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Seventieth session  
Agenda item 20 (g)

## Sustainable development: Harmony with Nature

### Report of the Second Committee\*

*Rapporteur:* Ms. Chantal Uwizera (Rwanda)

#### I. Introduction

1. The Second Committee held a substantive debate on agenda item 20 (see [A/70/472](#), para. 2). Action on sub-item (g) was taken at the 34th and 36th meetings, on 4 and 14 December 2015. An account of the Committee's consideration of the sub-item is contained in the relevant summary records.<sup>1</sup>

#### II. Consideration of draft resolutions [A/C.2/70/L.42](#) and [A/C.2/70/L.70](#)

2. At the 34th meeting, on 4 December, the representative of South Africa, on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China, introduced a draft resolution entitled "Harmony with Nature" ([A/C.2/70/L.42](#)).

3. At its 36th meeting, on 14 December, the Committee had before it a draft resolution entitled "Harmony with Nature" ([A/C.2/70/L.70](#)), submitted by the Vice-Chair of the Committee, Reinhard Krapp (Germany), on the basis of informal consultations held on draft resolution [A/C.2/70/L.42](#).

4. At the same meeting, the Committee was informed that draft resolution [A/C.2/70/L.70](#) had no programme budget implications.

5. Also at the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution [A/C.2/70/L.70](#) (see para. 8).

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\* The report of the Committee on this item is being issued in 10 parts, under the symbols [A/70/472](#), [A/70/472/Add.1](#), [A/70/472/Add.2](#), [A/70/472/Add.3](#), [A/70/472/Add.4](#), [A/70/472/Add.5](#), [A/70/472/Add.6](#), [A/70/472/Add.7](#), [A/70/472/Add.8](#) and [A/70/472/Add.9](#).

<sup>1</sup> [A/C.2/70/SR.34](#) and [A/C.2/70/SR.36](#).



6. Also at the 36th meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Australia (also on behalf of Canada and the United States of America).

7. In the light of the adoption of draft resolution [A/C.2/70/L.70](#), draft resolution [A/C.2/70/L.42](#) was withdrawn by its sponsors.

### III. Recommendation of the Second Committee

8. The Second Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

#### Harmony with Nature

*The General Assembly,*

*Reaffirming* the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,<sup>1</sup> Agenda 21,<sup>2</sup> the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21,<sup>3</sup> the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development<sup>4</sup> and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation),<sup>5</sup>

*Recalling* the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012, entitled “The future we want”,<sup>6</sup>

*Reaffirming* its resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, in which it adopted a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals and targets, its commitment to working tirelessly for the full implementation of this Agenda by 2030, its recognition that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, its commitment to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions — economic, social and environmental — in a balanced and integrated manner, and to building upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and seeking to address their unfinished business,

*Recalling* its resolutions 64/196 of 21 December 2009, 65/164 of 20 December 2010, 66/204 of 22 December 2011, 67/214 of 21 December 2012, 68/216 of 20 December 2013 and 69/224 of 19 December 2014 on Harmony with Nature and its resolution 63/278 of 22 April 2009, by which it designated 22 April as International Mother Earth Day,

*Recalling also* the 1982 World Charter for Nature,<sup>7</sup>

*Noting* the interactive dialogue of the General Assembly on Harmony with Nature, held on 27 April 2015 to commemorate International Mother Earth Day, on the promotion of the balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development through Harmony with Nature,

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex I.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, annex II.

<sup>3</sup> Resolution S-19/2, annex.

<sup>4</sup> *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, resolution 2, annex.

<sup>6</sup> Resolution 66/288, annex.

<sup>7</sup> Resolution 37/7, annex.

*Recognizing* that planet Earth and its ecosystems are our home and that “Mother Earth” is a common expression in a number of countries and regions, noting that some countries recognize the rights of nature in the context of the promotion of sustainable development, and expressing the conviction that, in order to achieve a just balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations, it is necessary to promote harmony with nature,

*Noting* that, in promoting a holistic approach to achieving sustainable development in harmony with nature, Earth system science plays a significant role,

*Expressing concern* about documented environmental degradation, potentially more frequent and intense natural disasters and the negative impact on nature resulting from human activity, and recognizing the need to strengthen scientific knowledge on the effects of human activities on the Earth systems, with the aim of promoting and ensuring an equitable, balanced and sustainable relationship with the Earth,

*Taking note* of the Peoples’ World Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, hosted by the Plurinational State of Bolivia in Cochabamba from 20 to 22 April 2010,<sup>8</sup>

*Recognizing* that a number of countries consider Mother Earth the source of all life and nourishment, and that these countries consider Mother Earth and humankind to be an indivisible, living community of interrelated and interdependent beings,

*Noting* that in recent years there have been many initiatives on sustainable development governance, including policy documents on living well in harmony with nature,

*Taking note* of the conceptual framework of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services,<sup>9</sup>

*Recognizing* that gross domestic product was not designed as an indicator for measuring environmental degradation resulting from human activity and the need to overcome this limitation with regard to sustainable development and the work carried out in this regard,

*Recognizing also* the uneven availability of basic statistical data under the three dimensions of sustainable development and the need to improve their quality and quantity,

*Reaffirming* that fundamental changes in the way societies produce and consume are indispensable for achieving global sustainable development and that all countries should promote sustainable consumption and production patterns, with the developed countries taking the lead and with all countries benefiting from the process, taking into account the Rio principles,

*Recognizing* that many ancient civilizations, indigenous peoples and indigenous cultures have a rich history of understanding the symbiotic connection between human beings and nature that fosters a mutually beneficial relationship,

*Recognizing also* the work undertaken by civil society, academia and scientists in regard to signalling the precariousness of life on Earth, as well as their efforts,

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<sup>8</sup> See [A/64/777](#), annexes I and II.

<sup>9</sup> IPBES/2/17.

along with those of Governments and private sector organizations, to devise more sustainable models and methods for production and consumption,

*Considering* that sustainable development is a holistic concept that requires the strengthening of interdisciplinary linkages in the different branches of knowledge,

1. *Takes note* of the sixth report of the Secretary-General;<sup>10</sup>

2. *Decides* to initiate, in 2016, a virtual dialogue on Harmony with Nature among, inter alia, experts on Earth jurisprudence worldwide, including those who have been active in the interactive dialogues of the General Assembly, in order to inspire citizens and societies to reconsider how they interact with the natural world in order to implement the Sustainable Development Goals in harmony with nature, noting that some countries recognize the rights of nature in the context of the promotion of sustainable development, and requests that the experts submit a summary to the General Assembly at its seventy-first session, and that the virtual dialogue be hosted at the website on Harmony with Nature;

3. *Also decides* to continue observing International Mother Earth Day annually on 22 April, requests the Secretary-General to provide continuing support, and encourages Member States to observe the International Day at the national level;

4. *Invites* Member States to consider existing studies and reports on Harmony with Nature, including the follow-up to the discussions at the interactive dialogues of the General Assembly, such as the dialogue held on 27 April 2015 on the promotion of the balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development through Harmony with Nature;

5. *Decides* to put on hold the issue of the timing of an inclusive and interactive dialogue of the General Assembly on Harmony with Nature, pending the discussions on the revitalization of the Second Committee;

6. *Recalls* its resolutions requesting that the Secretary-General establish a trust fund for the participation of independent experts in these interactive dialogues, and in this regard invites Member States and other relevant stakeholders to consider contributing to the trust fund once it is established;

7. *Also recalls* the launching of the Harmony with Nature website during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development by the secretariat of the Conference and the Division for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, and requests the Secretary-General to continue to use the website maintained by the Division to gather information and contributions on ideas and activities to promote a holistic approach to sustainable development in harmony with nature and to advance the integration of interdisciplinary scientific work, including success stories on the use of traditional knowledge and on existing national legislation;

8. *Calls for* holistic and integrated approaches to sustainable development, in its three dimensions, that will guide humanity to live in harmony with nature and lead to efforts to restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystems;

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<sup>10</sup> A/70/268.

9. *Invites States:*

(a) To further build up a knowledge network in order to advance a holistic conceptualization of sustainable development in its three dimensions to identify different economic approaches that reflect the drivers and values of living in harmony with nature, relying on current scientific information to achieve sustainable development, and to facilitate the support and recognition of the fundamental interconnections between humanity and nature;

(b) To promote harmony with the Earth, as found in indigenous cultures, to learn from those cultures and to provide support for and promote efforts being made from the national level down to the local community level to reflect the protection of nature;

10. *Encourages* all countries to develop and strengthen the quality and quantity of basic national statistical data on the three dimensions of sustainable development, and invites the international community and the pertinent bodies of the United Nations system to assist the efforts of developing countries by providing capacity-building and technical support;

11. *Recognizes* the need for broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product in order to better inform policy decisions, and in this regard notes the ongoing work of the Statistical Commission on a work programme to develop broader measures of progress and to conduct a technical review of existing efforts in this area;<sup>11</sup>

12. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-first session, under the item entitled “Sustainable development”, the sub-item entitled “Harmony with Nature”, unless otherwise agreed in the discussions on the revitalization of the Second Committee.

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<sup>11</sup> *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2013, Supplement No. 4 (E/2013/24)*, chap. I, sect. C, decision 44/114.