CLIMATE ACTION

UNEA 7: Understanding how environmental resolutions are negotiated and implemented

BY HELLEN SHIKANDA

The largest gathering of environmental experts and civil society members on environmental issues recently concluded in Nairobi.

Three resolutions that Kenya backed went through. Now, member states must begin implementing the resolutions passed during the seventh United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 7).

Nation spoke to Dr Patricia Kamori-Mbote, Director of the Law Division at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), who unpacked details on what unfolds before and after the Assembly.

"A resolution is primarily from a member state. A call is made by the UNEA Bureau, which is UNEP, asking member states to put in resolutions.

It starts with a concept, and that concept is looked at by the Secretariat. After that, member states are given an opportunity to blow it out. Between the date of putting in the resolutions and UNEA, the member states may, through their committee of permanent representatives, discuss their resolution.

And the member states that propose the resolution may be asked to go back and revise certain parts. Sometimes, the member states may call on other member states to join in. You may have one member state putting in a resolution, but by the time it comes to the open-ended committee of permanent representatives, which is just before UNEA, you now have a resolution that the member states then begin to negotiate.

Many resolutions will have asks from the member states. So they could ask the UNEP Executive Director to carry out certain actions. They asked the Executive Director to put in place the mechanisms to implement it. Another one is at UNEA 5 (Resolution 5/14), which asked the Executive Director and member states to put in place the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastics. So what we do is we begin working on what we've been asked to do, because at the next UNEA, we are expected to report on what has happened.

Multilateral processes are not legally binding, but they are the seeds planted towards internationally legally binding processes.

There is no bar to bringing back a resolution. Member states have the freedom to bring whatever resolutions they want to bring before the UNEA. So if a member state feels strongly that an issue needs to be brought back, they could bring it back. And it could come back in a different form.

Adoption

They could also talk to other member states to join them in bringing the matter before UNEA as a resolution. As the Secretariat, we offer them help in refining. If they want to know if there was another resolution like the one they are bringing, we prepare papers telling them the state of play.

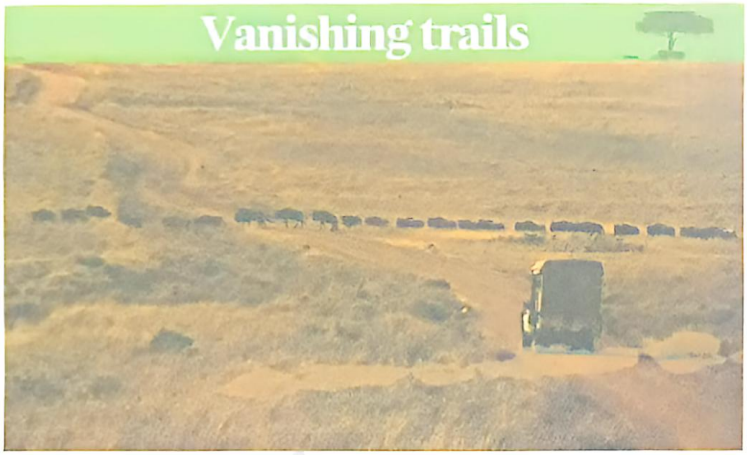
When a treaty is concluded, what happens is thatmember states sign on to their agreement.

That's the first step. But signing on to the agreement isn't taking on obligations. You have to carry out what is called ratification.

And that is sort of bringing it into your domestic space. And after it has been brought into the state, there has to be a certain number of countries that ratify an agreement for it to enter into force. Once it enters into force, member states hold the first meeting, saying this is how we now want to carry out the issues under this particular treaty. And now it's after that that countries then domesticate. The domestication is putting in place national laws to reflect what was contained in the agreement.

To ratify an implementation, it depends on what the member states agree to when the treaty is adopted."

Vanishing trails



A tour vehicle stops as wildebeests cross a road during their migration to greener pastures between the Maasai Mara Game Reserve in Narok County and the open plains of the Serengeti in Tanzania on August 7, 2025. REUTERS I THOMAS MUKOYA

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At last! Ijara residents relieved as WaterFund delivers clean water, improved sanitation

BY MANASE OTSIALO

It was five months ago. The Chairman of Ishaqbini Hirola Community Conservancy in Ijara, Garissa county, Mr Barre Hussein Dakane, stood proudly beside a shiny water pump and pronounced: "Today, my friends, we begin a new chapter. Today, we bring water to our village."

The excitement that met this pronouncement was profound. It signified relief.

For as long as anyone in Kotile village in Ijara sub-county could remember, fetching water had been a daily struggle, and a risk. Women would trek to the nearest stream some 5km away, each day. The journey back would involve rolling jerrycans filled with dirty water, on the ground. This trip would involve walking through the conservancy, where wild animals roamed.

"I used to go to Ishaqbini to fetch water as early as 6am and return as late as 1pm. You can see I was wasting a lot of time that I could use in making my home," says Ms Fardosa Omar Abdi, a resident. "We were putting our lives at risk because there are hyenas in the conservancy. Sometimes baboons would chase us," she confirms.

Mr Dakane's announcement that the new solar-powered borehole at Kotile was ready for use thus marked an end to these risky trips. The borehole is one of the projects by Ishaqbini Conservancy Water and Sanitation Project (ICWSP) funded by Water Sector Trust Fund (WaterFund) with support from the Royal Danish Embassy in Kenya, to reduce the distance between communities and water sources.

Now clean water is available in the village, and the impact is already recognisable. Children spend more time in school, women have time to start businesses, and the gardens are flourishing, bringing in steady incomes to farming households. "Water has brought us life," beams Mr Dakane.

Under this project, both Kotile Dispensary and Primary School will enjoy piped water once the extension of a 4.2km pipe is completed.

Mr Dakane says local pastoralists no longer cross to Lamu in search of water. "Our livestock now have access to water, which has improved milk production. With increased availability of milk and water, the health of expectant mothers and children is assured," he adds.

The Ksh104.3 million water project targets 960 households in 30 villages with a provision of 30,000 cubic metres of clean water. Of the total amount, the County Government of Garissa contributed Ksh23.4 million. Northern Rangeland Trust (NRT) donated Ksh10.7 million, and WaterFund invested Ksh70.2 million.

In Garissa County, access to water and sanitation has been a historical challenge for mostly rural households, and WaterFund's support is helping to bridge this gap through targeted financing and technical assistance.

The Kotile project is at the tail end of an implementation process that began 35 months ago. It entailed drilling a borehole and installing a solar-powered pumping system. WaterFund laid 16km of HDPE (high-density polyethylene) pipeline extension and installed a 50 cubic-metre steel water tank.

Other activities included rehabilitation of eight water kiosks and construction of a 40,000 cubic-metre water pan in the area.

To ensure good health through sanitation, WaterFund has constructed seven four-door VIP latrines in three public primary schools. The Fund, says Ishaqbini Hirola Community Conservancy Manager, Mr Ahmed Maalim, has also supported household sanitation through the Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach, resulting in increased access to sanitation to 1,056 households, benefiting 5,280 people, and 30 villages being declared Open Defecation Free (ODF).

"We have ensured that one door in each of the four VIP latrines is designated for Persons with Disability (PwD). This is part of mainstreaming Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in all our projects," says WaterFund's Principal Programme Officer for Sanitation, Ms Violet Mucheni.

Residents are happy. One parent, Ms Asha Godow Hassan, testifies: "My children used to miss school every month because of sickness, but now they learn and play without worrying about getting sick."

She continues: "These toilets have given us more than just a place to help ourselves. They have given us health, dignity, and a brighter future."

Headteacher at Kotile Junior School, Mr Abdi Kuno Morsal, has lauded the sanitation project, stating: "Previously, our students used to defecate in the field and whenever it rained, all these wastes would be washed into small dams within the school where the same students still played. Bilharzia was quite prevalent. But now with toilets, we have achieved improved sanitation in our school."

Mr Morsal says the girls can now comfortably change and dispose of their sanitary pads. "Our enrolment has increased because parents now feel that the school has a healthier environment," he says.

The sanitation success in Kotile has inspired neighbouring communities to follow suit. Project designers hope that this ripple effect will eventually result in improved sanitation in the entire county and lead to better health indicators.

