

<p>27th Senior Officials Meeting of the United Nations Environment Management Group 07 October 2021 (14:00 -15:30 CEST) Online</p>	<p>EMGSOM.27 Distribution: EMG Members</p>
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Proceedings of the 27th meeting of the Senior Officials of the Environment Management Group

Summary Report

Introduction

1. The twenty-seventh meeting of the Senior Officials (SOM) of the Environment Management Group (EMG) was held as a web conference on 7 October 2021. The Senior Officials meeting was preceded by a Technical Segment on 30 September¹. The Senior Officials Meeting was chaired by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Chair of the EMG, Ms. Inger Andersen. The Senior Segment was attended by 50 EMG members and 2 observing entities (See [list of participants](#)). Meeting documents are available on the [EMG website](#).
2. In her introductory remarks, the Chair stressed that the work of the EMG could not come at a more important time given the triple planetary crisis. The entire UN system has understood the climate change crisis and has integrated it into its programming. The biodiversity crisis has been the focus of our work in the last year which resulted in a UN Common Approach. UNDP and the many other agencies have worked hard on this issue together with UNEP. The UN now needs to fully take on board the pollution and the waste crisis as well. Each of these crises requires our collective action.

Approval of the EMG workplan 2021-2022

3. The Senior Officials considered and approved [10 recommended Action Points](#) proposed by the Technical Segment for the future work of the EMG which will form the [EMG workplan 2021-2022](#).
4. They supported the principles of the [UN Sustainability Strategy Phase II](#), noting the importance of accelerating the implementation of the Strategy while respecting the individual mandates of each UN entity.²
5. The following reports of the EMG prepared in 2020-2021 were endorsed by the Senior Officials:

¹ The report of the Technical Segment is available on the EMG website <insert link when available>

² In this regard, the IAEA stated that although it will take the principles contained in the Strategy into account when updating and implementing its policies on the matter, it will not endorse the Strategy at this stage.

- [An UN system-wide contribution to support Member States in addressing marine litter and microplastics](#)
- [Phase II of a UN Sustainability Strategy 2020-2030](#)
- [UN International Good Practice Principles for Sustainable Infrastructure](#)
- [Inclusive Green Recovery: An Essential Post-COVID-19 Paradigm Shift to Recover Better](#)

A pollution-free planet including the sound management of chemicals and waste

6. The Chair introduced the [topic](#) by referring to the [Ministerial Declaration](#) of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its third session (UNEA 3) and the importance of heightening joint efforts to address the pollution crisis by supporting the [implementation plan “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”](#) adopted by the UNEA 4.
7. The Senior Officials provided the following key thoughts and perspectives on this topic including:
 - There is a need for agencies to work together on providing further evidence for the planetary crisis, using operational capacities and mobilising resources to address the issue. There is a need for working faster and further together, enshrining the right to a healthy environment and leveraging UN system-wide coordination at all levels to unlock the full potential at both regional and country levels.
 - The agencies need to continue to “walk the talk” on managing the impacts of their programmes and support operations on the environment, with respect to pollution prevention and responsible waste management.
 - Multilateral environmental agreements including the Water, Industrial Accidents, Aarhus, BRS, Minamata, CBD and other Conventions are highly relevant to the pollution-free planet discussion and action.
 - Tackling pollution is a key element of building back better for a robust and sustainable recovery. Chemicals and waste management may be key to maximise lasting and transformational impact. The focus should be on addressing the sources of pollution rather than addressing the costly clean-ups and remediation that currently exist.
 - Scaling up solutions will require forming new partnerships with entities outside of the UN, including with the private sector.
 - The proposed Consultative Process could consider how the UN can push progress in the following areas: (a) encouraging the disclosure of the chemicals and pollution footprint of enterprises; (b) encouraging countries to push through legislation, establishing the liability of companies for the pollution they cause.
 - Only 20% of the required funds and resources are being mobilised annually to address chemicals and waste issues. It is important that the proposed Consultative Process looks into a financial approach to chemicals, generating information on cost benefits, investments in chemical management and information on needs and financial gaps.
 - There are important opportunities for an innovative technology revolution and digital transformation, with a focus on a circular economy, to support the issue of pollution-free planet.

- There is a need for strengthened dialogue to better understand interlinkages between various areas contributing to the pollution and waste crisis. The following themes were brought into the discussion: incorporation of the criminal justice dimension into the broader environment and pollution agendas; intersection of trade with plastics production and consumption; alignment between the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and chemicals management frameworks.

Conclusion

8. The Senior Officials agreed to establish a Consultative Process on a Pollution-free Planet.

UN system contribution to the International Meeting “Stockholm+50: a healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity”

9. The Chair introduced the [topic](#) highlighting the focus of the Stockholm+50 International Meeting on a healthy planet for our wellbeing today and in the future, and the responsibilities and opportunities in this context.
10. The Senior Officials expressed their overall support for a contribution to the international meeting, as a great opportunity to align and operationalize existing commitments on the environment. Key points shared by the Senior Officials included the following:
 - Stockholm+50 is an opportunity to highlight the compounding vulnerabilities from interlinked planetary crises.
 - The environmental crisis is the greatest current challenge to human rights.
 - Messaging around the meeting should build on a people-centered and SDG-centered approach.
 - It is important to learn from the past while focusing on the way forward. Successful approaches and failures should be considered, so that lessons from the past can help overcoming future challenges.
 - It is important that Stockholm+50 inspires Member States and encourages them to look forward, emphasizing notions of green recovery and green economy. A systemic and just transition is crucial. The UN can contribute by connecting many different central areas such as pollution and human health.
 - Stockholm+50 is an opportunity to boost the impact of the Rio- and other UN conventions for the global environmental goals.
 - Many processes feed into Stockholm+50, such as the Oceans Conference, Transport Conference, Food Summit, Biodiversity Conference, the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and the COPs.
 - It should be ensured that local and regional government groups can meaningfully contribute to Stockholm+50 preparations.
 - Agriculture and food systems are crucial. The way we produce and consume, and how well we can promote agriculture with less reliance on synthetic inputs (fertilizers, pesticides) influence the quality of the environment.

- There is a need to address the "fundamentals" of the economic system, including the aspects of inequality. There is no time for marginal changes, environmental sustainability needs to be considered as an economic solution for development.
- Stockholm+50 should stress the feasibility to integrate the economy and the environment in policymaking (i.a. through ecosystem accounting).
- Environmental sustainability has had large implications for employment. Not only can preserving and restoring natural assets lead to more and better jobs, but social justice and decent work for all can only be delivered if environmental sustainability is promoted.
- Young people are an essential part of Stockholm+50 both through meaningful participation as well as using the meeting as a platform to encourage education.
- The outcomes of Stockholm+50 must reflect the ongoing emergency, through awareness-raising and communication using modern platforms.

Conclusion

11. **The Senior Officials agreed to establish an interagency Task Team to prepare the EMG contribution to the international meeting.**

Other matters

12. The EMG Secretary notified participants that the Children and Youth Major Group of UNEP has submitted a written statement to the SOM ([information document](#)) requesting to be present in future Senior Officials meetings.
13. The Senior Officials agreed with the suggestion of the Chair to find ways for youth to have a voice in the EMG building on existing youth networks. The EMG Secretary was requested to liaise with the respective UN departments and units on youth, including the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth and the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth and Development (IANYD) to find a suitable way forward.

Closure of the Meeting

14. The Chair thanked participants and stressed that the support of each agency is critical to the work of the EMG. She invited the participants to reach out to their respective focal points to hear from them, as they provide a heavy lift to the broader environmental agenda of the UN.