

The UN General Assembly has approved a resolution paving the way for an international pact on environmental laws. But the resolution had several opponents, including the US and Russia.

The UN General Assembly on Thursday voted through a resolution establishing a framework for a global pact for the environment, an initiative put forward by French President Emmanuel Macron last September.

The resolution asks Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to create a working group that is to identify, assess and come up with potential remedies for possible gaps in existing international environmental law. Its report is due to be presented to the General Assembly session starting in September.

The global pact is intended to be the first international legally binding agreement to gather and harmonize all environmental laws in one document, according to the French permanent mission to the UN.

The accord has as its objective “to be an essential tool for governments to help them implement environmental rules and principles in their own country,” a statement on the mission’s website says.

Need to ‘act decisively’

Speaking ahead of the vote, the French ambassador to the UN, Francois Delattre, told the assembly that “the unprecedented deterioration of our environment is already causing hundreds of thousands of deaths due to planetary warming, water and air pollution and the deterioration of biodiversity and soils.”

“If we don’t act decisively, we are exposing ourselves to dire consequences: The exhaustion of natural resources, migrations and an upsurge in conflicts,” he added.

US not joining in

Although 143 of the UN’s 193 member states backed the resolution, five nations opposed it — the United States, Russia, Syria, Turkey and the Philippines — while seven abstained, including Iran.

China, one of the world’s two biggest polluters along with the US, was among the countries in favor of the measure.

The US opposition was expected in view of President Donald Trump’s announcement last June that his country would withdraw from the 2015 Paris agreement on fighting climate change, which the global pact is designed to complement.

UN Ambassador Nikki Haley said it was not in the US interest to join the pact.

“When international bodies attempt to force America into vague environmental commitments, it’s a sure sign that American citizens and businesses will get stuck paying a

large bill without getting large benefits," she said.

Source: dw.com