



Major Group for Children and Youth to UN Environment Programme
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Intervention at October 1, 2020 Sub-Committee meeting on *Options for the 5th UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5)*

1st October 2020

Thank you co-chair. Dear Executive director, delegates, and excellencies,

I am speaking on behalf of the Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP. We thank you for the organization of this meeting. We also thank the UNEA-5 Presidency for the presentation of their proposal.

The COVID - 19 pandemic has not stopped the climate and ecological crisis. We the youth are still worried about the climate crisis as it impacts our present and our future. As we look at how UNEA 5 can continue, we ask you to look at how to enhance youth engagement and involvement during UNEA, and in the process leading up to it - as the negotiations will impact our future.

As the COVID- 19 pandemic limits physical travel, we are also faced with new challenges, including the digital divide, time zone limitations, and language barriers with limited translations during online sessions. These factors inhibit the youth from the valuable inputs needed at UNEP5.

Firstly, we elaborate some examples of what is happening across the UN system -

- The annual meetings of several processes custodian-ed by the UNEP, including the BRS COP, the SAICM Chemicals and Waste COP, the CBD COP - have all been postponed to take place in-person in 2021.
- Furthermore, prominent meetings, such as the IUCN Conservation Congress, SE4ALL Sustainable Energy Forum, have also been adjusted so as to have in-person components.
- At the same time, UN General Assembly took place last week in a virtual format, and HLPF in July 2020 was fully virtual.

As we deliberate on the date and format of the UNEA, we want to highlight some prominent moments for UNEA-5 to include. UNEA is about negotiations, is about the ministerial declaration, program of work; and it will also mark the start of the UN decade on ecosystem



restoration, the MEA Forum, UNEP@50, the Global Major Group, and Stakeholders Forum. These events will mark the global environmental family coming together.

In the past CPR meetings, especially on the emerging elements of consensus, we have heard from various member states and stakeholders on the need to make UNEA inclusive, more known. So how can we enable that?

Having heard all suggestions brought forward, we the MGCY support having a virtual part 1 of the UNEA negotiations in Feb 2021 and have a more in-depth negotiation process in later in 2021 or in early 2022. In this time of a global health crisis, it is extremely important that UNEA convenes in some format and demonstrates leadership. This will allow us to adopt key elements, such as the UNEP MTS and PoW.

To this effect, we have the following recommendations -

- As there have not been in-person meetings of MGS throughout 2020, we suggest that the budget allocated for civil society participation should be allocated for a virtual MGS forum before part 1 in Feb, with the leftover budget for an MGS Forum before Stockholm+50.
- We ask member states and the secretariat to support a Virtual Youth Environment Assembly before Feb 2021 and an in-person Youth Environment Assembly before the in-person 2022.

Finally, how are we going to finally decide upon the dates and timings?

in the process of COPs of climate change, biodiversity and desertification - this decision has been taken by the Bureau and the Presidency. The same has been the case in Chemical and waste COP. So we believe a similar process should be followed here for the final decision. Having said that, we of course appreciate and acknowledge the space provided for different member states and stakeholders to express their views today.

Finally co chair, as we speak here today - there are over 34 million and rising cases of COVID-19, and over 1 million deaths. This has impacted the most vulnerable the most - women, children, young migrants, people with disability and those already on frontlines. This is a time for us to come together as a global environmental family and demonstrate leadership - towards an inclusive road to UNEP@50 and Stockholm+50.

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