

Agenda item 7.1 : UNEA 5.2 Strategic Outcomes

Purpose of paper

1. To inform the Meeting of the outcomes of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA5.2) which was convened in person and online on the 28 February to 2 March 2022 in Nairobi, Kenya.

Background

2. The fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA5.2) brought together political, industrial, scientific, and civil society leaders to work towards strengthening actions for nature to achieve the sustainable development goals.
3. In the lead-up to the UNEA5.2, a preparatory meeting organised jointly by the Secretariat in collaboration with UNEP Pacific Office was held virtually on 2 February 2022 was attended by 17 SPREP Members as well as Civil Societies and NGOs to discuss the draft decisions and resolutions under the five clusters of:
 - a. Cluster 1: Marine / Plastic pollution;
 - b. Cluster 2: Nature-Based Solutions and biodiversity;
 - c. Cluster 3: Chemicals and minerals;
 - d. Cluster 4: Green recovery and circular economy; and
 - e. Cluster 5: Organisational and administrative matters.
4. A follow-up meeting was held on 18 February 2022 for registered SPREP Member delegates and was attended by Australia, New Zealand, Federated States of Micronesia and Fiji as well as Civil Societies and NGOs in particular the Centre of International Law (CIEL), Environment Investigation Agency (EIA), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Massey University, and University of Newcastle.
5. 11 SPREP Member Countries registered to attend UNEA5.2 (5 metropolitan Members and 6 Pacific Island Members). The Federated States of Micronesia and Fiji were the only Pacific Island Countries to have in-person attendees in Nairobi.
6. Members were invited by the Secretariat to join an on-line communication coordination skype and WhatsApp channel to hold regular on-line meetings and discuss events or to prepare for sessions.

Key Outcomes from the UNEA5.2

7. UNEA outcomes form the key global environmental agenda and as such, the outcomes of the fifth Session of the UNEA have strategic importance and relevance to SPREP, the Noumea Convention, as well as the Waigani Convention.
8. The Pacific region participated in person as well as virtually at UNEA5.2. Some of the key outcomes of UNEA 5.2 include the:
 - a. resolution “*End Plastic Pollution: Towards an International Legally Binding Instrument*” and establishment of an *Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC)* to negotiate a new binding global agreement covering the whole life cycle of plastics;
 - b. recognition of “Nature-Based Solutions for supporting sustainable development”;
 - c. discussions on “Sustainable Nitrogen Management”;
 - d. resolution on the “sound management of chemicals and waste”;
 - e. resolution to “Establish a Science-Policy Panel”;
 - f. resolution on “Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure”;
 - g. resolution on “Green Economy” and “Circular Economy”; and
 - h. resolution on “Mineral Resource Governance”.
9. The main outcome of UNEA5.2 was the resolution “*End Plastic Pollution: Towards an International Legally Binding Instrument*” including the establishment of an *Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC)* to negotiate a new binding global agreement covering the whole life cycle of plastics. This resolution is in line with the Pacific Regional Declaration on the Prevention of Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution and its Impacts reaffirming Pacific leaders’ grave concern about the environmental, social, cultural, economic, **human rights**, human health and, food security impacts of plastics **pollution at each stage of its life cycle**.
10. A recognition of “Nature-Based Solutions for supporting sustainable development” as it is well aligned with the main regional frameworks dealing with sustainable development, especially the *Vemööre Declaration* (Item10), the Pacific Islands Frameworks for Nature Conservation 2021-2025, The regional *Regional Marine Species Programme 2022-2026*, and the *Pacific Coral Reef Action Plan 2021-2030*. This recognises the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, as well as the interdependencies between biodiversity loss, climate change and human wellbeing, including health.
11. The discussions on “*Sustainable Nitrogen Management*” recognising that both the challenges and benefits that reactive nitrogen presents for all forms of life and calls for the establishment of an *Inter-Convention Nitrogen Coordination Mechanism (INCOM)* which is to work towards an ambitious halving of nitrogen emissions by 2030. While it is worth noting that this aligns with the *Cleaner Pacific 2025*, only Fiji was part of the *Colombo Declaration* so there is a need to establish the region’s familiarity with the *Colombo Declaration*.
12. The resolution on the “*sound management of chemicals and waste*” remains central to the Secretariat’s strategy to tackle climate change, loss of nature, pollution and contributing to achieving the 2030 Agenda. This is also very much in line with the *Cleaner Pacific 2025*.

13. The resolution to “*establish a science-policy panel*” to support action on chemicals, waste, and pollution in line with other intergovernmental panels on climate change and biodiversity which have proved successful in improving the scientific support to policy making and in raising awareness. This is again in line with the *Cleaner Pacific 2025*.
14. The resolution on “*Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure*”. It is in line and supports the S.A.M.O.A. Pathway which identifies the importance of finance as a means of progressing sustainable development, as well as regional frameworks such as the *Cleaner Pacific 2025* and *Pacific Framework for Nature Conservation 2021-2025* and is vital to our region.
15. The resolution on “*Green Economy*” is relevant and applicable to the region considering the COVID-19 impacts which has seen declines in tourist industry having significant impacts on national and local economies. This has increased reliance on subsistence farming, and on exploiting new areas of land for commercial activities (such as kava cultivation) which has placed pressure on natural resources. The draft resolution seeks to provide a framework to support implementation of environment and sustainable development initiatives while identifying new areas requiring strategic interventions. This is aligned to the *Pacific Framework for Nature Conservation 2021-2025* and other related frameworks.
16. The resolution on “*Circular Economy*” is in line with what the Pacific broadly agrees with, particularly on waste management and pollution control as outlined in the *Cleaner Pacific 2025*. This is also very much in line with the paradigm shift from a linear to a circular economic model.
17. The resolution on “*mineral resource governance*” highlighting the key challenges that the extraction of minerals and metals to climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. It further casts doubt on the ability of governments around the world to achieve the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement due to increasing demand on minerals such as graphite, lithium, cobalt and sand and gravel.

Next steps for SPREP following UNEA5.2

18. Aligning the Secretariat’s workplans and activities to help achieve the resolutions including the use of the Country Territory Strategic Partnership Framework (CTSPF) to guide the integrated and coordinated delivery of SPREP work to Members.
19. Supporting Members in achieving their commitments and statements made during the UNEA5.2 such as developing National Plastic Pollution Prevention Plans (N4Ps), supporting policies to phase out problematic plastics including toxic and single-use plastics and plastic products that cannot be safely reused or recycled in the region, supporting to ensure plastics are returned to producers outside the region at end of useful life, assisting remediation of plastic pollution in the environment.

20. Supporting Members to be fully engaged in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to negotiate a global treaty to address the full life cycle of plastic pollution. The Secretariat has received a Grant of AUD 837,000.00 from the Government of Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to support Members engagement in the INC process.
21. Supporting Members to engage in the establishment of a science-policy panel to support action on chemicals, waste, and pollution like the INC process.
22. Support Members in adopting Green and Circular Economy policies for sustainable development such as through advanced recovery fee and deposit legislation and action plans.
23. Support Members in increasing awareness and understanding of mineral resource governance highlighting the key challenges that the extraction of minerals and metals to climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution such as through national education and awareness plans.

Recommendation

24. The Executive Board Meeting is invited to:
 - 1) **Acknowledge** with appreciation the leadership, support and effort by Members (Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France, New Zealand, Palau, Samoa, Tuvalu, United States of America, United Kingdom) as well as Civil Societies and NGOs particularly CIEL, EIA, Massey University, WWF and University of Newcastle;
 - 2) **Reaffirm** our commitment as SPREP Members to the INC process to negotiate a global legally binding treaty to address plastic pollution;
 - 3) **Acknowledge** the financial support from the Government of Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to support the engagement of Members in the INC process; and
 - 4) **Request** the Secretariat to assist and support to Members towards achieving the commitments made at UNEA5.2.

28 June 2022