

The Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) to UNEP
Subcommittee Meeting
Monday, 26 September 2016, 9:30 am– 12:30 pm
UNON Conference Room 4, Nairobi

MEETING SUMMARY

Agenda item 1: Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

1. The meeting was chaired by H.E. Ms. Julia Pataki, Chair of the CPR, and Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Romania. She welcomed new members to the Committee of Permanent Representatives. The meeting thereafter adopted the agenda.

Agenda item 2: Lessons learned from the United Nations Environment Assembly at its second session and way forward to the third session of the Environment Assembly

2. The Chair expressed appreciation to members for sending their views on the lessons learned. She invited additional comments on the key recommendations outlined in the following areas:
- i. Management of the inter-sessional period
 - ii. Prepare for a more effective UNEA session
 - iii. The need to enforce principles of transparency, ownership and inclusiveness
 - iv. Early consensus on strategic and structural issues
 - v. Resourcing for the meetings of the Assembly

It was noted that all inputs received would be considered for the roadmap to the 2017 Environment Assembly with milestones and clear activities. They would also support preparations for the 2017 Environment Assembly preparatory retreat.

3. The Chair opened the floor for comments. Members thanked the Chair, Bureau and Secretariat for putting together the document, which provided solid guidance. They discussed the following areas:

- i. Outcome of the High Level Segment of the Environment Assembly

4. Many members were of the view that a clear political message and negotiated outcome of the High Level Segment would strengthen the UN Environment Assembly.

5. One member said his country had not changed its position against a negotiated political declaration but would be willing to look positively into a general document with impact and focused towards communicating to a wider audience the message from the Ministers of the Environment.

6. Others felt the outcome of the High Level Segment should concentrate on the theme and should be presented as an input from the environmental community to the High Level Political Forum as part of the review of the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, Ministers, under the leadership of the President of the Assembly, should be engaged before the Environment Assembly in reaching consensus.

7. Based on the experience of his region, one member proposed that representatives of regional forums should be allowed to address the High Level Segment even if they were not ministers. Members agreed that there should be greater ownership by capitals and clearer roles in negotiations for capitals and the Committee.

ii. Resolutions

8. Members agreed on the need for a deadline for the submission of resolutions. One member, noting that many of the resolutions recently adopted by the Assembly were not sufficiently connected with ordinary people's concerns, expressed the expectation that in 2017 the Environment Assembly will consider only a limited number of science driven, actionable and achievable resolutions on which member states and the Secretariat could act. The gap of 18 months between sessions of the Assembly put further pressure on the Secretariat to focus on implementation.

9. One member noted that the 5 clusters used during the inter-sessional meetings were very useful. The shift from 5 to 3 groups caused confusion for delegations that had planned their participation based on the 5 clusters. Concerns were raised on the proliferation of simultaneous meetings and its impact on small delegations.

iii. Visibility of the Environment Assembly

10. Members highlighted the need to enhance the visibility of the Environment Assembly and recommended a communication strategy for the 2017 Environment Assembly. It was important to avoid having too many messages as was the case at the 2016 Environment Assembly.

iv. Theme Selection

11. Members agreed that it was time to start the discussion on themes. A group of countries proposed that agreement be reached first on criteria for selection of topics before delving into the topics themselves. Possible criteria included: global nature; added value of the Environment Assembly; attractiveness to ministers; link to High level political forum and 2030 Agenda processes where specific Sustainable Development goals had already been selected. It was also suggested that the choice of side events, resolutions and other areas focus on the theme. One member cautioned that given their integrated nature, the focus should not be on one or two Sustainable development goals. Members pointed to the need for a clear political message relevant to the public and to policy makers. They called for a focused and cutting-edge effective theme that would resonate both with the global community and with people at the grassroots.

v. Inclusion of Non-Nairobi based members

12. Member States tasked the Secretariat to look into a mode of communication that would allow non-resident Committee of Permanent Representatives members to engage in meetings.

vi. Rules of Procedure

13. One member was of the opinion that there was not enough time for comprehensive negotiations on the Rules of Procedures and instead supported a legal review of the Rules. Some members questioned the need to revise the Rules of Procedure but felt that a handbook would be useful.

14. Members expressed support for the preparation and distribution of a handbook for negotiators and highlighted the need for adequate legal advice. They supported the establishment of an Open Ended Working Group to discuss issues on the rules and other matters.

vii. Roles of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and UNEA Bureaus

15. Members highlighted the need for greater engagement and ownership by the President and the Bureau in both organizational and substantive matters. One member expressed the view that UNEA President and Bureau should begin to prepare an agenda for the 2017 Environment Assembly. It was agreed that the Bureaus of the Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives should work closely together. In this connection, the Committee welcomed the forthcoming joint retreat.

viii. Translation and Interpretation

16. Members emphasized the need to make the UN Environment Assembly truly universal, through translation of all negotiating documents and working documents and adequate interpretation. They also stressed the importance of accurate translation and interpretation. They underscored the need to ensure the timely translation of all documentation associated with the preparation of the meetings of the Assembly, in particular documentation emanating from the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

ix. Document on lessons learned from the 2016 Environment Assembly and way forward to the 2017 Environment Assembly.

17. Overall, all delegations commended the Chair of the Committee for having compiled their views in the 'Lessons Learned' document and agreed it represented a basis from which the preparations of the 2017 Environment Assembly could start, bearing in mind the need for realistic expectations on what could be achieved within the available timeframe. Furthermore, Members agreed that it would be useful to establish a group to discuss the lessons learned and way forward.

18. One member expressed concern over the use of the terms, "Green Finance, Blue Economy and Environmental Crime" in the document on lessons learned. Another member defended the use of the term, "environmental crime."

19. One member speaking on behalf a group of countries proposed that the Committee should play a key role in the follow up and implementation of the programme of work as opposed to negotiations in the inter-sessional period.

20. Another member also speaking on behalf of a group of countries questioned the goal and nature of the 'Lessons Learned' document, and sought clarification on the way forward. Members of the Group noted that not all their views were incorporated especially with respect to translation. The Chair requested them to re-submit their inputs to the Secretariat, highlighting those that had not been incorporated.

x. Financing

21. Members expressed gratitude to countries that pledged funding for the 2017 Environment Assembly. One member informed the meeting that as stated during closing session of the 2016 Environment Assembly, his country would not provide extra budgetary funding for the third session of the Environment Assembly. He hoped that the 2017 Environment Assembly would not have an adverse impact on programmatic work. Another member was of the view that financing should not only address the 2017 Environment Assembly but the broader issues of translation and interpretation and participation of representatives not resident in Nairobi.

Response from the Chair

22. The Chair thanked members for their contributions and pointed out that the application of the lessons learned and way forward would be discussed in the upcoming meeting of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives. She clarified that the document was a Chair's document and not a negotiated document.

Agenda item 3: Update on Global Environment Outlook-6 (GEO6)

23. At the invitation of the chair, Ms. Jacqueline McGlade, Director, Science Division updated the meeting on the Global Environment Outlook-6. The update covered the working structure, timelines and budget. Ms. McGlade outlined the divergent views of the High Level Group on the content and form of the progress report to be prepared for the 2017 Environment Assembly. She informed the meeting that the President of the Environment Assembly would write to the Executive Director on the need to prepare an amendment to UNEA Resolution 1/4 to reflect the dates of the new UNEA cycle.

24. In the discussion that followed, the meeting agreed that the Global Environment Outlook 6 was a flagship project for the UN Environment with an important contribution to the environmental and development agenda. The quality of the report was considered a top priority. One member speaking on behalf of a group of countries, recognized the decision of the High Level Group that the full report would be provided in 2019. He requested that the progress report in UNEA 3 provide inputs to policy makers and contribute to the themes of the High Level Political Forum. This view was supported by other members who added that it should be the foundation for the High Level Segment of the 2017 Environment Assembly. The Secretariat was asked to outline how the Global Environment Outlook 6 process could contribute to the 2030 Agenda process.

25. The member expressed concern about the funding gap that currently exists for the Global Environment Outlook-6 process, noting that budget allocations had been substantial. He requested additional details on the amount of the funding gap and how the Science Division budget has been split between Global Environment Outlook 6 and UNEP Live. Another member noted that any progress report should have a positive effect on the 2017 Environment Assembly but should avoid any negative impact on the timelines for the Global Environment Outlook-6.

26. Member States recognized and appreciated efforts made to work together with the scientific community. They were eager to get further information on the amendment to the 2014 Environment Assembly timelines in Resolution 1/4 and requested regular updates on the progress of the Global Environment Outlook-6.

27. A member pointed out that the High Level Group had agreed to focus on a progress report to be delivered to the 2017 Environment Assembly and asked how UN

Environment was organizing these discussions. The Chief Scientist and Director of the Science Division clarified that UN Environment was working to produce an up-to-date work on environmental trends and policy effectiveness, and that this would be an input to the progress report. She undertook to provide the information requested on the budget and on how the process would fit into the High Level Political Forum.

Agenda item 4: Other matters

28. One member noted discrepancies in the translation and editing of the resolution (2/16) on biodiversity and emphasized the need to check other resolutions. The Secretary thanked the member for having alerted the Secretariat to the matter and informed the meeting that the resolution would be re-issued. He assured the Committee that there would be more vigilance on the part of both the United Nations Office at Nairobi who translate and edit the documents and the Secretariat to ensure accurate reflection of agreed language.