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Agriculture development, food security and nutrition: natural plant fibres and sustainable development

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2023

[on the report of the Second Committee (A/78/466/Add.2, para. 6)]

78/169. Natural plant fibres and sustainable development

The General Assembly,

Recalling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,¹ the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development,² the Paris Agreement,³ the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030⁴ and the New Urban Agenda adopted in Quito by the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III),⁵

Recalling also its resolution 61/189 of 20 December 2006 on the International Year of Natural Fibres, 2009, and its resolution 76/223 of 17 December 2021,

Recalling further resolution 3/2005 of the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, adopted on 25 November 2005,⁶

Noting the definition of natural fibres, as developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations during the International Year of Natural Fibres in 2009, and the scope of the present resolution, which focuses on the lesser-known natural plant fibres, such as jute, abaca, coir, kenaf, sisal, hemp, ramie and flax,

Noting also that the diverse range of natural plant fibres produced in many countries provides an important source of income for farmers, and thus can play an important role in contributing to food security and nutrition, the realization of the

¹ Resolution 70/1.

² Resolution 69/313, annex.

³ Adopted under the UNFCCC in FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1, decision 1/CP.21.

⁴ Resolution 69/283, annex II.

⁵ Resolution 71/256, annex.

⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, document C 2005/REP.



right to adequate food and in eradicating poverty and hence in contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals,

Reaffirming the commitment to achieve sustainable development in its three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – in a balanced and integrated manner,

Recognizing that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development,

Reaffirming the need to achieve sustainable development through sustainable production and consumption, including through protecting and sustainably managing natural resources,

Emphasizing that the sustainable production, consumption and use of natural plant fibres can make a positive contribution towards the efforts to achieve sustainable development, poverty alleviation, improved human well-being and addressing environmental degradation and climate change,

Stressing that natural plant fibres, like any other agricultural product, need to be produced in a manner that respects the environment,

Recalling the 2019 Climate Action Summit convened by the Secretary-General on 23 September 2019 and noting the multi-partner initiatives and commitments presented during the Summit, welcoming the holding of the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, from 6 to 20 November 2022, taking note with appreciation of the United Nations Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment, convened by the Secretary-General in Rome, Italy, from 24 to 26 July 2023, welcoming the first part of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Kunming, China, from 11 to 15 October 2021, and the second part of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, held in Montreal, Canada, from 7 to 19 December 2022, and its outcomes, including the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and urges their early, inclusive and effective implementation,

Emphasizing that nature-based solutions, ecosystem-based approaches and other management and conservation approaches, in line with United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 5/5, can contribute, among other strategies, to climate change mitigation and to halting and reversing biodiversity loss, and in this regard recognizing the important role of nature-based solutions, ecosystem-based approaches and other management and conservation approaches, in line with the above-mentioned resolution, in promoting the sustainable production, consumption and use of natural plant fibres,

Noting the contributions and the challenges to sustainable development arising from the use of plastic and artificial fibres, and noting also the role that natural plant fibres can play in addressing certain economic, social and environmental challenges to sustainable development,

Recalling resolutions 5/14 of 2 March 2022, entitled “End plastic pollution: towards an international legally binding instrument”,⁷ 4/6 of 15 March 2019, entitled “Marine plastic litter and microplastics”,⁸ and 4/9 of 15 March 2019, entitled

⁷ UNEP/EA.5/Res.14.

⁸ UNEP/EA.4/Res.6.

“Addressing single-use plastic products pollution”,⁹ adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme,

Recalling also the ministerial declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its third session, entitled “Towards a pollution-free planet”,¹⁰ the ministerial declaration of the Environment Assembly at its fourth session, entitled “Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production”,¹¹ and the ministerial declaration of the Environment Assembly at its fifth session, entitled “Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”,¹²

Recalling further the proclamation of the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010–2020), the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity, 2011–2020, the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028, the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, 2021–2030, the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (2019–2028), the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) and the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027),

Recognizing that natural plant fibres can be easily recyclable, biodegradable and renewable and can foster energy efficiency and relatively low levels of greenhouse gas emissions, and thereby may contribute to promoting sustainable development,

Stressing the need for cooperation, coordination and synergies in the work related to the production, distribution and use of natural plant fibres among relevant United Nations entities, in accordance with their respective mandates,

Noting that political support and commercialization factors, including price and cost of production, investing in logistics, infrastructure, research and development, are needed, as appropriate, to promote the sustainable production, consumption and use of natural plant fibres, aimed at contributing to sustainable development,

Noting also that the promotion of the use of natural plant fibres needs to be carried out in ways that balance economic, social and environmental objectives and with the engagement of relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society and academia,

Recognizing the crucial role that women, Indigenous Peoples, local communities and youth play in the production, consumption and conservation of natural plant fibres, and stressing the need for the full participation of women, Indigenous Peoples, local communities and youth at all levels of policymaking and implementation for promoting the use of natural plant fibres,

Noting with great concern the severe negative impact on human health, safety and well-being caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, as well as the severe disruption to societies and economies and the devastating impact on lives and livelihoods, and that the poorest and most vulnerable are the hardest hit by the pandemic, reaffirming the ambition to get back on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by designing and implementing sustainable and inclusive recovery strategies to accelerate progress towards the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to help to reduce the risk of and build resilience to future shocks, crises and pandemics, including by strengthening health systems and achieving universal health coverage, and recognizing that equitable and timely access for all to safe, quality, effective and affordable COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and

⁹ [UNEP/EA.4/Res.9](#).

¹⁰ [UNEP/EA.3/HLS.1](#).

¹¹ [UNEP/EA.4/HLS.1](#).

¹² [UNEP/EA.5/HLS.1](#).

diagnostics are an essential part of a global response based on unity, solidarity, renewed multilateral cooperation and the principle of leaving no one behind,

Stressing that countries around the world continue to grapple with COVID-19 recovery and current geopolitical tensions, as well as adverse impacts of climate change, which have created additional challenges on eradication of poverty, food security, nutrition, energy security, cost of living (inflation), access to concessional financing for recovery and development, and gender equality, undermined the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, disproportionately impacted the recovery efforts, particularly of developing countries, and reversed development gains of at least a decade,

Expressing its concern that there was a steep decline in the production of jute, kenaf and allied fibres in 2020 as a result of the impacts from the spread of COVID-19 and due to extreme weather events and that the COVID-19 pandemic has had widespread impacts on agricultural production systems, including those producing natural plant fibres, as it has disrupted natural plant fibre production and value chains owing to restrictions in the movement and availability of inputs, labour, post-harvest services and timely access to markets, and has challenged the livelihoods of farmers, including small-scale and family farmers and workers dependent on agriculture, including migrant workers,

1. *Invites* all relevant stakeholders to scale up efforts to promote awareness of the benefits of the sustainable production, consumption and use of natural plant fibres;

2. *Underlines* the importance of unlocking the benefits of natural plant fibres, and encourages all stakeholders to promote the sustainable production, consumption and use of natural plant fibres in all relevant areas and sectors;

3. *Recognizes* that the production, processing, application and proper management and export of natural plant fibres may well have the potential to be advantageous to the economies of many developing countries and the livelihoods of millions of small-scale farmers and low-wage workers, and in this regard calls upon Member States to take effective measures, as appropriate, to help to integrate small-scale holders into global production, value and supply chains for the sustainable production, consumption and use of natural plant fibres;

4. *Stresses* that the sustainable production, consumption and use of natural plant fibres may contribute to broader efforts towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as of outcome documents of other related major United Nations conferences and summits and multilateral environmental agreements including the Paris Agreement, and the achievement of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and its four goals and 23 targets, particularly target 10;¹³

5. *Encourages* Member States:

(a) To foster political support, the mobilization of resources, capacity-building and proper management and momentum for the sustainable production, consumption and use of natural plant fibres at the global, regional, national and local levels, as appropriate;

(b) To promote and support the full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular Indigenous Peoples and local communities, in the decision-making process regarding the production of natural plant fibres;

¹³ See United Nations Environment Programme, document UNEP/CBD/COP/10/27, annex, decision X/2.

(c) To promote and support measures to ensure that the production of natural plant fibres is consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity and does not lead to the conversion of natural forests or overexploitation of natural resources, including water;

(d) To consider mainstreaming the promotion of the sustainable production, consumption and use of natural plant fibres into policies and plans and current national development priorities, as appropriate, and address challenges, including environmental degradation and the adverse impacts of climate change;

(e) To develop and implement policies and plans to incentivize the sustainable production, consumption and use of natural plant fibres and to promote the identification and development of environmentally friendly alternatives to single-use plastic products, taking into account the full life cycle implications of those alternatives, so as to reduce the utilization of single-use plastic, in line with national laws and priorities, as appropriate;

(f) To build on and reinforce existing initiatives in order to scale up the sustainable production, consumption and use of natural plant fibres, as appropriate;

(g) To facilitate synergies among all stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society and academia, and a holistic view of how to promote international partnerships and achieve national priorities related to the promotion of the sustainable production, consumption and use of natural plant fibres, as appropriate;

(h) To share information and best practices, in particular leveraging the platforms of South-South and triangular cooperation, regarding the multitude of innovative applications of natural plant fibres, with a view to promoting longer-term economic, social and environmental benefits for both producers and consumers;

(i) To foster scientific research and development and cooperation at the national, regional and global levels, as appropriate, to support, in addition to traditional use, high-end, value-added and innovative use of natural plant fibres;

(j) To preserve Indigenous knowledge and technologies associated with natural plant fibres, and scale up their sustainable production, consumption and use as appropriate;

6. *Recalls* that the natural fibre industry is one of the world's oldest industries, generating millions of jobs and connecting remote producers to world markets, and the commitment to promoting a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization;

7. *Invites* the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to lead the efforts and work with other United Nations entities, including the United Nations Environment Programme, to scale up international efforts to promote the sustainable production, consumption and use of natural plant fibres, within their respective mandates and existing resources and through voluntary contributions, as appropriate;

8. *Invites* Governments, international and regional organizations, the private sector, the business community and academia to foster an effective and enduring international partnership in support of research and development and technical know-how to promote various applications of natural plant fibres, as appropriate;

9. *Invites* Governments, the United Nations system, international and regional organizations, the private sector and the business community, academia and civil society to incentivize and develop overarching projects to promote the sustainable production, consumption and use of natural plant fibres, including through the promotion of sustainable agricultural approaches, ecosystem-based approaches and other management and conservation approaches, in line with United

Nations Environment Assembly resolution 5/5 integrating small-scale producers, with particular attention paid to family farmers, Indigenous Peoples, women and youth in the related value chains and leveraging South-South and triangular cooperation platforms, and to tackle the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on this sector, leaving no one behind, and ensuring its sustainable and resilient recovery;

10. *Underlines* the importance of stepped-up funding from all sources, including public and private, bilateral and multilateral, as well as alternative sources of finance, for sustainable, inclusive and resilient recovery in the sectors related to natural plant fibres, including through the promotion of strong and resilient value chains, strengthened rural financial markets and social protection systems, including with access for women, Indigenous Peoples and young people, and technology transfer on mutually agreed terms and conditions for developing and least developed countries;

11. *Requests* the Secretary-General, in close collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, as well as other relevant international organizations, to include a special section on natural plant fibres and sustainable development in the report of the Secretary-General on agriculture development, food security and nutrition to be submitted to the General Assembly at its eightieth session, and decides to include in the provisional agenda of its eightieth session, under the item entitled “Agriculture development, food security and nutrition”, the sub-item entitled “Natural plant fibres and sustainable development”.

*49th plenary meeting
19 December 2023*