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On the sidelines of UNEA 5.2, Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, the Deputy Secretary-General of the UN and Chair of the UN SDGs visited a community waste management initiative in the outskirts of the Kenyan capital, Nairobi
NAIROBI: The climate crisis that is unfolding in many parts of Africa should be addressed urgently in the context of COVID-19, according to the Green Economy Coalition, a global, multi-stakeholder alliance on a mission to accelerate the transition to green and fair economies.

campaigners noted that over two years on from the outbreak of COVID-19, no corner of the global economy remains untouched, but it is poor and marginalized communities who are bearing the brunt of the pandemic especially in developing countries most in Sub-Saharan Africa.

According to the report entitled " Building Back Greener:International Environmental Protection and Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the Context of COVID-19" which was released on the sidelines of the Fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly – UNEA-5, an inclusive Green Recovery has emerged as one of the top policy solutions to the challenges posed by COVID-19.

While the proposed recovery has primarily been the domain of wealthy countries, the report noted that lower income countries lack upfront funding or access to credit for large stimulus packages, green or otherwise.

Phasing out single-use plastics

There remains little sign of much-needed structural changes including fiscal and pricing reforms, embedding natural capital into macroeconomic planning, beyond GDP measures,the report said.

Among the key priorities areas to push forward this agenda, activists cite current efforts to embed circular economy into recovery agendas whereas campaign to prioritising a new global framework to rapidly phase out single-use plastics should also be another way to incentivise the use of alternative materials, and invest in recycling capacity.

Since 2017, state parties, regional groups, and multiple stakeholders have introduced on the sidelines of the United Nations Environment Assembly currently taking place in Nairobi, formal propositions and issued declarations concerning a new global instrument to address the plastics crisis, demonstrating that movement towards such an instrument is picking up.

Inclusive Green Recovery

But before negotiations begin for parties to achieve a circular economy for plastic by 2024, a mandate must be established and negotiating committees must be formed, according to Ms. Bérangère Abba, French Secretary of State in charge of Biodiversity who was heading a delegation at UNEA 5.2 in Nairobi.

Although activists seek to embed inclusive, green outcomes into the COVID-19 responses of international finance institutions, with high-level coordination to ensure multilateral funding agencies are prioritising an inclusive Green Recovery in their portfolios, the top French government official stressed at current levels of negotiation, all participants should search for fair compromises and addresses their differences.



While more than 3,000 businesses have pledged to reach net-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050, many companies face challenges in putting this guidance, according to Business Registration Service (BRS) Secretariat

“Science-policy interfaces are critical in shaping current environmental governance,” Ms. Bérangère Abba told reporters on the sidelines of UNEA 5.2 in the Kenyan capital city, Nairobi.

Latest forecasts by the World Bank show that the largest share of the “new poor” will be in South Asia, with sub-Saharan Africa close behind, “many of the new poor are likely to be engaged in informal services, construction, and manufacturing – the sectors in which economic activity is most affected by lockdowns and other mobility restrictions.

Poverty forecasted to almost double

While in the lowest income countries, poverty is increasing, and it is doing so at a faster pace than expected before the pandemic – an increase of poverty in 2021 by

2.7% compared to the pandemic projection of a 0.2% increase, the report pointed out that for sub-Saharan Africa, the rate of increase in poverty is projected to more than double, from 1.0% to 2.5%.

Estimates also show that due to lockdowns, confinements and travel restrictions, carbon emissions fell as a result of COVID-19 in 2020.

Recycling plants and waste picking cooperatives across the world have not only been hit by local lockdowns and work restrictions but have seen a significant drop in demand as the market for virgin plastics has increased, it said.

Failed promise of climate finance

Basing on these findings, climate actors in Nairobi note that despite the rhetoric, green recovery and stimulus spending remains a fraction of investment in and support for fossil-fuel based sectors and industries.

Developing countries, according to climate actors gathered in Nairobi, Kenya face an estimated gap of 1 trillion dollars in COVID-19 emergency and response spending.

Despite some progress at COP26, developed countries have failed to deliver the US\$100 billion a year in climate assistance to developing countries first promised in 2009, it said.

Estimates by the UNEP show that plastics are not only harmful to human and planetary health, but they are almost all made from fossil fuels.

“These products contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions, with emissions from plastics on track to increase threefold by 2050, according to the UN agency. (End)