

Proteus Partners update: UNEA-6

The 6th session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6) took place from 26 February to 1 March 2024 under the theme *Effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution*.

Several other events took place prior to or alongside UNEA-6, including the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum, the Youth Environment Assembly, meetings of the International Resource Panel, the Climate and Clean Air Conference, the United Nations Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment, the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution, the Cities and Regions Summit, and dozens of side events. A record 5,600 delegates from 190 countries, civil society, Indigenous Peoples, international organisations, scientists, and the private sector participated in the meeting and associated events.

More than 10 of the 33 official side events for UNEA-6 were related to nature and biodiversity. These included a [side event](#) hosted by Fauna and Flora with IUCN, Ipieca and ICMM on ensuring that the energy transition contributes to a nature- and people-positive planet. UNEP-WCMC also moderated two side events: [moving forward with recommendations on consultations on nature-based solutions](#), and [the Convention on Migratory Species' contribution to addressing the triple planetary crisis](#).

Ministerial Declaration and adopted resolutions at UNEA-6

Through the [Ministerial Declaration](#), countries affirmed commitments to slow climate change, restore and protect biodiversity, create a pollution-free world and confront issues of desertification, land and soil degradation, drought and deforestation by taking effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions. The Declaration also identified cooperation for a just and sustainable energy transition and enhancement of environmentally sustainable management of minerals and metals as priorities that were decided on by countries.

A total of [15 resolutions](#) were adopted, covering management of metals, mineral resources, chemicals and waste, integrated water resource management to tackle water stress, sustainable lifestyles, rehabilitation of degraded lands and waters, and more. Some resolutions of particular significance for businesses included:

[UNEP/EA.6/L.8 - Environmental aspects of minerals and metals](#) – This resolution calls for:

- **Alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and with relevant obligations and decisions under multilateral environmental agreements**, emphasising the importance of environmentally sustainable management of mineral and metal resources in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- **Responsibility along the full life cycle**, including extraction, on-site and off-site processing, refining, management of mining waste and tailings, rehabilitation of sites and closed or abandoned mines, manufacturing, and recycling of non-mineral fuels.
- **Promotion of sustainable consumption and production**, with businesses encouraged to promote sustainable consumption and production practices in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- **Establishment of a digital knowledge hub** with existing good practices relevant to the environmental aspects of minerals and metals, to facilitate information sharing with stakeholders including businesses.

[UNEP/EA.6/L.16 - Effective and inclusive solutions for strengthening water policies to achieve sustainable development in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution](#) – This resolution calls for businesses in and between large water consuming industries, such as agriculture, textiles, energy, meat, and

mining industries, to adopt integrated water resource management practices to address water stress and pollution. It calls for adapting water reuse strategies by enhancing wastewater reuse and strengthening pollutant discharge control to improve overall water efficiency, water quality, and resilience to water stress. It also calls for investment in sustainable, climate-resilient water and sanitation infrastructure and nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches.

UNEP/EA.6/L.17 - Strengthening international efforts to combat desertification and land degradation, restore degraded land, promote land conservation and sustainable land management, contribute to land degradation neutrality and enhance drought resilience – This resolution invites the private sector to strengthen investments in the development, deployment, adaptation and scaling up of technologies relevant to its aims. It also encourages stakeholders, including businesses, to implement or support nature-based solutions as defined by [UNEA resolution 5/5](#). It is also notable that soil was a topic of frequent discussion in many UNEA-6 side events. There were calls to action from member states and organisations for more efforts to address soil health and prioritise farmers, providing them with necessary funding and continuous capacity building to manage their soil sustainably, from both private and public sector partners.

UNEP/EA.6/L.18 - Strengthening ocean efforts to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution – This resolution encourages Member States to consider signing and ratifying the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction ([BBNJ Agreement](#)). This has implications for businesses with operations in ABNJs that could relate to expansion of Marine Protected Areas, requirements of Environmental Impact Assessments, and increased regulation and requirements for transparency and traceability on access and benefits-sharing of marine genetic resources.

UNEP/EA.6/L.12 - Sound management of chemicals and waste – This resolution calls for private sector responsibility, accountability and involvement in sound management of chemicals and waste.

UNEP/EA.6/L.11 - Promoting sustainable lifestyles – This is the most consumer-oriented resolution, encouraging sustainable choices at an individual level. The private sector is called on to increase availability and accessibility of information, best practices and literature that enable individuals to adopt more environmentally friendly behaviours. There is also a call for more private-public sector collaboration to empower citizens to make informed sustainable lifestyle choices.

Launch of key reports

The [Global Resources Outlook 2024](#) (GRO), developed by the UNEP-hosted International Resource Panel, highlights that resource extraction has tripled over the past five decades, largely propelled by infrastructure development and increasing consumption, particularly in high-income nations. This report shows that demand will continue to increase but there is potential to turn negative trends in associated environmental damage around. However, current utilisation patterns are unsustainable, posing threats to exacerbate climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, thereby impeding the attainment of the SDGs. The GRO report shows that it is feasible and economically advantageous to decouple economic growth from resource use. Embracing circular economy principles and renewable energy sources, including across the mining and energy sectors, offers a pathway to significantly reduce environmental impact while fostering new business opportunities. The [Global Resource Observatory](#) underscores the transformative potential of circularity. Prioritising product durability, reimagining service delivery models, and minimising resource consumption are imperative for ensuring a sustainable future.

Other key reports launched at UNEA-6 include the [2024 Global Waste Management Outlook](#) and the [Used Heavy-Duty Vehicles and the Environment](#) report.