
Meeting of the Bureau of the Environment Assembly
Thursday 27 October 2016
08:30 to 15:00
Windsor Golf Hotel and Country Club, Nairobi

MEETING SUMMARY

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda.

The meeting was chaired by His Excellency Edgar Gutierrez, President of the UN Environment Assembly Bureau (UN Environment Assembly Bureau) and Minister of Environment and Energy of the Republic of Costa Rica.

The meeting was attended by the following members of the Bureau:

- H.E. Mr. Vladislav Smrž, Deputy Minister, Ministry of the Environment, Vice President, Eastern European Group (Czech Republic)
- H.E. Mr. Jassim Humadi, Acting Minister of Health and Environment, Vice President, Asia-Pacific Group (Iraq)
- H.E. Mrs Amina Mohammed, Minister of Environment, Vice President, Africa Group (Nigeria)
- by video link
- H.E. Mr Ramon J.P. Paje, Senior Advisor to the Climate Change Commission, Senior Advisor to the Climate Change Commission, Vice President, Asia-Pacific Group (Philippines)
- Mr. John Matuszak, Senior Advisor, Office of Environmental Quality and Transboundary Issues, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, Department of State, Vice President, Western European and Others Group (United States of America)
- H.E. Ms. Roxane de Bilderling, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Rapporteur, Western European and Others Group (Belgium)

Other representatives

- Mr. Friday O. Okai, Charge d' Affaires a.i., High Commission of Nigeria, Nairobi
- Mr. Jamal Abdullah Khudhair Dulami, DPR Iraq, Nairobi
- Ms. Majella Cristy U Pua-Diezmos, DPR Philippines, Nairobi
- Mr. Joel B. Hansen DPR of USA, Nairobi

The Secretariat was represented by the Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director, Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Governing Bodies. Ms. Elizabeth Mrema, Director Law Division and Mr. Michele Candotti, Chief Office made presentations under agenda item 3.

There were no suggestions for changes to the agenda and it was adopted.

2. Achievements and challenges from the Second Session of the UN Environment Assembly and way forward to the 2017 UN Environment Assembly

In his introductory remarks, the Executive Director recalled discussions by the Bureau at its last meeting and informed the meeting that the main deliverables of the retreat were expected to be: (i) building consensus on the structure of the high-level segment; (ii) discussing a theme; (iii) drawing up a road map/action plan for the preparation of the Third Session of the UN Environment Assembly.

The Deputy Executive Director highlighted the steps taken by the Secretariat to address the challenges relating to the interpretation of the Rules of Procedure during the 7th meeting of the 2016 Environment Assembly. These included reaching out to the Office of Legal Affairs to clarify the interpretation of the Rules on quorum, translation and interpretation and working with the Office in the preparation of a guidance note for delegations which was expected to be ready in time for translation. The note would clarify the following rules relating quorum and voting; translation and circulation of documents and; interpretation at meetings.

In the discussions that followed, members were not supportive of changing the rules of procedure, highlighting instead the importance of clear interpretation. The meeting welcomed the Secretariat's intention to distribute a guidance note on rules of procedure. A formal briefing a few weeks before every Assembly was recommended. In response to a question on translation and interpretation, the Deputy Executive Director explained that regarding translation, two key considerations included the cost and the delay associated with translating documents. In addition, he indicated that an expert from the UN Office in Nairobi would provide details during the joint retreat.

There was general support for a deadline for the submission of resolutions at least six to eight weeks prior to the UN Environment Assembly to allow for sufficient time for translation and circulation. An added benefit noted was that a deadline could result in fewer resolutions, facilitating the adoption of specific outcomes.

On translation, one member proposed that the Secretariat emulate the practice by the Conference of the Parties of Multi-Lateral Agreements which partnered with UN offices in different time zones to allow for seamless translation irrespective of time constraints.

One member expressed the discomfort of his group with degree of pre-negotiation of draft resolutions by the Committee of Permanent Representatives during the inter-sessional period. Some members not resident in Nairobi had indicated that the comments they submitted were neither reflected nor acknowledged. He noted that despite efforts by the Committee the negotiation process was restarted during the Assembly with opening of previously agreed paragraphs. Some members emphasized the unique role of the Committee in monitoring the implementation of resolutions and the programme of work and budget. Other members also pointed to the important role of the Committee in the inter-sessional period.

To address the concerns of small delegations about the multiple parallel meetings, it was proposed that less contentious resolutions be considered in plenary. It was further proposed that the UNEA plenary adopt them on the first day of the high-level segment.

The Bureau meeting discussed the issue of nominating the Chairs of the Committee of the Whole and other Sessional Committees. One member was of the view that the selection of the Chairs of the Committee of the Whole and other Sessional Committees should not to be limited to Nairobi-based representatives. Consultations should be undertaken at regional ministerial fora to identify competent, experienced individuals. Another member expressed concern over the practicality of having non-resident Chairs. It agreed that this process should be transparent, guided by clear procedures, including respect to geographical distribution and equity, and completed with enough time to allow for the new chairs to begin work. On the Chair of the Committee of the Whole, while the Committee could make suggestions, the Bureau had the responsibility to make the recommendation to the Assembly which elected the Chair. At the request of the President, the Secretary highlighted the Rules relating to the election of Sessional Committees. The meeting was informed that Chair of the Committee of the Whole was elected by the UN Environment Assembly upon nomination President of Assembly who in turn acted in consultation with the Bureau and the regional and political groups. The Secretariat was requested to prepare a note on the selection procedure.

It was agreed that the next UN Environment Assembly retreat in June 2017 would represent an important opportunity for consultations on the matter. The importance of a proper hand over process from the intersessional period was emphasized. The Bureau noted that a new Committee Bureau would be nominated in June 2017 (while taking functions in July) thus facilitating a smooth transition.

Regarding consistency of work by the UN Environment Assembly Bureau in the inter-sessional period, the meeting was reminded of resolution 2/22, Review of the cycle of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme, that moved the timing of the election of the UN Environment Assembly Bureau to the end of the second session. The meeting was also reminded of the terms of the Governing Council decision 27/2 which strengthened the role of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

The meeting stressed the need to raise public awareness and transparency through the use of different media such as the UN web-television, including the archives.

On the organization of the High-Level Segment, which was only two days long, the meeting agreed on the benefits and importance of interactive ministerial dialogue and/or parallel groups. Most members were of the view that ministers should have the opportunity to deliver national statements. The meeting recommended that Governments submit their speeches to the Secretariat prior to the high-level segment and that statements be pre-recorded for online distribution and record. To encourage short speeches, the use of visible timers indicating allocated time was proposed.

It was suggested that both interactive, parallel thematic dialogues and delivery of national statements could occur in smaller groups meeting in parallel. Possible models such as the UN Conference on Trade and Development meeting, held in Nairobi in 2016 and the climate change summit in Paris held in 2015 were discussed as relevant examples. The meeting noted the possible constraints on some ministers' ability to engage in both presentation of national positions and interactive dialogue.

To maximize the time for interactive dialogue between ministers during the Davos style meetings, the Bureau agreed that the number of experts making presentations should be reduced. The alignment of discussion groups with ministerial expertise and interest was encouraged, provided critical issues were addressed. In addition, topics should be focused and actionable, and discussions should feed into UN Environment's agenda setting and programming. The importance of regional dialogues to aggregate issues was also emphasized.

Some members emphasized the importance of working to advance the Stakeholders' Engagement Policy. If this was not possible at the 2017 Environment Assembly, maximum flexibility should be used to increase Stakeholder participation. The need to avoid retrogression was highlighted.

A member commended the App used during the 2016 Environment Assembly but noted that during the session it was hard to access documents owing to system overload and lack of appropriate wifi bandwidth.

In his conclusions, the President pointed to the need to accommodate the desire for dialogue, the approval of resolutions and the time for national speeches. The Secretariat indicated that on speeches the Communications Division would look at options for compiling the national statements. The Secretariat also indicated that a maximum of three parallel round tables was feasible bearing in mind interpretation costs.

3. Global Environmental Governance

The President introduced the item on Global Environmental Governance, drawing attention to a paper prepared by the Secretariat. Key points that Bureau members should focus on included; reducing the number of resolutions, creating a concise and powerful message; acting as advocates for the UN Environment Assembly by referencing its outcomes at international fora; ensuring consistency on expectations of the UN Environment Assembly and securing the participation of ministers.

Other issues included the need for consistency on what to expect in terms of outcome and on the added value of inviting ministers of other portfolios. Citing his experience at the High Level Political Forum, he emphasized the importance of profiling the Environment Assembly as a political body.

Bureau members expressed concern about the limited visibility of the UN Environment Assembly at the meetings of the High-Level Forum and meeting of the Conference of the Parties of Multi-Lateral Environment Agreements. They emphasized need to actively place the UN Environment Assembly on

the map as well as to attain political buy-in. The UN Environment Assembly must ensure that it contributes to and responds to the 2030 Agenda.

The meeting noted that the UN Environment Assembly was not able to control other UN agencies, bodies and conference of the Parties of Multi-Lateral Agreements, which were sovereign. Thanks to the UN Environment's earlier work, many UN agencies, funds and programmes had come to develop their own environmental strategies. Cooperation with these bodies should be in the form of positive support based on UNEP's comparative advantages, rather than attempts to exercise control over their work. Comparative advantages of UN Environment in the global system of environmental governance were highlighted as its coalitions, measurement, science as demonstrated by the Global Environment Outlook and innovative work in areas like financing sustainable development. It was suggested that UN Environment find ways to integrate economic information with environmental data on a national and local scale, working with the Statistical Commission and the UN system of accounts.

It was agreed that the President of the UN Environment Assembly should visit the Secretary General and seek guidance on how to relate to other UN bodies and assistance in the consolidation of environmental efforts and the Secretariat was tasked to make the necessary arrangements. The meeting was encouraged to take into account the outcomes of governing bodies of different environmental treaties. In addition, a member suggested that these bodies could be represented in agenda setting processes of the UN Environment Assembly.

On whether the UN Environment Assembly should treat the UN as its client or whether it should focus its efforts outside of the UN, the Executive Director emphasized the importance of focusing on the world and impacting people rather than only looking inward to the United Nations. To this end, the selection of an attractive theme for the Environment was deemed critical. Once a theme for the Environment Assembly meeting was selected, a global campaign would be developed, based on science and figures building up to a political decision. A popular campaign could help build momentum, raise awareness and enhance impact and then motivate other bodies to take notice and undertake further implementation.

While members agreed with the importance of relevance and focus on the outside world, they reiterated the need to impact on UN bodies.

The meeting agreed on the need to have a group of friends in New York along the lines of the Group established in Geneva.

The Director of the Law Division briefed the Bureau on the workshop held in New York in July 2016. Issues raised included limiting the number of resolutions, the format of the UNEA and the inconsistency of the membership between UNEA and CPR and the outcomes of UNEA and their impact on multi-lateral agreement treaty bodies. She also touched on the discussed the Environment Management Group, and contribution to the 2030 Agenda.

The meeting discussed at length the issue of the outcome document. One member preferred for a Chair's summary to a negotiated outcome document as the summary could include stronger messages. Most of the members however expressed support for a short, negotiated political outcome linked to the main theme of the Assembly. It was agreed that a Chair's summary should be prepared regardless of whether there was a negotiated document.

The need to integrate the sustainable development agenda with the climate change agenda was acknowledged as both are critical for environmental well-being. Although progress has been made on addressing the environmental dimension of sustainable development, a lot of work remained on integrating environment into development.

The Chief of the Executive Office introduced the sub-item on UN Environment Assembly outcomes. He identified three ingredients and four levels of action for moving forward. The three principles were: i) maintaining relevance, ii) maintaining institutional legitimacy, and iii) gravitas. The four levels of action were to: i) work on the outcome, ii) partnerships with environmental institutions without controlling them, iii) cooperation in institutional settings like UN system and Multi-Lateral Organizations, and iv) engaging at national and local levels. It was important to invest in the inter-sessional period, combine

formal discussions with local campaigns grounded in science, facts and figures and to continually prove relevance and legitimacy.

In the discussion that followed, members emphasized the need for an early agreement on a theme. The outcome should also be based on the theme. They also reiterated that clarity of communication was key to full public engagement.

The Secretariat updated the meeting on the implementation of the four Governance related resolutions adopted at the second session of the UN Environment Assembly. On the work on synergies among biodiversity related conventions, the meeting was informed that while discussions on the accountability framework and similar transactions were moving forward, political engagement between the UN Environment Assembly Bureau and the Governing Bodies of the relevant environmental conventions was needed.

Regarding to the linkages with the High Level Political Forum, the President informed the participants that he had recently received a letter from the President of the Economic and Social Council on the inputs by the Assembly to the next High Level Political Forum. For this submission to be complete it would be best to bring the environment dimension as a single submission, including contributions from the Multi-lateral Environment Agreements. A joint meeting of the Chairs could be considered. Further consultations were deemed necessary on this topic at the next bureau meeting.

Modus Operandi for the Bureau of the UN Environment Assembly

At the request of the President, the Rapporteur moderated discussions on this agenda item which focused on representation of the Assembly in international meetings with a ministerial component; division of work among bureau members and tools to enhance communication.

On representing the Assembly in international meetings with a ministerial component, Bureau members volunteered as follows:

- a) H.E. Mr. Edgar Gutiérrez Espeleta, Minister of Environment and Energy
President, Latin American and Caribbean Group (Costa Rica)
 1. 7-18 November 2016, COP22 UN Framework Convention for Climate Change and MOP 12, Marrakech, Morocco
 2. 4-17 December 2016, COP13 Convention for Biological Diversity, COP-MOP-8 of the Cartagena Protocol, COP-MOP-2 of the Nagoya Protocol, Cancun
 3. 14-15 January 2017, Seventh session of IRENA Assembly, Abu Dhabi
 4. 10 - 19 July 2017, High Level Political Forum and High Level Segment of ECOSOC, New York, USA
- b) H.E. Mr. Jassim Humadi, Acting Minister of Health and Environment, Vice President, Asia-Pacific Group (Iraq)
 1. 7-18 November 2016, COP22 UN Framework Convention for Climate Change and MOP 12, Marrakech, Morocco
 2. 21-23 April 2017, Spring meeting of the World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund, Washington,
 3. 22 – 31 May 2017, World Health Assembly, Geneva,
- c) Mr. John Matuszak, Senior Advisor, Office of Environmental Quality and Transboundary Issues, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, Department of State Vice President, Western European and Others Group (United States of America)
 1. 24 April – 5 May 2017, COP13 of the Basel Convention, COP8 of the Rotterdam Convention, COP8 of the Stockholm Convention
- d) H.E. Mr Ramon J.P. Paje, Senior Advisor to the Climate Change Commission Vice President, Asia-Pacific Group (Philippines)

1. 3 – 8 July 2017, 40th session of the Food and Agriculture Organization Conference, Rome
 2. 4-17 December 2016, COP13 Convention for Biological Diversity, COP-MOP-8 of the Cartagena Protocol, COP-MOP-2 of the Nagoya Protocol, Cancun
- e) H.E. Mr. Vladislav Smrž, Deputy Minister, Ministry of the Environment, Vice President, Eastern European Group (Czech Republic)
1. 4-17 December 2016, COP13 Convention for Biological Diversity, COP-MOP-8 of the Cartagena Protocol, COP-MOP-2 of the Nagoya Protocol, Cancun
 2. 8 – 10 May 2107, ECOSOC Integration Segment, New York City, USA (in person or through a designated representative)
 3. 10 – 19 July 2017, High Level Political Forum and High Level Segment of ECOSOC (in person or through a designated representative)

On the division of work, the meeting agreed to add an additional item on the Committee of the Whole and Other Committees. Bureau members agreed to take the lead on items on preparations for Third session of the UN Environment Assembly as follows:

- a) Themes:
 1. H.E. Mr Ramon J.P. Paje, Senior Advisor to the Climate Change Commission Vice President, Asia-Pacific Group (Philippines)
 2. H.E. Mr. Vladislav Smrž, Deputy Minister, Ministry of the Environment Vice President, Eastern European Group (Czech Republic)
 3. Mr. John Matuszak, Senior Advisor, Office of Environmental Quality and Transboundary Issues, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, Department of State Vice President, Western European and Others Group (United States of America)
- b) Outcome:
 1. H.E. Mrs Amina Mohammed, Minister of Environment, Vice President, Africa Group (Nigeria)
- c) Stakeholders' Engagement Policy:
 1. H.E. Ms. Roxane de Bilderling, Ambassador and Permanent Representative Rapporteur, Western European and Other Group (Belgium)
 2. H.E. Mrs Amina Mohammed, Minister of Environment, Vice President, Africa Group (Nigeria)
- d) Committee of the Whole and Other Committees:
 1. Mr. John Matuszak, Senior Advisor, Office of Environmental Quality and Transboundary Issues, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, Department of State Vice President, Western European and Others Group (United States of America)United States of America

It was also emphasized the openness by the Members of the Bureau of the Assembly to collaborate on these topical issues with members of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

The Secretariat made a presentation on innovative and virtual communication methods. To improve engagement with both resident and non- resident Member States as well as other stakeholders the Secretariat has revamped its website and improved its provision of information on meetings of the Committee and the Environment Assembly Bureau. Members can download pre-session and post-session documents. In addition, meetings of the Committee are webcast and can be joined virtually.

Members of the UN Environment Assembly Bureau were encouraged to submit their biographies to the Secretariat for use on the website.

A separate closed platform (Slack) had been set up. Members of the Bureau would be sent the link that allows them to join. A member expressed concern about being overloaded with forms of communication. It was noted that this private platform is a work platform first and foremost, for the distribution of documents and would be made open to Members of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

A Whatsapp group would also be finalized once all contact details have been shared by the Secretariat. The Secretariat was requested to associate the numbers with names.

Concluding the agenda item the President thanked the Bureau for supporting the participatory way of doing business through team effort.

The meeting was closed at 3:30 pm.