised the urgent need for a post-COVID recovery process that puts us back on track with a green transition process that will help us build more resilience and revive our economies and livelihoods in a greener and more sustainable manner, leaving no one behind.

For UNEA-5 to be part of the global recovery effort, a central feature of the declaration should therefore be a call to shift our course onto a better trajectory towards achieving Agenda 2030 and the

Sustainable Development Goals. Member States and Stakeholders have in this connection emphasized that a clear, strong and ambitious political message from ministers responsible for the environment at UNEA-5 is needed more than ever. Such a ministerial declaration must also send a clear call for international cooperation and solidarity.

The environmental crises the world was facing before the pandemic in respect of climate and biodiversity loss have not abated. There are also fears that the pandemic can further aggravate existing challenges, not least of which, the sustainable management of chemicals and wastes. In their inputs, Member States and Stakeholders also emphasized that environmental cooperation challenges cannot wait for things to return to "normal", and that we must send a clear message that the response to the pandemic must be mutually supportive and aligned with existing agreed international cooperation.

Many inputs from Member States and Stakeholders also underscored a strong understanding of the connections between a healthy environment and human health. Inputs centred around the need to safeguard nature, biodiversity and ecosystems, including *Life on Land*, as well as *Life under Water*. Strong concerns were voiced about the loss and degradation of habitats, and the related risks for human health, including the emergence of zoonotic diseases. Several inputs engaged with the proposed action area of sustainable food systems, citing both risks and synergies connected to environmental challenges and sustainable development, and provided a range of proposals as to how the issue could be addressed.

Some inputs also expressed a desire that the declaration address other relevant issues related to chemicals and wastes, as well as marine litter. Furthermore, several Member States have underlined the importance of addressing questions relating to means of implementation.

Proposed timeline for the consultation process for the Ministerial Declaration

In order to ensure the finalization of the draft ministerial declaration in an inclusive and transparent manner, it is important that the zero draft captures member states' priorities both within and across the proposed thematic areas. To this end the President of the Assembly wishes to propose the following steps:

11 September	Consideration of this note at the joint bureau meeting, in particular the proposed roadmap for the preparations.
8 October	The zero draft ministerial declaration will be basis for discussion at the UNEA Bureau Meeting. Based on guidance from the Bureau, the zero draft may be amended and then circulated to all Member States, Major Groups and Stakeholders for their feedback.
Late October	Virtual open-ended informal consultation meeting convened with support of the Secretariat.
Approx. 6 November	Deadline for submission of inputs to the zero draft of the ministerial declaration
Early November	Virtual open-ended informal consultation meeting convened with support of the Secretariat.
19 November	Briefing by UNEA Presidency to the 152 nd CPR meeting (tbc).
Late November	A revised draft ministerial declaration will be circulated.
Early December	Consultations with regional and political groups in Nairobi with support from the Secretariat.
January 2021	Open informal consultations in Nairobi with support from the Secretariat followed by the circulation of a final draft of the ministerial declaration.

February 2021

Consultations as required, including in the margins of the Open-Ended CPR.

Adoption of the Ministerial declaration by consensus at UNEA-5.