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INFORMATION NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Delegations

Subject: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP):

- Fourth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR-4) (Nairobi, 4-8 March 2019)
- Fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-4) (Nairobi, 11-15 March 2019)

= Statements by the European Union and its Member States

Delegations will find in the [Annex](#) for information a compilation of statements, as delivered during the OECPR-4 and UNEA-4 meetings, including the High-level Segment.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP):

**Fourth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR-4)
(Nairobi, 4-8 March 2019)**

**Fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-4)
(Nairobi, 11-15 March 2019)**

= Statements by the European Union and its Member States =

Opening statement at OECPR-4

- Madame Chair, distinguished colleagues; it is my privilege to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.
- Allow me to start by welcoming the decision of the UN Secretary General to appoint Ms Inger Andersen as the new Executive Director of UNEP. We wish her every success and look forward to meeting her in the upcoming meeting of UNEA. We would like to take this opportunity to express our highest appreciation to all candidates who gave their time and availability for this critically important position. We also thank the Acting Executive Director, Ms Joyce Msuya, for her skilful handling of the organisation ad interim.
- The EU and its Member States would also like to express their highest gratitude for the thorough preparations conducted ahead of the meeting of the Environment Assembly and this open-ended meeting of the CPR. In particular, we would like to thank the President of the Assembly, Mr Siim Kiisler, and the members of the Bureaus of UNEA and the CPR and the co-facilitators of the resolutions. Special thanks also to the Acting Executive Director of UNEP, Ms Joyce Msuya, and the UNEP Secretariat for their hard work and unremitting support. We appreciate that UNEA-4 will receive the solid science-policy background, in the form of a series of reports to be launched next week, including the GEO-6, the International Resource Panel's Global Resources and the Chemicals and Waste outlooks.
- From what stems from those reports, UNEA-4 will be challenged to respond to the unprecedented environmental crisis which, if not resolved, will prevent the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Innovative solutions for environmental challenges, and a fundamental change of our model of unsustainable production and consumption, need to be pushed forward, backed by the authoritative voice of this Assembly.

- The EU and its Member States will therefore seek a strong outcome from UNEA-4 with an ambitious Ministerial Declaration and focused resolutions. The EU and its Member States are putting forward three proposals. Firstly, together with Colombia, the resolution on Sustainable Consumption and Production that paves the way forward towards greater resources efficiency, circular economy and to decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation. We also thank Chile, Indonesia and Japan who have come with closely related resolutions and agreed to work with us on a joint document. Secondly, the resolution on Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste prioritises efforts to accelerate action to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2020 targets and strongly supports the process towards the new ambitious platform beyond that date that may be further developed through merging with elements from related resolutions. Thirdly, the resolution on Deforestation and agricultural commodity supply chains that seeks to combat the serious threats to the environment from this phenomenon, to promote the achievement of SDG 15, including through existing initiatives, and to encourage the private sector to enhance their efforts, which will be key.
- The EU and its Member States would like to thank all Member States who have put forward resolution proposals, which all address very important matters. We will work constructively, mindful of the challenges they address, whilst seeking the most appropriate solutions, including through UNEP, within its mandate and the Programme of Work and Budget. Where possible, we would welcome further integration to reduce the very high number of resolutions on our agenda. We also look forward to receiving the assessment from the Secretariat on the implications of the resolutions to the Programme of Work and Budget.
- The EU and its Member States also look forward to the important discussions and subsequent adoption of the Programme of Work and Budget for the period 2020-2021, the Implementation Plan "Towards a Pollution Free Planet" and the new Marine and Coastal Strategy.
- Madam Chair,
We are conscious of the enormous amount of work ahead of us during this preparatory week. We trust in your skilful guidance and that of the other Bureau members and the co-facilitators. We believe that if approached with a good spirit, pragmatism and flexibility, we shall produce a good agreed outcome for endorsement by the Assembly, with significant potential for improving the environment and contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. We wish all of us a productive and satisfactory week.

Thank you.

OECP-4 Agenda item 4: Budget and Programme Performance, including implementation of past UNEA resolutions

- The EU and its Member States appreciate the updates by UNEP's Executive Director on the progress made to implement various resolutions. At this stage we would like to provide our general comments and will submit our detailed comments in writing.

- Furthermore, we would request UNEP to continue reporting in the future, not only about the “latest” resolutions, but also on the work which is still required under previous resolutions on related subjects, such as on the sound management of chemicals and waste, that would have benefitted from a more complete picture if previous resolutions would also have been taken into account.
- **On pollution mitigation and control in areas affected by armed conflict or terrorism**, the EU and its Member States welcome UNEP's support to countries dealing with conflict related pollution, either directly or indirectly caused by human displacement. We expect UNEP to continue its support and expand it to other countries or regions, where appropriate, including to undertake field visits and to dispatch assistance missions to affected areas, upon the invitation of affected States, as foreseen by Resolution 3/1.
- Furthermore, we would like to emphasize that, when implementing Resolution 3/1 on conflict pollution, UNEP should explore synergies and develop coordination with other UN agencies and stakeholders.
- **On Contributions of UNEA to the High Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF)**, the EU and its Member States welcome the report and the efforts undertaken in order to ensure substantive input from UNEA and active participation of the UNEA president during last year's HLPF.
- We would like to underline the importance of ensuring a similar input and visibility during the upcoming HLPFs. As the main universal decision-making body for environmental decision making, UNEA should continue to pursue a prominent role to ensure that the environmental perspective is taken into account in the proceedings of the HLPF. This includes the provision of substantive inputs to the HLPF - in particular on the SDGs under review - as well as seeking an oral intervention by the UNEA chair during the HLPF.
- In light of the invitation of the ECOSOC President to provide inputs to the HLPF by 15 March, time is short. We expect the Secretariat and/or UNEA President to provide further clarification on the preparations and steps scheduled for UNEA to provide its input, and we look forward to discussing with other Member States under agenda item 6 a way forward to ensure that UNEA will continue to provide its valuable contributions to the HLPF in future years.
- **On Health and Environment** we welcome the work done so far and notably the inter-agency work engaged to implement the resolution. We note that no information is provided on the steps taken in response to the request (in OP 26) related to the inclusion of human health factors in UNEP's projects on ecosystem valuation and accounting on the assessment of the health co-benefits of UNEP's current biodiversity-related projects and request the Secretariat to provide further information on the state of play of this issue.
- We call for the timely delivery, in advance to UNEA-5, of the two reports requested in that resolution (on pesticides and fertilizers, and Antimicrobial Resistance), noting that the progress report mentions that only one scoping meeting was held for each report and that no date for a first-order draft is announced.

- We also highlight the importance of abiding to a strict conflict of interest policy in the development of the report on the impact of pesticides and fertilizers on the environment and health.
- On **managing soil pollution to achieve Sustainable Development** we stress that soil pollution receives too little attention globally, in view of its wide-ranging impacts, directly affecting biodiversity, ecosystems and human health.
- We welcome the work done to articulate the efforts on the report on soil pollution, as well as the report on the impact of pesticides and fertilizers on the environment and health. And we note that the report by the International Technical panel on Soils of the Global Soil Partnership entitled “soil pollution : a hidden reality” only partially addresses the requests specified in the resolution.
- However, we also note that not much information is provided on the progress in the implementation of the resolution, while the progress report indicates that an implementation plan and budget have been drafted to be incorporated in an UNEP/FAO mobilization strategy. We would like to request the Secretariat to provide further information on this draft implementation plan and the related budget envisaged.
- Furthermore, we call on the Secretariat to provide more information on the steps taken to “elaborate technical guidelines for the prevention and minimization of soil contamination as a contribution to support the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management, including nature-based solutions “.
- **On marine litter and microplastics** the EU and its Member States thank the Executive Director for the report which states the outcome of the Ad Hoc Open Ended Expert Group (AHOEWG) established under resolution 3/7 as laid down in the co-chairs’ “Draft Options For Discussions (Revised)”. It should be noted that this report does not fully reflect the options that were presented by various proponents. Also, minutes from the meeting have still not been published. We consider that the challenge for UNEA consists in transforming this outcome that might appear as a list of measures “à la carte” into a clear, articulated, comprehensive and integrated approach susceptible to improve the international efficiency in achieving the long term elimination of discharge of litter and microplastics.
- We would have expected the report to have provided further information on the state of play on the other elements of the resolution. We understand that this can partly be done only on the basis of information provided by the Member States themselves and we appreciate that UNEP gave an opportunity to Member States to provide information on the actions undertaken to follow-up the UNEA resolutions, by filling in a form embedded in the AHOEEG webpage. We however believe that a reflection should be carried out on simpler ways for Member States to report.
- We also wish to thank UNEP for its analysis of voluntary commitments with regard to marine litter and microplastics to assess the potential and realized impact of voluntary commitment targeting marine litter and microplastics and to provide an overview of their scope.

We look forward to further engaging with UN Member States in this meeting to define follow up steps to strengthen international cooperation, coordination and synergies to effectively monitor and address marine litter and microplastics, in the context of a comprehensive approach, focusing on prevention and taking better into account the whole life cycle of plastic products.

- We also welcome the report and the progress made on **preventing and reducing air pollution to improve air quality globally**. The EU and its Member States remain committed to improve air quality as a policy priority, noting that air pollution remains the single greatest environmental risk to human health, now around 7 million premature deaths globally per year according to WHO and with negative impact also on ecosystems and the environment.
- We acknowledge the efforts for establishing an air quality programme, including the work undertaken on monitoring and assessment, policy and technology support, awareness-raising and communication.
- We encourage to continue this work as outlined in the Executive Director's report in close partnership with other relevant UN agencies, including the WHO, the World Meteorological Organization and the UNECE Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution – this year celebrating its 40th anniversary – as well as with other relevant actors, in particular where climate change co-benefits can be achieved.
- Furthermore, we seek further information to be provided by the Secretariat on UNEP's activities and progress made on the implementation of the Road Map for Clean Fuel and Vehicle Standards in Southern and Western Africa and the Africa Sustainable Transport Forum Action Plan (as reflected in UNEA Resolution 3/8, 7(b)).
- On **eliminating exposure to lead paint and promoting environmentally sound management of waste lead-acid batteries**, the EU and its Member States welcome the work undertaken and the progress made on the sound management of lead, in particular lead in paint and waste lead-acid batteries.
- Effectively addressing lead is an important element of a larger and urgent need to prioritise efforts towards the 2020 goal for the sound management of chemicals and waste, as emphasised in UNEA resolutions 1/5, 2/7 and 3/4. The mandate provided to UNEP under UNEA resolutions 1/5 and 2/7 on the sound management of chemicals and waste (and in fact also under Governing Council decision 27/12) remains valid and requires decisive broader action. Indeed, the work of UNEP in the field of chemicals and waste needs to be significantly enhanced to address the urgency required by the 2020 goal.
- On **addressing water pollution to protect and restore water-related ecosystems**, we note the progress as reported. On the report we would like to highlight paragraph 15 referring to the conclusions of the 4th Intergovernmental Review held in Bali in October 2018, and note that no approved report, nor conclusions from this meeting are available to date.
- The EU and its Member States acknowledge the need of additional work and support related to the monitoring of the implementation of SDG 6, and that the work under the GEMS/Water programme could be linked to that. We encourage UNEP to continue its activities and cooperation with other UN agencies to strengthen monitoring and reporting, while building on existing activities and programmes and avoiding duplication of efforts.

- Furthermore, we recognize the links with the work undertaken in the Waste Water Initiative and the Global Nutrient Management Partnership, and we encourage UNEP to effectively integrate these and related activities in its Programme of Work in a coherent manner.
- With regard to partnerships on data and monitoring, we expect UNEP to take a prudent and due diligent approach.
- On **the implementation of paragraph 88** (a)-(h) of the outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled “The future we want”, we welcome the report of the Executive Director, which provides a useful summary on the state of play relevant to international environmental governance and the strengthening of UNEP.
- We recognize the findings that the universal membership of UNEA has contributed to increased participation of Member States and other Stakeholders, as well as more visibility for the environment within the UN system. We also recognize that progress has been made in other areas, including consolidation of the headquarters functions, strengthening regional offices, communication and awareness raising and improved access to information by stakeholders.
- We regret, however, that the report is lacking analysis on areas where progress seems to be lagging behind, including to enhance system-wide coordination in the UN system, contributions to the Environment Fund, as well as strengthening the Science-Policy interface. The EU and its Member States would like to request the Secretariat to provide further information and analysis on possible actions to advance in those areas.
- In that regard, we would like to highlight the role of the Environmental Management Group to support implementation of system-wide framework strategies relevant to the protection of the environment, with the view of improving cooperation among the UN agencies in providing more effective support to Member States to implement the environment dimension of the 2030 Agenda.
- We also would like to reiterate our support and underline the importance of effective implementation of the UN Development Reform as agreed in resolution 72/279 of the UN General Assembly and call upon all UN agencies, including UNEP, to implement the reform at all level.
- Furthermore, we highlight the importance of a predictable and sustainable Environment Fund and invite all Member States to contribute to the Fund.
- On **Coral Reefs**, we thank the Executive Director for its comprehensive report as well as the recommendations.
- The EU and its Member States support continued attention to coral reefs, given their role in coastal protection, providing a source of income (tourism and fisheries) that needs to be managed well, conserved, protected and restored where relevant.
- We look forward to engaging with other UN Member States on how to follow up on the recommendations during this meeting.

OECP-4 Agenda item 5: Administrative and budgetary issues
- Programme Performance Report 2018-2019

We would like to thank UNEP for the information provided on the progress made in 2018 on the current programme of work. Due to the short amount of time available to study this information and since the report was not yet available on the portal, we will keep our intervention limited to preliminary comments. We will send in detailed comments at a later stage.

We welcome the progress made so far on several subprogrammes. The results achieved are encouraging and the improved information provided to the meeting is most appreciated. As a next step we would like to encourage the secretariat to provide more insight on the reasons for insufficient progress, as well as on how UNEP will take into account the identified challenges and opportunities in future implementation work.

The EU and its Member States would like to express concern that, once again, the gap between the agreed budget for the Environment Fund and the actual contributions remains too wide.

The EU and its Member States are especially concerned that the lack of balance between earmarked and un-earmarked contributions means "an unbalanced delivery of the work program" of UNEP.

As major contributors to the Environment Fund, the EU and its Member States would like to recall the importance of increasing the range of contributors to UNEP funding, especially through the Environment Fund. All of us are responsible to provide UNEP with the resources needed to implement the Programme of Work we adopted.

We appreciate the efforts UNEP has made to make available, on its website, information on the contributors to the Environment Fund and on earmarked funding. This increases transparency and makes monitoring of the resource mobilization strategy easier.

We look forward to the formal and informal dialogue with Regional groups, Members States and the UNEP Secretariat this week on the current and future programmes of work and budget.

OECP-4 Agenda item 6: Contributions to the meetings of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development

- The EU and its Member States thank the Secretariat and the UNEA President for the paper containing the draft UNEA inputs to the 2019 HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC.
- We would have liked to receive the document a bit earlier, but welcome the fact that these inputs take into account the need to align with the overall HLPF theme of "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality", the SDGs under in-depth review this year, as well as the need to respond to the specific questions raised in the questionnaire.

- Overall, the EU and its Member States welcome that the report acknowledges the role of innovative solutions and technologies in combatting further environmental deterioration and addressing emerging challenges. However, we are surprised that unsustainable consumption and production patterns (SCP) are described as an emerging challenge: The need to transition to more sustainable consumption and production patterns has been recognized for a long time already, especially since the Rio+20 Summit in 2012, when the 10 Year Framework Programme on SCP was agreed and subsequently developed. We therefore propose to adjust the language and to refer to unsustainable production and consumption patterns as a pressing challenge to be addressed without delay.
- On the identification of progress, gaps and areas requiring urgent attention (part a):
 - the EU and its Member States agree with the focus on SDG 13 (also in view of the Climate Summit later this year and given the valuable findings contained in the 2018 UNEP Emissions Gap Report); on the gender-environment nexus (given the importance of the interlinkages between the SDGs and empowerment of women); and the need for further work on SDG indicators.
- On valuable experiences and lessons learned (part b):
 - the EU and its Member States welcome the focus on the role of financial and fiscal policies in supporting the delivery of several SDGs (also against the background of the EU's own experience with sustainable finance).
- On emerging issues (part c),
 - with regards to issue of geoengineering, the document is in our view prejudging the outcome of UNEA, and we would like to strongly request to align the document with the outcome of the discussions this week.
- As to the principle of “ensuring that no-one is left behind” (part d),
 - We agree to keep underlining from the experience of UNEP and UNEA, that often the poorest and most vulnerable, particularly women and children, are impacted the most by environmental and associated health risks.
- As to areas for political guidance by the HLPF (part e),
 - We would like to caution against calling for “creative approaches” to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns” without duly reflecting on solutions that may exist already.
- As to policy recommendations (part f):
 - the EU and its Member States agree that “urgent attention is needed to address the fact that implementation and enforcement of environmental laws and regulations fall short of what is required to address environmental challenges”.
 - On the suggestion to recognize the human right to a clean, safe and healthy environment in a global instrument, we believe this recommendation is pre-empting discussions that are taking place elsewhere.

- Finally, the EU and its Member States would like to emphasize that the Summary of inputs should reflect the body of the text. In this regard, we would like to seek clarification on the idea contained in the Summary of inputs of “the need to work towards a transformative governance mechanism that would bridge the alarming gap between proliferating environmental norms and policies on the one hand and continuing trajectory towards environmental degradation and pollution on the other hand.”

OECP-4 Agenda item 8: Report on consultations on the Ministerial Declaration

- On behalf of the EU and its Member States, I wish to thank the UNEA President for the 2nd draft of the Ministerial Declaration and the report on the consultations that are ongoing.
- We also wish to thank and express support for the transparent process in engaging regional groups and Member States in the development of the text.
- As indicated on earlier occasions, the EU and its Member States support the proposal for a concrete Ministerial Declaration from UNEA.
- In general, the EU and its Member States believe that the text provides a good basis for further discussions at this meeting.
- In particular, we support the text:
 - to reflect concrete targets for 2025 that reflect the urgency to take action to promote innovative solutions for Sustainable Consumption and Production and environmental challenges, including on plastics and sustainable public procurement;
 - to highlight the importance of the Science-Policy Interface and monitoring to support evidence based decision making and
 - to underline the importance of partnerships to work towards sustainable and innovative finance opportunities.
- We also appreciate that guidance is provided on the ongoing processes relevant to the post 2020 framework for biodiversity and an inclusive platform for the sound management of chemicals and waste.
- However, there are also some areas where we think the text could be further improved.
- The EU and its Member States would welcome if the Declaration would highlight how circular economy could contribute to innovative approaches and solutions to address environmental challenges and Sustainable Consumption and Production.
- We also would welcome the text to refer to the contribution to the theme of the 10 Year Framework Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production through the One Planet Network.
- Furthermore, we would welcome the Declaration to further emphasize the importance to achieve the 2020 targets for existing processes, including chemicals and waste.

- In particular, the EU and its Member States would like to highlight two areas that we think should be addressed in the Declaration:
 - Firstly, the need to continue to increase ambition on climate, building on the outcomes of COP 24, and
 - Secondly, to welcome the Marine and Coastal strategy that will assist Member States in their collective actions to restore and protect Coastal and Marine Ecosystems.
- We look forward to continue our consultations with the UNEA President and all Member States during this meeting and we have full confidence to arrive at a Ministerial Declaration that is inspiring and ambitious.

Thank you

Closing Statement at OECPR-4

Dear President, Excellencies, distinguished Delegates,

I have the honour to deliver this closing statement on behalf of the European Union and its 28 Member States.

We welcome the constructive consultations we had so far during the OECPR and we appreciate the efforts that Member States, facilitators and the Secretariat have made during this process.

Let me also stress the positive spirit generated by all participants at this OECPR session, who have shown strong commitment and determination to achieve our common objective - *Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production*. Let's keep the momentum!

We have also very much appreciated the various opportunities for engaging with stakeholders from civil society, the private sector, science etc., and we are impressed with their contributions to our common cause. This engagement with stakeholders should be further strengthened at subsequent meetings of UNEA.

We warmly thank the President of UNEA-4 for all the efforts made to find the support of all Member States for the draft Ministerial Outcome Document. We are confident that the President will be available to work with all Member States to finalize the document, while taking into account the results of the work during the weekend. We stand ready to engage with all other Member States to work constructively to contribute to an ambitious outcome to be adopted by the High Level Segment.

Thank you.

Opening Statement at UNEA 4

Mr. President,

Excellences,

Distinguished colleagues,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

We are saddened by the tragic circumstances that affect this meeting. We express our deepest condolences for those who lost their lives in yesterday's tragic event and our thoughts and prayers are with their families, friends and colleagues. Many of them were on their way to this meeting wanting to make a difference and adding their voices to our call for urgent action in the face of today's pressing environmental challenges. Their absence increases our responsibility to make this meeting a success.

This session of the United Nations Environment Assembly represents our opportunity to boost the political will and efforts in order to solve the sustainability crises and move towards establishing the reference values for a sustainable use of our natural resources.

We would like to congratulate the UNEA President and the Acting Executive Director of the UNEP for their contributions on preparing this fourth session of the Assembly and assure them that the EU will work constructively to enable this Assembly to live up to its mandate to provide global Environment leadership and to work on innovative solutions to address environmental challenges and Sustainable Consumption and Production.

We appreciate the draft Ministerial Outcome Document and we support the UNEA President in his efforts to preserve a level of ambition that meets the urgent need to address specific areas. In that light, we would like to continue the consultations with the Member States to work towards an ambitious outcome that recognizes among others the urgency, underlined by the best available science, to enhance ambition to address climate change and effectively address plastics.

We welcome the very constructive consultations at the fourth OECPR. Looking at the results of the OECPR, we will work constructively during this week's negotiations at UNEA-4 to reach agreement on many if not all resolutions, in our efforts to build a better future.

To get there, we still face a number of challenges. The climate and biodiversity crises which we face make it essential and urgent to step up global action against all forms of deforestation and to give UNEP the mandate to contribute with its expertise. We would also like to emphasize the interlinkages between Sustainable Consumption and Production, resource management and the elements of our environment - climate, air, biodiversity, water and land use. The European Union and its Member States recognize the imperative to place sustainable resource management in the center of our relevant policies.

We wish to voice our strong support for the resolution on women and the environment which promotes gender equality and the human rights and empowerment of all women and girls in environmental governance.

We wish to facilitate environment ministers' discussion on *Natural resource use: towards a Safe Operating Space*. We invite all ministers and heads of delegations to a breakfast on Friday 15 March 2019, at 8.00 am to discuss how we can use our natural resources in a safe operating space for humanity and how we can boost the political will, establishing targets and reference values for a sustainable level of use of natural resources.

We believe that the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and other multilateral environmental agreement objectives cannot be achieved without the sustainable management and use of natural resources, through greater resource efficiency and by moving towards a circular economy.

Dear colleagues,

The draft Ministerial Outcome Document has been developed based in the spirit of consensus after in-depth consultations and negotiations to accommodate all concerns, while maintaining the action-oriented nature of the document. We hope that further work during this week may allow us to make further improvements to an outcome document that provides valuable guidance for all Member States and stakeholders on innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production. We still believe that UNEA should recognize the urgency, underlined by the best available science, to enhance ambition to address climate change.

The EU and its Member States want this meeting to be a success. As Environment Ministers we have to use this opportunity and show leadership to communicate a clear and ambitious political message from this global meeting to the High-level Political Forum and to the wider global public. This message is clear: We must shift our global economic systems towards greater sustainability and circularity and catalyze global and concrete action to achieve this shift as a matter of urgency.

Thank you.

**Committee of the Whole
13 March 2019**

Statement on the Deforestation resolution

Mr. Chair,

I take the floor on behalf of the European Union and its Member States and wish to touch upon the negotiations that have taken place in Working Group 2 on the draft resolution on "Deforestation and Agricultural Supply Chains".

To begin with, we wish to express our appreciation to the co-facilitators who have guided the discussions in the Working Group through long hours during the past days and nights.

Considering the important role forests play for the Earth system, for providing livelihoods to many people worldwide as well as the multitude of ecosystem services they provide, sustainably managing all types of forests, protecting forests, halting deforestation, restoring degraded forests as well as increasing afforestation globally constitute an important priority for us.

The European Union remains committed to the ambitious and effective implementation of all international forest-related instruments, processes, commitments and goals, such as SDG 15, the Global Forest Goals and the Aichi Biodiversity targets. We believe that achieving these globally agreed goals requires addressing the impacts of global supply chains on forests.

Considering the theme of this UNEA meeting, UNEP's expertise on life cycle approaches and the sustainability of value chains as well as UNEP's mandates to coordinate environmental matters within the UN system, the EU and its Member States are of the opinion that this body is well placed to contribute constructively on this issue.

In line with this conviction, the EU and its Member States have submitted mid-November a draft concept note and in mid-January a draft resolution on "Deforestation and Agricultural Commodity Supply Chains". Up to the very first formal discussion in OECP, the EU and its Member States received nothing but positive comments on these documents.

The intent of this draft resolution was to acknowledge the importance of tackling deforestation, and the shared responsibility of all actors along the value chain, including consumer countries via their supply chains regarding deforestation. It intended to initiate a multilateral and multi stakeholder discussion to promote consumer information, traceability, transparency and due diligence as well as capacity building, sustainable finance and education towards more sustainable agricultural supply chains.

The intent of this draft resolution was to promote concrete, collaborative solutions to reduce trade-offs and build synergies between different SDGs, recognizing the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda we have collectively committed to. We fully recognize the importance of sustainable agriculture and the need to end poverty, achieve food security and end all forms of malnutrition as a matter of priority.

Throughout the past days, the EU and its Member States have engaged in extensive consultations with a spirit of compromise and have strived to take up comments by other delegations by revising twice their proposal. We want to thank all the delegations who constructively engaged in these discussions.

Despite all our efforts, we have come to the disappointing conclusion that it is not possible to reach consensus on the need to improve the sustainability of agricultural commodity supply chains with respect to forests. What is even more concerning is that it seemed impossible to reaffirm our collective commitments on halting deforestation.

Mister Chair, we thus wish to inform the Committee of the Whole that the EU and its Member States decided to withdraw its proposal related to deforestation.

The EU and its Member States remain committed to fight against the different drivers of deforestation. We have implemented the Forest law enforcement, governance and trade action plan to combat illegal logging by strengthening sustainable and legal management, improving governance and promoting trade in legally produced timber. Today, all of our timber industries and wood operators are engaged in this process through the EU timber regulation.

But illegal logging is not the only deforestation driver, and for sure not the first. That's why the EU has launched at the end of 2018 an initiative to combat deforestation, protect forest and promote sustainable supply chains. Through that, we want to step up EU action against tropical deforestation and forest degradation by developing a more coherent and comprehensive approach to this complex issue.

Thank you.

Closing statement at UNEA-4

- Mister President, distinguished colleagues; it is my privilege to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.
- This Assembly was overshadowed by the tragic accident of the flight carrying many of our colleagues to this meeting. And today we also extend our condolences to the New Zealand delegation and mourn with them the loss of many lives.
- All of us represented at the fourth session of the UN Environmental Assembly have worked hard to achieve an ambitious and forward looking result. And we think we have succeeded. It is therefore with great pleasure that we welcome the outcome of this Assembly.
- We welcome the engagement of all Member States in discussing solutions for the environmental challenges that our planet is facing. That proves that the highest environment authority sets the global environmental agenda and that UNEP maintains its underpinning science-policy foundation.
- This significant engagement and the positive results would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of the UNEA President, Mister Siim Kiisler, the chair of the Committee of the Whole, Ambassador Coimbra from Brazil, and the Bureau of the Assembly as well as the facilitators. We also welcome the preparatory process led by the Committee of Permanent Representatives and efficiently supported by the UNEP Secretariat. Great thanks to the Acting Executive Director, Ms Joyce Msuya. We also extend a very warm welcome to the incoming Executive Director, Ms Inger Andersen. We are looking forward to working with her.
- The most prominent success of UNEA-4 is the Ministerial Declaration. It presents a compromise between various levels of ambitions of Member States, nevertheless, it clearly indicates the direction in which our development needs to evolve to ensure a sustainable future. The Declaration includes very important statements and commitments that will guide our work in the multilateral system and actions at national and regional level, not least with regard to the topical issue of single use plastics.

- Along the same lines, we are largely happy with the overall balance of the package of resolutions we have negotiated over the last days. The EU and its Member States believe that we have agreed on an important set of approaches, commitments and innovative solutions that will advance us in our work on important topics such as women and the environment, sound management of chemicals and waste, sustainable consumption and production, more resource efficiency and circularity and fewer unnecessary products such as certain single use plastic products.
- We welcome the review process initiated at this UNEA meeting and we look forward to work with other Member States to improve efficiency and effectiveness of UNEA and its subsidiary bodies.
- It will remain a major disappointment that it was impossible to agree on the resolution proposed by the EU and its Member States on Deforestation and agriculture commodity supply chains. Despite efforts and untiring engagement, it proved impossible to convince some Member States to address this burning global challenge also at this Assembly. The EU and its Member States will continue engaging beyond UNEA-4 to ensure that this threat to our environment is fully addressed.
- We remain committed to the 2030 Agenda, agreed multilateral cooperation and international environmental governance, and will not agree to any back-sliding in this regard.
- We would like to thank all with whom we worked hand in hand for the past ten days. We have been encouraged by the tremendous opportunities to discuss and exchange views, including through dialogues with political leaders and stakeholders, various side events and bilateral meetings. We invite all partners to join us to work with us to develop future initiatives and actions building on the achievements of this Assembly.
- Last but not least, the EU and its Member States would like to congratulate the newly elected President of UNEA-5, Mr Ola Elvestuen, and the new UNEA Bureau, and we wish you every success in guiding us towards the next session of the Assembly.
