



Joint NGO Submission to the UNEA-6's Ministerial Declaration

February 2024

We, the undersigned group of 22 civil society organizations working at the intersection of environmental, climate and conflict issues and constituting part of the NGO Major Group, appreciate the recognition of the urgency for effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle global challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, as outlined in the final draft of the Ministerial Declaration. However, we are concerned that the current version of the text omits the environmental repercussions of armed conflicts and military activities that significantly exacerbate the triple planetary crisis, and is lacking conflict sensitivity.

Therefore our suggested amendments to the text of the Ministerial Declaration aim to address these shortcomings. This contribution comes on top of the civil society's [input](#) to the earlier versions of the Ministerial Declaration, as well as to respective [statements](#) adopted by civil society organizations during the regional consultations in the run-up to the UNEA-6.

First and foremost, **it is imperative that the Ministerial Declaration recognizes the inherent relationships between armed conflict, and the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.** Armed conflicts and military activities worldwide result in widespread environmental pollution, leave a trail of toxic remnants of war, make huge areas perilous and inaccessible due to mine contamination, destroy ecosystems and worsen biodiversity loss, lead to degradation and overexploitation of natural resources, and contribute to extensive military GHG emissions. Fragility and conflict undermine environmental governance, weaken systems of environmental protection and sustainable resource use, and hamper societies' abilities for climate adaptation and achieving internationally agreed environmental goals including relevant SDGs. Hence, consideration of conflicts' impacts on the environment should be a part of the problem analysis in the UNEA-6's deliberations on the triple planetary crisis.

Secondly, as [highlighted](#) in the report by the UNEP Executive Director, environmental challenges – as well as the ways in which they are tackled – also risk aggravating displacement and conflict. The cycle of conflict and environmental degradation can perpetuate instability and hinder sustainable development efforts. Therefore, while elaborating on envisaged measures to address the triple planetary crisis, **the Ministerial Declaration should highlight the need for a conflict-sensitive approach, and take into account respective capabilities as well as the special needs and circumstances of fragile and conflict-affected countries.**

Finally, **the Ministerial Declaration should contain the commitment of Member States to enhance multilateral actions for addressing conflict-linked environmental impacts and their root causes as part of response to the triple planetary crisis.** This should include strengthening protection of the environment in relation to armed conflict, supporting environmental monitoring and assessment of related environmental harm, and assisting affected states with environmental

dimensions of their post-conflict recovery. In the Ministerial Declaration, Member States should also extend their support to UNEP's work on this issue, committing to provide it with a clear plan, mandate and resources that are commensurate with the required scale of work.

The persistence of current armed conflicts and the enduring legacies of past conflicts emphasize the need to address their environmental dimensions, and their impacts on public health and livelihoods. Given that UNEA-6 presents a unique opportunity to tackle this issue as part of multilateral response to the global planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, we believe that the Ministerial Declaration should duly reflect this ambition.

Please find the detailed language proposals for the above points in the track changes mode in the Annex.

List of signatories:

1. Afrihealth Optonet Association (AHOA)
2. Afrique Esperance
3. Arava Institute for Environmental Studies
4. ARTICLE 19
5. Centre for Human Rights and Climate Change Research
6. Conflict and Environment Observatory
7. CSO Interecocentre
8. Eco-union
9. Emirates Environmental Group
10. European Environmental Bureau (EEB)
11. Force Juvénile pour un Avenir Rassurant
12. Interfacing Development Interventions for Sustainability (IDIS)
13. Journalists for Human Rights
14. Locals.Global - Circular Economy Coalition
15. National Ecological Centre of Ukraine (NECU)
16. PAX
17. Ripple Effect
18. Somali Greenpeace Association (SOGPA)
19. Soroptimist International
20. Terra-1530
21. Youth and Environment Europe (YEE)
22. Union des Amis Socio Culturels d'Action en Développement (UNASCAD)

ANNEX: Proposed Amendments to the UNEA-6 Ministerial Declaration

“Effective, inclusive, and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution”

1. We, the world’s Ministers for the environment, have gathered in Nairobi, Kenya, from 26 February to 1 March 2024, together with representatives of international organizations, major groups and other stakeholders at the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, with the urgent aim of taking effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle global environmental challenges including climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and deforestation.
2. We reaffirm all the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development including inter alia the CBD, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and we welcome the recommendations of the UN Secretary General in his report Our Common Agenda and the Stockholm+50 International Meeting.
3. We acknowledge with great urgency the systemic threats posed by global challenges including of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution to sustainable development and their impacts on human health, ~~and~~ the environment, peace and security, that are further aggravated by persistent levels of poverty, inequality, armed conflict and food insecurity.
4. We emphasize the importance of advancing integrated, science-based approaches, informed by the scientifically verified evidence, as well as traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and of local communities, to strengthen resilience to present and future emerging challenges, promote global solidarity while recalling the UN General Assembly resolution 76/300 on the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.
5. We welcome the important outcomes of the twenty-seventh session of the conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP27), including the decision to establish new funding arrangements for responding to loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, as well as the Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan and the outcome of the twenty eight session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on climate Change (UNFCCC COP 28) including the outcome of the first global stocktake that calls the parties for the first time to transitioning away from fossil fuels, laying the ground for a swift, just and equitable transition underpinned by deep emissions cuts and scaled up finance, the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15) and its adoption of the [Kunming- Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#), to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030, the fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP15), and the [Abidjan Call](#) to act on drought, desertification and land degradation; as well as the Fifth International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM-5) including the Bonn Global Framework on Chemicals.
6. We also welcome with appreciation other recent, important multilateral achievements, including the adoption of the agreement under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), the outcomes of [2022 UN Ocean Conference](#), the 2023 UN Water Conference, the adoption of General Assembly resolution 77/334 deciding to convene the 2026 United Nations Water Conference “to Accelerate the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6”, the high-level meeting on the mid-term Review of the Sendai Framework

for Disaster Risk Reduction and the 2023 meetings of the Conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm, and Minamata Conventions.

7. We note with great concern the main findings of the Synthesis Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) [Sixth Assessment Report \(AR6\)](#), recognizing that limiting global warming to 1.5 °C with no or limited overshoot requires deep, rapid and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions of 43 per cent by 2030 and 60 per cent by 2035 relative to the 2019 level and reaching net zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2050.
8. We also note with great concern the findings of the assessment on Invasive Alien Species (IAS) adopted by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services at its 10th plenary, recognizing that more than 3,500 out of the 37,000 alien species that have been introduced by many human activities to regions and biomes around the world pose major global threats to nature, economy, food security and human health. Noting that IAS play a key role in 60% of global plant and animal extinctions, and cost humanity more than \$400 billion a year – an amount that has quadrupled every decade since 1970, we emphasize the importance of international cooperation, including international funding to support developing countries, to effectively manage IAS in the context of climate change and biodiversity loss
9. We are aware that in order to inspire decisive and collective action to tackle global challenges including climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, as well as other related crises of desertification, land and soil degradation and drought, we urgently need to reinforce global inclusiveness and solidarity across sectors and jurisdictions and means of implementation to support developing countries.
10. We are committed to urgently address the challenges before us through effective, inclusive and sustainable actions and ensure that these are transformative, science- and knowledge- based, [conflict sensitive](#) and taking into account traditional knowledge and gender responsive actions with the engagement of all relevant actors and partners including civil society, academia, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, the private and public sectors, as well as all women and girls, children and youth, persons with disabilities, leaving no one behind.
11. We therefore decide to take the following actions, on the basis of common but differentiated responsibilities, taking into account respective capabilities as well as the special needs and circumstances and the specific challenges faced by developing countries, including Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), [and developing countries in fragile and conflict-affected situations](#):
 - a. ~~Strive to a~~Address climate change, in line with the objective of the UNFCCC and the goals of the Paris Agreement. We will also take action on equity and social justice to achieve more sustainable outcomes and co-benefits, reduce inflationary and indebtedness trade-offs while advancing climate resilient development and protect our communities against disasters induced or exacerbated by climate [change and environmental damage](#), such as drought, heavy rains, wildfires, heat waves, famine, and flooding, which undermine the ability of all countries to achieve sustainable development.
 - b. Halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 by ensuring implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and put nature on a path to recovery for the benefit of people and the planet, including by conserving, restoring and sustainably using biodiversity and by ensuring the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the utilisation of genetic resources, including associated traditional knowledge with the free and prior

informed consent of indigenous people and of local communities. We will do so by the acceleration of the revision or update of national biodiversity strategies and action plans and the alignment of national targets with the GBF, while providing the necessary means of implementation including under the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund, in recognition of the importance of sustainable biodiversity-based activities, products and services that enhance biodiversity to provide social, economic and environmental benefits for people, and by advancing the implementation in a timely manner the multilateral mechanism for benefit-sharing on the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources, including a global fund.

- c. Commit to align the Glasgow Declaration and the UN decade on ecosystem restoration to halt biodiversity loss, combat desertification, and promote sustainable practices.
- d. Cooperate for a just and sustainable energy transition, within each country, that seeks to achieve an energy-secure future for all, while respecting local, national and regional needs and priorities, and define clear actions to address climate change, including a progressive transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems, a phase-down of unabated coal power and phase-out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies towards net zero emission energy systems by 2050 at the latest, while, considering equitable access to clean energy, secure and resilient development of sustainable energy infrastructure, promoting a just transition based on effective social dialogue among all stakeholders.
- e. Deploy greater efforts, including mobilizing and allocating adequate resources, to enhance the environmentally sustainable management of minerals and metals, and address challenges associated with sand mining and tailings management worldwide.
- f. Commit to continue to engage constructively and actively with a sense of urgency and solidarity in the ongoing negotiations of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full life cycle of plastics, as adopted in UNEA resolution 5/14, and seek to reach common ground for a fair, effective, balanced and ambitious legally binding instrument through the INC by the end of 2024.
- g. Enhance efforts and broader cooperation to address pollution, including through reducing short-lived climate pollutants and in accordance with the One Health approach, and recognizing that pollution is a leading environmental risk factor for human health, which contributes to negative impacts on ecosystems and climate change, transcends national borders and impacts regions in different ways.
- h. Committed to the outcome of ICCM5, including the Bonn declaration and fully involved in achieving the vision, objectives and targets of the Bonn Global Framework on Chemicals, we resolve to deploy greater efforts towards the sound management of chemicals and waste, including through an integrated financing approach based on enhanced mainstreaming, greater industry involvement, and strengthened dedicated external financing, to prevent, or where not feasible, minimize adverse health and environmental impacts, and accelerate the implementation of the Bonn Global Framework on Chemicals, with due regards to national circumstances. We also strongly support the process to establishing a new Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution, as per UNEA Resolution 5/8, and we call on Member States to engage constructively in its ongoing negotiations towards completion by the end of 2024.
- i. Incorporate climate, biodiversity, pollution, as well as land degradation, desertification and drought considerations into disaster risk management policies and actions to mitigate and prevent the adverse impacts of natural and human-made hazards, including armed conflicts, on human health and the environment, strengthen the resilience to global risks and shocks and promote a sustainable and inclusive recovery to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- j. [\[add point\] Recognizing conflicts' contributions to the global crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, we commit to enhancing multilateral actions for preventing and addressing environmental damage and its root causes, including through strengthening protection of the environment in relation to armed conflict, supporting environmental monitoring and assessment of related environmental harm, and assisting affected states with environmental dimensions of their post-conflict recovery. We also commit to support UNEP's work addressing environmental impacts of armed conflicts on the climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution with a clear mandate, action plan and resources that are commensurate with the scale of work required to support conflict-affected states and with UNEP Medium Term Strategy's goal of mainstreaming this work across its thematic sub-programmes and science-policy sub-programmes.](#)
- k. Achieve gender equality and empower women and girls, and persons with disabilities in line with existing international commitments and obligations, to ensure the full, equal, effective and meaningful participation, representation and leadership of women at all levels of environmental decision-making, and promote the collection and use of gender and disability-disaggregated data, as appropriate, and statistics across all policies and actions, in our pursuit of inclusive and equitable solutions to global challenges including climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution that leave no one behind.
12. We leverage digital transformations as an enabling tool to support sustainable economies and [peaceful](#) societies through leapfrogging existing digital divides, improving [research and environmental data collection](#), innovation and equal access to environmental information and harnessing emerging technologies and monitoring how they develop for sustainability, as appropriate, while ensuring that digitalization remains inclusive, equitable and sustainable.
13. We commit to continue to advocate for a whole-of-society approach that can effectively empower societies at large, and particularly people in vulnerable situations, to accelerate research, innovation, education and behavioural change, facilitate a just transition to sustainable consumption and production patterns. We also commit to move towards the implementation of economic and environmental policies and models, including resource efficiency along value chains, and other related approaches such as sustainable and circular economy and sustainable lifestyles, in line with the 10 YFP Global Strategy for Sustainable Consumption and Production 2023-2030, and the Kunming Montreal Global Framework and call on Member States and UN Observer States to develop resource efficiency strategies and circular economy strategies.
14. We call upon Member States, UN Observer States, International Financial Institutions, Multilateral Development Banks, Private Foundations, philanthropies, funds and other actors to promote further synergies and coherence in financing action to address the global challenges including climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, to provide incentives and an enabling fiscal and policy framework for resource mobilization, as echoed at the International Monetary Fund and World Bank 2023 annual meetings held in Marrakech. We will engage domestic, international, and private sector actors towards a rapid mobilization and scaling up means of implementation, in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, while welcoming ongoing efforts to evolve the international financial architecture.
15. We reiterate our recognition of UNEP's role in strengthening the science-policy interface and to undertake strategic foresight and horizon scanning, [including](#) in collaboration with existing science- policy platforms and panels, to improve the capacities of Member States and stakeholders at all levels to prioritize scientific research, stimulate and encourage decision making and actions that can anticipate trends and risks, and prevent and respond to emerging

crosscutting environmental and health issues, with particular focus on life cycle assessment of the environmental and sustainable development impacts of specific technologies to make informed decisions.

16. We reaffirm the interdependencies between climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, and that these crises need to be addressed in an integrated manner. We reaffirm also, the role of the United Nations Environment Programme and the importance of advancing equitable geographic distribution and gender parity among the staff of the UNEP Secretariat as set for in the UNEP@50 declaration.
17. We note the increasing necessity and catalytic role of UNEP and its Regional Offices in strengthening regional cooperation, including through the Regional Ministerial fora, while excluding politicization of environmental processes, to tackle context-specific environmental challenges. We also recognize the increasing demand for synergetic environmental support at the country level and UNEP's engagement with Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams to support mainstreaming of environmental issues into planning, programming and operations, and including the environmental dimension of sustainable development in Common Country Analyses as well as UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, and invite the strengthening of UNEP's role within the UN Development System at the regional and country level, including from the regular budget.
18. We call on UNEP, as the leading environmental authority within the United Nations, and echoing the UNEP@50 Ministerial Declaration, to intensify its support and assistance to Member States, including at the country level and in cooperation with relevant MEA Secretariats, in the implementation of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as providing equal attention and prioritization of the implementation of all UNEA resolutions and outcomes.
19. We look forward to the adoption of a Pact for the Future at the Summit of the Future in September 2024, as an opportunity to further advance our collective environmental commitments, urge all Member States, UN Observer States as well as relevant NGOs, Major Groups and stakeholders, UNEP, the MEAs and other relevant international organisations to advocate for the implementation of the relevant actions set out in this Ministerial Declaration and to ensure an ambitious outcome that will reinvigorate multilateral cooperation for environmental protection, stimulate the implementation of existing commitments, strengthen synergies and complementarities between the work and implementation of the MEAs and decide on concrete solutions for a better tomorrow with greater effectiveness, inclusiveness and confidence. We therefore request the President of the UN Environment Assembly to transmit this Ministerial Declaration as the UN Environment Assembly's contribution to the General Assembly for consideration at the Summit of the Future.
20. In the spirit of this reinvigorated multilateral cooperation, we invite the governing bodies of multilateral environmental agreements and relevant international organisations to work with the United Nations Environment Assembly, as appropriate, to promote an effective and inclusive implementation of the commitments contained in this Declaration.