



Implementation of the UNEA-4 Resolution on  
Sustainable Nitrogen Management (UNEP/EA.4/Res.14)

Briefing Paper for the Nitrogen Working Group (8-9 June 2020)

**NWG Briefing-1 /Inf. Doc. 3**

## **Actions toward UNEA-5: Follow up to Resolution 4/14 on Sustainable Nitrogen Management, Colombo Declaration and related developments**

Note prepared by the Director of INMS with the assistance of UNEP

### **Background**

Since the Resolution on Sustainable Nitrogen Management was adopted at UNEA-4, the international community has been taking major steps forward, especially as catalysed by the UNEP GEF project 'Towards the International Nitrogen Management System' (INMS). Key steps include current action of the Nitrogen Working Group to establish the Interconvention Nitrogen Coordination Mechanism (INCOM), adoption by several governments of the Colombo Declaration (including the agreement to establish national action programmes), as well as preparation of new international Guidance on Integrated Sustainable Nitrogen Management coordinated under the auspices of the Geneva Air Convention. Together with other regional developments, these provide the opportunity for UNEA-5 to make further progress on addressing the nitrogen challenge.

There are several specific opportunities:

1. The Global Partnership on Nutrient Management (GPNM) has submitted a proposal to the Norway Presidency of UNEA-5 and the UNEP Secretariat of Governing Bodies (SGB) for the **Ministerial Statement for UNEA-5** welcoming agreement of the Colombo Declaration as a follow-up activity to the UNEA Resolution 4/14,<sup>1</sup> submitted under the lead of India with the support of SACEP and other countries of South Asia.
2. Section 3 and sub paragraph 3.7 of the Colombo Declaration<sup>2</sup> identifies the goal to prepare a **Resolution to UNEA-5**, agreeing "*that countries should consider, in line with their national circumstances and where relevant, to*"... 3.7 Cooperate to submit a joint resolution to the Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly; and 3.8 Report on the progress of implementing this Colombo Declaration at the Sixth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly." In this way, the Colombo Declaration is both a follow-up to UNEA-4 and a preparing the way for UNEA-5.
3. Proposal for relevant **side-events at UNEA-5** and/or specific meeting of the Nitrogen Working Group, for example to launch the establishment of INCOM.

### **A possible Nitrogen Resolution at UNEA-5**

A UNEA-5 nitrogen resolution would agree next steps for the rapidly developing international work on nitrogen. In order to be successful a future resolution would need to *demonstrate clear measurable progress* compared with UNEA Resolution 4/14. This test is clearly met by taking the Colombo Declaration as a starting point, with the opportunity to incorporate other developments.

<sup>1</sup> <https://undocs.org/UNEP/EA.4/Res.14>

<sup>2</sup> <https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/sustainable-nitrogen-management>

Inclusion of developments should be considered that address the theme of UNEA-5: “**Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals**”. The agreement to accelerate coordination with relevant international conventions, such as the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and other conventions/programmes, as facilitated by INCOM, is likely to be welcome.

Specifically, the template provided by the Colombo Declaration offers the following key steps forward compared with the UNEA Resolution 4/14:

1. Endorsement of the proposed **Roadmap for Action on Sustainable Nitrogen Management 2020-2022**;
2. Endorsement to establish the **Inter-convention Nitrogen Coordination Mechanism** and secretariat to better facilitate communication and coherence across nitrogen policies, consistent with mandates of existing conventions and MEAs;
3. Objective to develop **national roadmaps for sustainable nitrogen management**;
4. Objective for national roadmaps to have **an ambition to halve nitrogen waste by 2030**;
5. Recognition of the aim to promote **innovation on anthropogenic nitrogen use and recycling** emphasizing the opportunities **for the circular economy**;
6. Recognition of the aim to sensitize citizens to **understand the natural nitrogen cycle** and how anthropogenic activities alter its balance;
7. A request that the UNEP Executive Director catalyse a comprehensive analysis of global nitrogen budgeting, impacts and solutions, including valuation of natural nitrogen fixation.

These and other elements of the Colombo Declaration clearly move beyond the initial objectives identified in the UNEA Resolution 4/14. This can be illustrated by Paragraph (a) of the UNEA-4 resolution, which calls on the UNEP Executive Director to “(a) **Consider the options** for facilitating improved coordination of policies across the global nitrogen cycle at the national, regional and global levels, **including consideration of the case for establishing an intergovernmental mechanism for coordination of nitrogen policies...**”

A UNEA-5 resolution could then go to the next stage by “1. endorsing the **Roadmap for Action on Sustainable Nitrogen Management 2020-2022**; 2. confirming establishment of the **Inter-convention Nitrogen Coordination Mechanism** to better facilitate communication and coherence across nitrogen policies; 3. agreeing so far as circumstances allow to **develop national roadmaps** for sustainable nitrogen management; 4. recognizing the **ambition to halve nitrogen waste....** etc.”

Member States and representatives of intergovernmental conventions/programs are **invited to give their initial informal comments** during the Nitrogen Working Group e-briefing on 8-9 June 2020, with any follow-up comments provided to Mahesh Pradhan ([mahesh.pradhan@un.org](mailto:mahesh.pradhan@un.org)) and [inms@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:inms@ceh.ac.uk) by 16 June.

At present, informal discussions are taking place to agree which countries may wish to sponsor or support development of such a resolution to UNEA-5. Indicatively, is anticipated that Member States will need to announce their intention to submit resolutions for UNEA-5 by end of October 2020, with draft resolutions submitted by 27 December 2020.

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INMS Project Coordination Unit ([inms@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:inms@ceh.ac.uk)). The Nitrogen Working Group is established by the UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives to follow up UNEP/EA.4/Res.14, as a preparatory body with the aim of fostering intergovernmental coordination and developing the terms of reference for an Interconvention Nitrogen Coordination Mechanism (INCOM).