

Agenda Item 4.5

Reports

Reports from Observer Organizations

**Information Document 4.5a**

**Reports from Observer Organizations:  
UNEP**

**Action Requested**

Take note

Submitted by

UNEP



*Note:*

*Delegates are kindly reminded to bring their own document copies to the meeting, if needed.*

**UNEP Information Document for the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS)**

**7-11 September 2020, Online**

This Information Document is in support to the long-standing and well-established synergetic cooperation between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS).

UNEP hosts the Secretariat of the Convention and has continued to strengthen its programmatic support to the work of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and its agreements. In particular, the outcomes of the meetings of the governing bodies of UNEP and the CMS family provide an overarching framework for mutually beneficial cooperation.

The fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA4) took place on 11-15 March 2019 in Nairobi, Kenya. The Assembly, building on the implementation of the outcomes of its preceding sessions adopted the Ministerial Declaration and resolutions summarized in the following section of this document. The document also includes relevant resolutions from UNEA3. The implementation of the resolutions will have an important impact for the implementation of the ASCOBANS Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023, including on marine debris, resources depletion, stranding response, underwater noise, and bycatch.

The UN Environment Assembly, through its resolutions calls to actions to overcome environmental challenges, including health-related challenges by fostering innovative solutions and sustainable consumption and production against pollution, provides an opportunity for all people to help design solutions for our planet's health. This entails ecosystems restoration, conservation and landscape management, sustainable food systems, innovation and knowledge sharing on chemicals/waste management and promoting data and monitoring systems.

Biodiversity, including marine environment and the conservation of small cetaceans can be impacted by pollution in all its forms including air, land and ocean pollution and elevates the significance of ASCOBANS in being part of the decision-making process to mitigate pollution. Henceforth, programmatic cooperation on UNEA resolutions in the preparation for the Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas, might be strengthened to that end.

UNEA3 and UNEA4 Proceedings, Reports, Ministerial Declarations, Resolutions and Decisions can be downloaded at: <http://web.unep.org/environmentassembly/proceedings-report-ministerial-declaration-resolutions-and-decisions>.

**The Ministerial Declaration (UNEP/EA.3/HLS.1)** of the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly reaffirms its commitment to work towards a pollution-free planet by increasing research, promoting science-based decisions, supporting cooperation among

existing multilateral cooperation agreements, and fostering sustainable and inclusive economies.

### **UNEA3 resolutions**

UNEA3 adopted 11 resolutions and 3 decisions, calling for innovative action and strengthened partnerships to reduce pollution on the theme of “Towards a pollution-free planet”, on environmental challenges related to Pollution Mitigation governance, Biodiversity and Ecosystems, Environment and Health, Chemicals and Waste.

#### **UNEP/EA.3/RES.2: Pollution mitigation by mainstreaming biodiversity into key sector -**

Recognizing that conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems services is critical to the well-being of all life forms, the resolution invites Member States to mainstream these across key sectors – including fisheries and aquaculture, strengthen appropriate legislative and regulatory frameworks, support sustainable value chains, promote good practice guidelines related to biodiversity, encourage the sustainable use of land and marine spatial planning and raise awareness to prevent pollution, and encourage investments in biodiversity.

**UNEP/EA.3/RES.4: Environment and health** - Affirming the strong interlinkages between environment and health, the resolution stresses the health benefits of addressing environmental challenges such as air, marine, water and soil pollution, the importance of cross-cutting and preventive approaches, of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and ecosystem-based approaches. It encourages Member States to effectively manage waste and wastewater.

**UNEP/EA.3/RES.7: Marine litter and microplastics** - Noting with concern the high and rapidly increasing level of marine plastic litter and the negative effects on marine biodiversity, ecosystems, animal well-being, fisheries, maritime transport, tourism and local economies, the resolution recognizes the urgent need to improve knowledge of the effects of microplastics and nanoplastics on marine ecosystems, seafood and human health. The resolution urges countries and other stakeholders (such as plastics producers, consumer goods and packaging industries) to reduce use of plastics and promote alternatives. It stresses the importance of long-term elimination of discharge of litter and microplastics into the oceans, and of the reduction of marine pollution, from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution. It encourages Member States to develop harmonized national measures and policies to prevent marine pollution and to clean up of the marine environment in priority areas. An ad hoc open-ended expert group is established and tasked to research on all barriers to combatting marine litter and microplastics, identify different responses with their respective costs and benefits, as well as respective feasibility and effectiveness.

**UNEP/EA.3/RES.10: Addressing water pollution to protect and restore water-related ecosystems** - Recognizing that water from terrestrial, coastal and marine sources is essential to all living species and concerned about threats to water quantity and quality, in particular from pollution on both land and sea across the globe, the resolution calls upon Member States to increase transboundary cooperation to reduce pollution, improve their capacities to tackle accidental pollution risks, and strengthen their preparedness to address waterborne disease issues.

**The Ministerial Declaration (UNEP/EA.4/HLS.1)** of the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly reaffirmed the dedication of Ministers of Environment to address environmental challenges through advancing innovative solutions, and moving towards sustainable and resilient societies through sustainable consumption and production patterns.

### **UNEA4 resolutions**

UNEA4 adopted 23 resolutions and 3 decisions, calling for innovative action and strengthened partnerships on several environmental challenges related to Biodiversity and Ecosystems, Resource Efficiency, Chemicals and Waste and Environmental Governance. Resolutions that have linkages with ASCOBAN's resolution amendments considered in its Meeting of the Parties are listed below:

**UNEP/EA.4/RES.6: Marine plastic litter and microplastics** - Noting that marine plastic litter and microplastics are a serious environmental threat to marine biodiversity, ecosystems and the human activities dependent on them the resolution stresses the importance of preventing, reducing and eliminating discharge of litter into the oceans, promoting sustainable and life-cycle management of plastics, and supporting the science-policy interface and science-based approaches. The resolution encourages Member States and other stakeholders to consider a whole-lifecycle approach and resource efficiency, promote environmentally sound management of waste, awareness creation on importance of and encouraging sustainable consumption and production. The resolution also requests the UNEP to strengthen scientific cooperation and technical knowledge on marine litter, establish a dedicated multi-stakeholder platform (within the UNEP), and develop consumer guidelines for the use and production of plastics. The ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics established by its resolution 3/7 (see above) is requested to identify technical and financial resources or mechanisms for supporting countries in addressing marine plastic litter and micro plastics. In addition, the group is requested to encourage partnerships and analyse the effectiveness of existing and potential response options.

**UNEP/EA.4/RES.7: Environmentally sound management of waste** - Recognizing the co-benefit of a sound waste management policy in areas such as the protection of the marine environment, the resolution invites Member States to strengthen monitoring activities to avoid the disposal of waste into the marine environment from all sectors.

**UNEP/EA.4/RES/8: Sound management of chemicals and waste** - Expressing strong concerns as insufficient progress has been made in this area, the resolution looks forward to the forthcoming publication of Global Waste Management Outlook II – which will notably highlight interlinkages and relevant policies in relation to plastics and marine litter – and notes the activities to address marine plastic litter and microplastics conducted by regional and coordinating centres for training and technology transfers of the Basel Convention and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutant. The resolution calls upon Member States and other stakeholders to sustain effort to reach target 12.4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**UNEP/EA.4/RES.10: Innovations on biodiversity and land degradation** - This resolution takes note of the need of preventing the loss and degradation of biodiversity. It encourages Member

States and relevant stakeholders to undertake strategic environmental assessments, upscale their efforts to prevent loss of biodiversity through conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and to mainstream biodiversity in all relevant sectors.

**UNEP/EA.4/RES.11: Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities** - The resolution notes the high vulnerability of coastal and marine environments to pollution resulting from land-based activities. It also notes the high contribution of coastal and marine environments to the economy as well as providing ecosystem services. The resolution provides for the mainstreaming of protection of coastal and marine ecosystems in policies, promoting capacity building, knowledge sharing and partnerships in the protection of coastal and marine ecosystems from land-based activities. This resolution requests UNEP to provide technical assistance to the regional seas programmes including the Global Partnership on Marine Litter, the Global Wastewater Initiative and the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities.

**UNEP/EA.4RES.15: Sustainable Nitrogen Management** - Recognizing the multiple pollution threats resulting from anthropogenic reactive nitrogen with adverse effects on marine environment, the resolution notes that use of nitrogen in the global economy (in particular for food and energy production) is extremely inefficient and that intersectoral approaches and national policies have been fragmented and incoherent. While acknowledging recent initiatives of the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management and establishment of the International Nitrogen Management System, the resolution calls on the UNEP to improve policy coordination by the establishment of an intergovernmental mechanism, collaborate with the Food and Agriculture Organization, coordinate with existing platforms for situation assessment, and provide capacity-building and knowledge sharing support for policy makers and practitioners.

#### **Administrative and financial management support**

The United Nations Secretariat has deployed the following modules of its enterprise resource management systems, Umoja, in various pilot offices; Grantor Management, Fund Raising, Strategic Management Application and finally Budget Planning and Consolidation. UNEP has implemented the Grantor Management module in all its Conventions, Divisions and Regional Offices thereby standardizing implementing partner engagement. The Convention Secretariat has been trained on the new application and has successfully engaged implementing partners. The Secretariat employs the Agile methodology of systems development and the final product will allow implementing partners to submit applications to execute defined programs that will be launched via the grantor management module.

On 18th December 2018, the United Nations Secretary-General, issued ST/SGB/2019/2 which established a new delegation of authority framework effective 1st January 2019. The objective of the new framework is to transfer centrally held authority closer to the point of service delivery. On 4 November 2019, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) approved its updated Delegation of Authority Policy and Framework in line with ST/SGB/2019/2. The current Delegation of Authority Policy and Framework for the Management and Administration of Multilateral Environmental Agreements Secretariats (November 2016) will be updated early next year after consultations with MEAs Secretariats.

The Executive Director decided to provide extra administrative coordination to the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) through the establishment of a dedicated Unit within Corporate Services Division under the supervision of the Division Director. Support provided by the unit includes budget administration, audit coordination and risk management, backstopping of administrative staff, treasury function for Multi-Lateral Fund, among others.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/217 and the United Nations procedures stipulated in administrative issuance ST/AI/286, programme support costs at a standard rate of 13 per cent are charged on all extrabudgetary resources to recover the incremental costs incurred when supporting activities financed through such resources. The amount of programme support resources available in any given year is dependent on the income generated for that purpose in the previous year. The Convention's Secretariat administrative staff and activities are funded through programme support resources which in recent years have been insufficient to meet expected obligations. The Executive Director has requested heads of offices to reconsider any requests for program support cost waivers which substantially reduce program support resources.