



## **BRIEFING NOTE OF THE SIXTEENTH GLOBAL MAJOR GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDERS FORUM (GMGSF-16): 21-22 MAY 2016**

The sixteenth session of the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF-16) convened from 21-22 May 2016, at the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. The Forum took place ahead of the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the UNEP (UNEA-2), taking place from 23-27 May 2016, under the overarching theme of ‘Delivering on the Environmental Dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.’ Around 200 participants representing all nine Major Groups and Stakeholders (MG&S) and the six UNEP regions participated at the discussions, which were organized by the Major Groups Facilitating Committee, with the support of the UNEP Secretariat.

Featuring the call to ‘Influence! Innovate! Learn! Coordinate! Cooperate! Interact! Convene! Exchange!’, GMGSF-16 aimed to mobilize MG&S to engage in a multi-stakeholders setting in order to learn from each other, develop partnerships and create their input into UNEA-2. Interactive plenary and parallel panel discussion sessions addressing: the status of negotiations and expected outcome of UNEA; the main UNEA themes and the role of MG&S in multi-stakeholder partnerships, policy making and the application of the rule of law in implementing the SDGs; and how to transform the GMGSF into a true and unique global multi-stakeholder forum in line with UNEA’s strengthened mandate.

On the first day of the Forum, GMGSF-16 participants held their final open dialogue session with the UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner. The wide-ranging exchange highlighted UNEP’s legacy in international environmental governance and the SDG process, with Steiner calling for UNEA Member States to celebrate the successes achieved over the last decade. He also highlighted the role of the private sector in mobilizing resources in the post-2015 world, and commented on UNEA’s unique position in speaking for the environment at the High-level Political Forum (HLPF).

On the second day of GMGSF-16, participants engaged in a discussion on the future of the GMGSF, held working group discussions on their input to the five UNEA-2 thematic clusters and prepared a draft common statement to be presented to the UNEA-2 opening plenary, underscoring some priority issues for MG&S on enhancing UNEA’s contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

This briefing note summarizes the discussions at the Forum.

## **REPORT OF THE MEETING**

### **OPENING SESSION**

On Saturday morning, Susana Rivero Baughman, Co-Chair of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee welcomed participants, noting the Forum will not only help MG&S representatives to learn about the status of the negotiations and organize their input to UNEA-2, but will also enhance their contribution to multi-stakeholder dialogues and partnerships to implement and follow up UNEA resolutions.

Ibrahim Thiaw, UNEP Deputy Executive Director, noted that over 2,400 delegates had registered for UNEA-2, saying this reflects the upgrading of UNEP as a global institution. Stressing that illegal trade in wildlife will be one of the most important outcomes of UNEA-2, he noted that environmental crimes account for the loss of more than US\$200 billion in resources from poor countries annually, which equates to around double of official development assistance (ODA) flow. Thiaw outlined other important UNEA-2 themes as: the sound management of chemicals, including the “mountains of plastic and microplastics” floating in oceans; protection of the environment in areas of armed conflict; and the interface between human health and the environment.

Stressing the importance of partnerships with stakeholders throughout the UNEA process, Julia Pataki, Chair, Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP (CPR), Romania, drew attention to the increased high-level participation at UNEA-2, highlighted the unprecedented number of resolutions discussed by the CPR, and underlined the need for UNEA-2 to pass on a strong message to the world on UNEA’s role in implementing the 2030 Agenda. She called on the MG&S to be “patient and hopeful” that the stakeholder engagement policy (SEP) will be concluded and agreed at UNEA-2, stressing that all participation is welcome and necessary.

### **UNEA 2: SIGNIFICANCE, STRUCTURE AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

**INTRODUCTION:** This session was chaired by Leida Rijnhout. Jorge Laguna-Celis, Secretary of Governing Bodies, UNEP, gave an overview of the UNEA-2 Road Map, focusing on the new platforms introduced to engage a greater number of stakeholders. He highlighted: the recently concluded Science-Policy Forum; the GMGSF; the Global Multi-stakeholder Dialogue; and the International Day of Biodiversity hosted by UNEP on 22 May 2016. He also drew attention to an increased number of side-events at UNEA-2, including Green Room events; the newly established Sustainable Innovations Expo, open to 140 Kenyan youth advocates to learn from and engage from UNEA-2 participants; and two symposia on mobilizing resources for sustainable investments, and environment and displacement. He called on MG&S to participate in all



sessions, including the Business Dialogue for Environmental Sustainability, and the High-Level Segment on Delivering on the Environmental Dimension of the 2030 Agenda.

**UPDATE BY MEMBER STATE REPRESENTATIVES ON THE STATUS OF UNEA-2 RESOLUTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR MG&S TO CONTRIBUTE:**

**Cluster 1:** CPR Vice Chair Pedro Escosteguy Cardoso, Brazil, noted that due to inadequate CPR representation by concerned Member States, there was no further follow up after OECPR-2 of two of the five draft resolutions under this cluster, on follow up to the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of the Asia-Pacific region and the SAMOA Pathway. He also reported broad acceptance of compromise text on the draft resolution on investing in human capacity. On the roles of UNEP and UNEA in delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), Cardoso said that some of the outstanding issues relate to the need to define institutional mandates, for example around the respective roles of the HLPF and UNEA, or areas that overlap with stand-alone UNEA resolutions, such as synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

With regard to promoting the effective implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change, Cardoso recalled that many delegations were hesitant to open discussions on this issue at the OECPR, citing the short timeframe since the Paris Conference and the need to avoid interfering with the mandate of climate negotiators. He reported that following the completion of a first reading of the text and the submission of a revised draft by the EU, CPR negotiations had failed to reach consensus on the way forward due to fundamental reservations expressed by some delegations. He predicted that UNEA-2 negotiations on this issue would be “difficult.”

**Cluster 2:** CPR Vice Chair John Moreti, Botswana, highlighted that discussions within the cluster had began with five resolutions, with delegates agreeing to merge three draft resolutions concerned with the environmentally sound management of chemicals and wastes. He noted the wide range of views put forward during the first reading of the draft proposal on sustainable consumption and production (SCP) by the OECPR, which had resulted in the establishment of a Friends of the Chair group to draft text for the cluster to consider. He highlighted that the bulk of this revised draft had been agreed to *ad ref* during the intersessional period, also mentioning progress on the resolution presented by the US on wasted food.

**Cluster 3:** CPR Rapporteur Corinna Enders, Germany, reported that the CPR had carried out several readings of all four draft resolutions. She reported that the resolutions on sustainable coral reef management and marine litter and debris were close to completion, with outstanding issues including the extent to which details of related SDG targets should be included in the text. On the last two resolutions, addressing oceans and seas and synergies between UNEP and other MEAs, Enders reported that discussions had been unable to resolve issues around institutional mandates and expected more in-depth discussions at UNEA-2 to arrive at a workable compromise.

**Cluster 4:** Moreti discussed progress on the three draft resolutions in this cluster. With regard to optimal management of natural capital for sustainable development and poverty eradication, he noted that despite several readings, negotiators were unable to agree on the definition of natural capital, with some parties favoring “natural resource management.” Clarifying that one of the core objectives of the resolution is to draw on UNEP’s expertise in natural capital accounting to build capacity for sustainable development planning and governance, especially in Africa, Moreti expressed hope that negotiators would show flexibility and “not lose sight of this opportunity.”

On illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products, Moreti said there is broad political momentum around this issue that should be reflected in a strong commitment from ministers

at UNEA-2. With regard to the resolution on environmental protection in conflict-affected areas he said that while many delegations expressed reservations about overstepping UNEP’s mandate, it is likely that discussions at UNEA-2 will converge around the need for greater recognition among policy makers that mass displacements, migration and conflicts are rooted in the degradation and depletion of natural resources. On the draft resolution by Arab States calling for a field-based environmental assessment of the effects of the November 2012 and July and August 2014 Wars in the Gaza Strip, he said there were widespread reservations due to the draft’s political implications and specific nature, and said it may be withdrawn despite ongoing consultations to develop a revised version.

**Cluster 5:** CPR Vice Chair Raza Bashir Tarar, Pakistan, reported that the resolution on sand and dust storms had been withdrawn following the inclusion of relevant language in the UNEP Programme of Work (PoW), and in recognition that a resolution on this issue had been passed by the UN General Assembly. He said progress was made on a draft resolution on mainstreaming biodiversity for wellbeing, with some unresolved issues, such as on whether to refer to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.

On a draft resolution on enhancing the work of UNEP in facilitating synergies among biodiversity-related MEAs, Tarar noted progress during informal consultations in the intersessional period, but highlighted concerns among some parties that it could compromise the independence of individual MEAs. He also drew attention to concerns regarding the repercussions of applying these MEAs to states that are non-members to individual conventions.

On the mandatory resolution on the Mid-Term Strategy (MTS) 2018-2021 and Biennial PoW and Budget 2018-2019, he noted outstanding issues on the voluntary scale of contributions, and increasing the contributor base. Tarar also announced that the draft resolution on the Mid-Term Review of the Montevideo Programme IV on Environmental Law had been agreed *ad ref* during the intersessional period.

On the review of the UNEA cycle, Tarar noted that discussions on the financial and substantive implications of moving from an even to an odd-year cycle will continue during UNEA-2.

**OTHER UNEA DECISIONS AND OUTCOMES RELEVANT FOR MAJOR GROUPS AND**

**STAKEHOLDERS:** Rosemary Mukasa, Deputy Secretary of Governing Bodies, UNEP, briefed participants on the expected outcome of the UNEA-2 High-Level Segment, stating the OECPR had requested the CPR Chair to develop a draft outcome text based on inputs from Member States on key priority issues. She further explained that some parties favor a political negotiated outcome, while others support a President’s summary, but that there is consensus that UNEA-2 should send out a strong message.

**INTERACTIVE PANEL DISCUSSIONS**

On Saturday, 21 May 2016, GMGSF-16 participants met in three rounds of parallel panel discussions covering the main UNEA themes and the role of MG&S in multi-stakeholder partnerships, policy making and the application of the rule of law in implementing the SDGs.

**MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATIONS AND MOBILIZING RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE INVESTMENTS:** This session was facilitated by Neth Dano, Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (ETC Group), the Philippines.

Ali Ahmed Hersi, Society for International Development, Kenya, discussed the underlying concerns regarding mobilizing means of implementation for the SDGs, calling for discussions on, *inter alia*: equitable participation of the Global South in regional and international trade policies; illicit financial flows; democratization of the global economy; and reforming global financial and monetary systems.

Pedro Escosteguy Cardoso, Deputy Permanent Representative, Brazil, highlighted the importance of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) and the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, stressing that the AAAA should not be seen as parallel to Agenda 2030, and underscoring the need to strengthen South-South cooperation.

Norine Kennedy, United States Council for International Business, noted that the business community views the SDGs through the lenses of innovation, good governance, economic growth and empowerment, and infrastructure. She said that in order to address gaps and challenges in the policy arena, all stakeholders need to demonstrate economic opportunities and incentives in persuasive arguments to policy makers and business leaders.

Ivo Mulder, UN-REDD, underlined the need to diversify and scale up development financing for land use through, *inter alia*, creative policies to ensure the compatibility between reducing emissions from land use and enhancing growth through agricultural subsidies. He called for further consideration of international private investments in green bonds which, he noted, could stimulate the shift to sustainable land-use practices.

Kwesi Obeng, Tax Justice Network Africa, stressed that dependence on ODA is unsustainable. Noting the clear links between illicit financial flows and the extractives industry, he reiterated the need to redirect the reported loss of US\$50 billion a year from Africa to sustainable development initiatives. He also highlighted the need for an international tax body, noting that through the UN Tax Committee, the infrastructure for this already exists.

In the ensuing discussion, participants highlighted the need to: take into account institutional investments as part of financing the sustainable development agenda; recognize that radical changes will be needed to deliver the 2030 Agenda; incorporate traditional knowledge in finding solutions to environmental challenges; and include members of the extractives industry in environmental discussions.

**UNEP AND PRINCIPLE 10: ACCESS TO INFORMATION POLICY, STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT POLICY AND BALI GUIDELINES IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE:** This session was facilitated by Stephen Stec, Central European University.

Alexander Juras, UNEP, spoke on the status of UNEP's access to information policy, noting that while it was prepared in parallel to the SEP, it did not have to go through an intergovernmental process. He explained that substantial efforts had been made to revise the policy following comments from MG&S representatives when the first version was tabled at UNEA-1, describing the new policy as one of the most progressive in the UN system.

Carole Excell, World Resources Institute (WRI), said the revised access to information policy was an improvement due to the inclusion of provisions such as the right to appeal to an independent panel if an information request is denied. She encouraged MG&S to test the new policy by making information requests in order to better understand its usefulness and limits.

David Banisar, Article 19, highlighted his organization's contribution, with WRI, to the consultation process that revised the UNEP access to information policy. Observing that while there are a lot of information policies, there is no overall UN system-wide framework, he suggested that UNEP had an opportunity to set a strong precedent that other institutions could follow. He pointed to the inclusion of harm tests, for instance to challenge restrictions on the basis of security or confidentiality, and a guaranteed response time, as well as a commitment to at least release sections of a document that do not contain exempted information, rather than withholding the entire document.

Benson Ochieng, Institute for Law and Environmental Governance, updated participants on the status of global civil society processes to propagate Principle 10. He noted that it is crucial for stakeholders to ensure that the spirit of Paragraph 88 in the Rio+20 Outcome Document is maintained, cautioning that if civil society does not make "the right noise" this opportunity will be lost.

Marcos Orellana, Center for International Environmental Law, spoke on the SEP process, remarking that while MG&S are able to present positions during UNEA sessions, the initial decisions are prepared in spaces where stakeholders are not present, such as the CPR, and that MG&S have limited capacity to participate in the OECPR. With regard to new approaches that are currently under discussion, such as the "big tent" model used in the Civil Society Mechanism of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), he said there is a lack of consensus among stakeholders themselves, with some established organizations concerned about losing their privileged position. He praised the efforts of the UNEA President and CPR Chair in maintaining momentum on the draft SEP, and cautioned that contrary to established practice where Member States rarely exercise their veto power, adopting one delegation's proposal to introduce a "no objection rule" for accrediting stakeholders would lead to the blacklisting of critical NGOs in some countries and "fatally undermine" the transparency of governance processes within UNEP and beyond.

In the ensuing discussions, participants highlighted the importance of looking beyond access issues to safeguard UNEP's role in generating meaningful information, especially with regard to emerging issues. Several speakers stressed the importance of rejecting the "no objection silent veto rule" noting it completely changes established practice where countries rarely utilized their veto power, and could set a dangerous precedent.

**HOW CAN MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS STRENGTHEN AND COMPLEMENT GOVERNMENT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION OF THE 2030 AGENDA?** This panel was facilitated by Mark Halle, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD).

Wardarina, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development emphasized that the global development space is dominated by a "partnership of wealth" that depletes the earth's resources and furthers exclusion and inequality. She underscored the need to draw on provisions on SDG17 to reverse this partnership model.

Herman Sips, Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment, the Netherlands, stressed the need to transform UNEA into the "UNEP Environmental Action Assembly," noting the 16 partnerships mentioned in UNEP's MTS remain an "unfulfilled promise." Observing that partnerships can be found in the most unexpected places, he called for a greater level of ambition and willingness to experiment, highlighting the forthcoming launch of the Verified Conservation Areas approach at UNEA-2, which includes a role for the private sector.

Stella Simiyu Wafukho, Croplife International, discussed the use of partnerships to overcome cultural barriers and promote links between sustainability and business, drawing on examples from the organization's integrated pest management programmes.

Susan Brown, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), stated that many multi-stakeholder partnerships have been unsuccessful, and called for a more strategic approach that focuses on strengthening transparency and a common agenda. Noting difficulties in building alliances with the private sector within the SDGs context, she suggested that one option could be to "match" private sector actors with civil society leaders with comparable levels of competency.

Luther Anukur, International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) emphasized that many discussions still focus on public-private partnerships, which he characterized as being

primarily about financing and “shifting risk from one actor to another.” Noting that multi-stakeholder partnerships work best where there are a lot of unresolved challenges and where other approaches have not worked, he said UNEA could take the lead in brokering partnerships to tackle complex issues such as illegal wildlife trade.

Salina Sanou, Action for Sustainable Development, discussed the contribution of multi-level civil society networks in advancing the SDGs, observing that NGOs have come a long way from “only making noise” to demonstrating what works. Lamenting the shrinking democratic space in many countries, she stressed that UNEA should build a platform in which all stakeholders can come to the table.

During discussions, one participant noted that the SDGs represent the best chance in decades for the UN to work on transformational change. Others highlighted the need to, *inter alia*: transcend traditional north-south dichotomies; link different SDGs and targets; draw on social entrepreneurship approaches; and identify the role of UNEP and UNEA in stimulating multi-stakeholder partnerships.

**MULTIPLE PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FACILITATION:** This session was facilitated by Scott Vaughan, President, IISD. Helge Zeitler, Directorate-General Environment, European Commission, emphasized the role of public institutions as a pathway to sustainable development as well as tools to mobilize means of implementation as enshrined in the AAAA. She discussed the EU’s Better Regulation policy, stressing that it is committed to the inclusion of stakeholders as well as promoting effective justice.

Polina Shulbaeva, Center for Support of Indigenous Peoples of the North, lamented that there were only six references to Indigenous Peoples in the 2030 Agenda, emphasizing that this affects their participation in SDG implementation. She highlighted the role that national multi-stakeholder consultations play in strengthening Indigenous Peoples participation and stressed the need to translate the SDG website into all six UN languages to encourage broad-based awareness and engagement.

Underlining that the SDGs are people-centered, Michael Stanley-Jones, UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative, highlighted “talking in abstraction” and working in silos as two problems that hamper the inclusion of marginalized populations in addressing the 2030 Agenda. He discussed the experience of a community project along the Tana River in Kenya as a good example of how to tackle the poverty-environment nexus in policy making.

Noting that big organizations do not fully comprehend the real issues facing local communities, Ashok Khosla, Development Alternatives, stressed that the call to “leave no one behind” will be fulfilled by the creation of sustainable livelihoods on a large scale. He pointed out some underlying issues at the heart of the SDGs, including: the compartmentalization of knowledge; the unsustainable economic system which promotes aggregate growth but ignores distributional issues; the construct of the nation-state which limits solutions to global issues; and linear development processes that preclude synergistic approaches to addressing socio-environmental challenges.

Najib Saab, Secretary-General, Arab Forum for Environment and Development, presented regional perspectives for achieving the SDGs, stressing that, among others: the Arab world should not be taken as a monolithic entity and should tailor its SDG implementation to country-specific needs; there are common challenges that need to be addressed including effective participation from non-state actors, job-creation in suitable green jobs, and home-grown science capabilities; and Arab governments should harness opportunities for green growth presented by the need to rebuild countries in conflict or post-conflict situations.

In the ensuing discussion, participants discussed: the need to promote alternative lifestyles; how to create an equitable economic playing field; and the need to encourage diverse government bodies to implement the SDGs.

**HOW CAN MG&S’ TECHNICAL EXPERTISE AND RESEARCH, CITIZEN SCIENCE AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE CONTRIBUTE TO ADVANCE THE MONITORING OF SDG IMPLEMENTATION, INCLUDING IN THE CONTEXT OF GEO-6?:** This session was facilitated by Jacqueline McGlade, Chief Scientist, UNEP.

Isis Alvarez, Global Forest Coalition, stressed that global knowledge systems are currently dominated by western science and called for greater recognition of indigenous conservation practices, citing various studies that show that adapting data collection and verification systems to local cultures can make the resulting data as reliable as that of researchers.

Diana Mangalagiu, Science Po, observed that meeting the transformative goals of Agenda 2030 will require going from “normal to post-normal science,” highlighting the need to integrate SDGs into national development frameworks and involve actors at the local scale.

Mohamed Abdelraouf, Gulf Research Center, said MG&S are well organized and could provide a useful mechanism to bring indigenous knowledge to the table. Giving the example of air circulation systems for cooling traditional homes and markets as a simple but effective traditional technology, he stressed the importance of entering into dialogue with private companies in order to develop context-appropriate and sustainable technologies.

Florence Daguitan, Tebtebba, underlined that the SDGs did not come out of a vacuum as they were shaped by decades of struggle for human rights and inclusive global processes. She highlighted the contribution of indigenous groups in these processes through such initiatives as contributing to indicator development for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and UN-REDD.

Explaining that his company processes five billion data transactions a month in order to help people make smarter decisions, James Donovan, ADEC Innovation, described UNEA as an ideal forum for “incubating” multiple coalitions, but noted that it will need to bring thousands more into the room to strengthen its decision-making base. He characterized citizen scientists as “the future of where we can start to gather more data points.”

Peter Denton, United Church of Canada, said that to arrive at sound evidence to implement the 2030 Agenda there is need to look at the values behind scientific knowledge and called on UNEA to include faith-based organizations in this dialogue, stressing that they are present in every community and can contribute to exploring diverse pathways. He highlighted the recent international seminar to promote intercultural dialogue for sustainable development, co-organized by the Iranian government, UNEP and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as an example of how to promote such dialogue.

Charles Mwangi, Global Learning and Observation to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) described how the programme works with primary and secondary school pupils to collect millions of measurements across different areas of research, enabling this data to be made available for science and decision making. He noted that GLOBE members are helping to monitor environmental trends such as mosquito breeding grounds, river flows, atmospheric variations, and changes in soil cover.

Participants raised issues on the need to, *inter alia*: develop national capacities for science, technology and innovation; ensure transparency when collecting large amounts of data; formally recognize and institutionalize citizen science; and fulfill verification and prior informed consent (PIC) criteria when working with groups such as school children. In their responses, panelists suggested that UNEA and the GMGSF could provide

a mechanism for incorporating indigenous knowledge systems in scientific and policy processes, and welcomed attempts by GEO-6 to find new ways of incorporating diverse types of knowledge.

**HEALTHY PEOPLE, HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT:** This session was facilitated by Anna Coopman, Stakeholder Forum. Fanny Demassieux, UNEP, presented UNEP's report on Healthy People, Healthy Environment, noting that environment and health linkages run through all 17 SDGs. Discussing the benefits of inclusive green policies in meeting the health-related SDGs, she highlighted the need for decarbonization, detoxification, decoupling and changing lifestyles, and enhancing ecosystem resilience.

Oyuntsetseg Oidov, Development Horizons, reported on national-level efforts to promote green growth and green economy in Mongolia. She spoke about tensions between traditional Mongolian herding communities and modern mining practices, highlighting the disproportionate health impacts from mining on women and children. She expressed hope that the UNEP report would assist in the implementation of policies to improve human health and the environment.

Sascha Gabizon, Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF), outlined WECF's work on raising awareness on asbestos, and discussed the challenges faced in trying to enact legislation to protect human health, such as blocking of the listing of chrysotile asbestos under the Rotterdam Convention on PIC for imports of hazardous waste, and unethical commercial tactics undertaken by industry players in promoting asbestos as a recyclable material. Stressing the importance of a circular economy which excludes hazardous chemicals, she called for the implementation of the polluter pays principle, and proposed a tax on hazardous chemicals to protect human health.

Dan Reifsnnyder, US State Department, highlighted the contribution of Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring' to public awareness of the impact of chemicals on the environment in the 1960s. He stressed the consequences of exposure to lead and mercury as well as air pollution to human health, as well as the links between ecosystem and animal health to human health. Highlighting the work of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management to deal with pharmaceutical waste, he called for further cooperation to ensure this issue is effectively addressed.

Saltanat Zhakenova, Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia, noted that governments in the region have a common understanding on the linkages between human health and the environment, and highlighted research which revealed the effects of low water and air quality on human health. She called for international cooperation to ensure the region fulfills the 2030 Agenda.

Helen Hakena, Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, noted

## OPEN DIALOGUE WITH UNEP EXECUTIVE

**DIRECTOR:** The final GMGSF open dialogue session with Achim Steiner, outgoing Executive Director of UNEP, was facilitated by Calvin James, Co-Chair, Major Groups Facilitating Committee. Discussing the role of the private sector in the implementation of the SDGs, Steiner defined the private sector as any actor outside the public and non-profit sectors and noted that it plays and will continue to play an essential role in the mobilization of finances to achieve the SDGs as well as the Paris Agreement. He called for UNEA-2 discussions to feed into the boardroom, explaining that even UNEP, an international public organ, has found it expedient to sometimes accept private sector financing to address environmental challenges including, *inter alia*, for the establishment of UNEP Finance Initiative, and in addressing the oil spill in the Niger Delta.

On the role of UNEA at the HLPF, Steiner observed that the environmental agenda is interwoven throughout the SDGs, and that while the 2030 Agenda is aspirational, MG&S need to keep governments accountable in order to fulfill it. He cautioned against prioritizing environment over the other elements of the 2030 Agenda, stressing its integrative nature. He called on MG&S representatives to ensure that UNEA Member States fully appreciate the role of the Assembly as the authoritative voice for the environment that must be heard at the HLPF, and alluded to issues on which UNEA "needs to pronounce itself more clearly."

In their responses, participants highlighted the need to, *inter alia*: integrate discussions from other MEAs in the UNEA agenda; consider UNEP's access to information policy through a multi-stakeholder process; address the disproportionate influence of economic interests over environmental and health concerns.

At the conclusion of the dialogue session, participants gave Steiner a standing ovation in recognition of his catalytic role in moving forward the global environmental agenda.

## PLENARY SESSION ON THE FUTURE VISION FOR UNEA AND GMGSF

**OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE GMGSF:** This special session on Sunday afternoon was co-facilitated by Calvin James, Co-Chair, Major Groups Facilitating Committee, and Ken Mwathe, Bird Life International.

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes, Stakeholder Forum, started by sketching out the 2030 Development Agenda "portfolio", saying it is more than the SDGs and their 169 targets, and also includes the AAAA, the Paris Agreement on climate agreement, the HLPF, national, regional and global reviews of the SDGs, the Global Sustainable Development Report and UNEA, all of which need to be implemented in a coordinated way. Stating that MG&S will become irrelevant unless they can clearly define

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