



UNITED NATIONS

ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT GROUP

EMG

25th Senior Officials Meeting of the United Nations Environment Management Group	EMGSOM.25_4
Technical Segment, 17 th September 2019 (15:00 -17:30 CET) Audio/video	Distribution: EMG Members

Potential new topics for future work of the EMG

In addition to reviewing progress on ongoing work, the midterm meeting of the Technical Segment of the 25th Senior Officials Meeting (held 20 May 2019) preliminarily considered four new topics proposed for possible future work of the Environment Management Group:

- I. UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030
- II. Marine plastic littering and microplastics
- III. Sustainable infrastructure
- IV. Sustainable food systems

This document provides a summary of the proposals and preliminary discussions and suggests decisions (action points) for the way forward. As per EMG practice, at their meeting on 17 September 2019, the Technical Segment is expected to consider these four issues and approve the suggested action points on behalf of the Senior Officials. A summary of approved action points will be presented to the Senior Officials at their meeting on 25 September.

I. UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030

In March 2019, the UN General Assembly, in its resolution [A/RES/73/284](#), invited the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to lead the implementation of the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, in collaboration with the secretariats of the Rio conventions, other relevant multilateral environmental agreements and entities of the United Nations System, including by identifying and developing possible activities and programmes, within their mandates and existing resources, and through voluntary contributions, as appropriate.

UNEP briefed EMG Members at the midterm meeting on the importance of the Decade, highlighting the potential for collaboration and partnership on this issue (please see Information Document INF_5). EMG members were asked to share their views, expectations, advice, and guidance on how to make the Decade impactful, and how to link it with other existing and forthcoming International Decades, and

with relevant International Days. As the system-wide coordination mechanism on the environment, the EMG is invited to consider this topic as an issue to ensure UN-wide collaboration and joint action.

II. Marine plastic littering and microplastics

At its fourth session in March, the UN Environment Assembly adopted a new resolution on Marine Plastic Litter and Microplastics ([UNEP/EA.4/RES.6](#)). Emphasizing the importance of strengthened coordination and multi-stakeholder cooperation for achieving long-term elimination of plastic discharge into the oceans, the resolution invites the EMG to engage in and contribute to the work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics.

The May 2019 mid-term meeting of the EMG discussed such a contribution, and recommended the establishment of an interagency Task Team to undertake, *inter alia*, a mapping of all relevant initiatives of United Nations Agencies, Funds and Programmes and expertise related to marine litter (please see Information Document INF_6).

The Ad Hoc Open-ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics, to which the mapping exercise would contribute, will convene in Bangkok on 18–22 November 2019. To enable a timely submission to this meeting, in August, the EMG Chair invited EMG members to nominate focal points for the Task Team, which, once established, will prepare its Terms of Reference specifying its deliverables.

III. Sustainable infrastructure

In February 2019, the [EMG Nexus Dialogue on “Sustainable Infrastructure for the SDGs”](#) was organized in Geneva in collaboration with UNEP and the Sustainable Infrastructure Partnership. The Dialogue recognized the need to collectively work to raise the international visibility of sustainable infrastructure as a central and crosscutting component of the 2030 Agenda, and invited the EMG to engage the UN System and other relevant partners to promote integrated approaches to sustainable infrastructure as a means of increasing safety, sustainability, and resilience.

In March 2019, the UN Environment Assembly passed a resolution ([UNEP/EA.4/RES.5](#)) on sustainable infrastructure, highlighting the cross-cutting interlinkages between infrastructure development and the broader SDG framework. The resolution urges the international community to “develop and strengthen national and regional systems-level strategic approaches” to infrastructure planning and development, and requests UNEP to, *inter alia*, foster multi-stakeholder dialogue and capacity-building efforts to ensure that stakeholders and policymakers are well-equipped to apply a holistic approach to infrastructure development at the national level.

Briefing the midterm meeting on the outcome of the Nexus Dialogue and the UN Environment Assembly resolution, UNEP highlighted the need for increased coordination within the UN System to achieve the necessary impact (please see Information Document INF_7). UNEP suggested that the EMG may be well-placed to lead in this respect, for example by taking stock of existing work on sustainable infrastructure within the UN System and facilitating a shared understanding of integrated approaches.

IV. Sustainable food systems

The [EMG Nexus Dialogue on Sustainable Food Systems](#), organized in collaboration with UNEP during the March 2019 UN Environment Assembly, called for a sustainable food systems approach that is holistic and integrated, to address food security, environmental health, human well-being and poverty alleviation.

A number of initiatives, policies and laws promote sustainable food systems at the international and national levels. However, food systems issues are often addressed in isolation, with insufficient collaboration among the different actors and domains.

In its briefing to the midterm meeting, UNEP highlighted that food systems cut across several disciplines and are present in the agendas of nearly all UN Agencies, influencing or being influenced by food systems outcomes (please see Information Document INF_8). It emphasized that a joint UN approach to key food systems issues will help Agencies advance their mandates. Promoting sustainable food systems jointly can help Member States shift towards sustainable food systems and advance towards the achievement of multiple Sustainable Development Goals. An EMG contribution could support the implementation of resolutions related to food systems by UN governing bodies, i.e., as an interagency input to the development guidelines for food systems and nutrition in collaboration with the One Planet Network on Sustainable Food Systems. Against this background, UNEP proposed that a Task Team composed of interested UN entities be created within the EMG, to agree on joint actions and areas for cooperation.

Suggested Actions:

The Senior Officials:

- Welcome the establishment of a Task Team on Marine Plastic Littering and Microplastics; and
- Take note of the other three proposals presented to the midterm meeting of the technical segment and invite further consideration of possible system-wide contributions on these topics, taking into account the availability of resources.