

Meeting of the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly,
Monday 5 December 2016
4:00 pm – 5:00 pm
United Nations Office at Nairobi, Gigiri
Executive Office Boardroom

MEETING SUMMARY

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

1. H.E. Mr. Edgar Gutiérrez, President of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and Minister of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica, chaired the meeting by video-link. He welcomed all the participants.

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

- Barbados (VP) H.E. Mr. Dennis Lowe, Minister of Environment and Drainage, by audio link
- Czech Republic (VP) Mr. Filip Vrlík and Mr. Lukas Pokorný, Ministry of the Environment representing H.E. Mr. Vladislav Smrž, Deputy Minister, Ministry of the Environment, by video link
- Iraq (VP) Mr. Yousf Mnayad, Representing H.E. Mr. Jassim Humadi, Acting Minister of Health and Environment, by video link
- Nigeria (VP) Mr. Friday O. Okal, representing H.E. Mrs Amina Mohammed, Minister of Environment,
- Philippines (VP) Dr. Ramon J.P. Paje, Senior Advisor to the Climate Change Commission, by video link
- USA (VP) Mr. John Matuszak, Senior Advisor, Office of Environmental Quality and Transboundary Issues, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, Department of State, by video link
- Belgium (Rapporteur) H.E. Ms. Roxane de Bilderling, Ambassador and Permanent Representative.

Observers

- H.E. Mr. Milorad Šćepanović, Permanent Representative of Montenegro to the UN and other international organizations, by audio link.

Other representatives

- Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representative, H.E. Ms. Julia Pataki, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Romania
- H.E. Mr. Pavel Razac, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Czech Republic
- H.E. Ms. Marta Juarez Ruiz, Ambassador on Special Mission of Costa Rica
- Mr. Husham Alfityan, Deputy Permanent Representative of Iraq
- Ms. Majella Pua-Diezmos, Deputy Permanent Representative of Philippines
- Ms. May Ofrasio, UN Focal Person of Philippines
- Mr. Joel Hansen, Deputy Permanent Representative of USA
- H.E. Mr. Vincent Willekens, Deputy Permanent Representative of Belgium

The Secretariat was represented by the Deputy Executive Director of UN Environment (by video link), the Secretary of Governing Bodies and Director Governance Affairs Office, and Deputy Secretary of Governing Bodies. Ms. Elizabeth Mrema, Director for Division on Environmental Law and Conventions made a presentation under agenda item 3.

The meeting adopted the agenda.

Agenda Item 2: Theme for the Third Session of the UN Environment Assembly

2. At the invitation of the President, H.E. Ms. Julia Pataki, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Romania, reported to the Bureau on the outcome of the consultation process on the selection of the theme for the 2017 Environment Assembly. The Chair briefly described the consultation process which had included the participation of non-resident representatives through remote means and written submissions. She informed the Bureau that the Extraordinary meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, held on 5 December 2016 had endorsed the following recommendations:

- There would be only one theme for the 2017 UN Environment Assembly.
- Theme one on pollution would be selected in its generic form. Details would be agreed at a later date.
- A general title will be used as a work in progress until Member States agreed on the actual title for the theme.
- Member States with an interest in themes two, resilience and three on harmony with nature, could look into relevant elements of these themes that could be included in the concept paper (outline) for theme 1 on pollution.
- The Secretariat will prepare a draft on process and timeline on works for the theme.
- A draft outline of concept paper and key recommendations will be prepared by the Secretariat and be presented to Member States in the first week of February 2017. It will be discussed during the Fourth Annual Sub-Committee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

3. The Chair of the Committee emphasized that the outline of concept paper should be concise and include actionable outcomes and emerging environmental issues. She noted the support of one Member State and one political group for an action plan. She expressed appreciation to all Member States and other Stakeholders for their contributions to the consultation process, particularly for their flexibility and political will to reach the agreement.
4. In response to a question from the President, the Secretary informed the meeting that there had been no complaints on the duration of the consultation process. He reiterated the commendation to all Member States and Regional and Political Groups who had participated in the consultation process physically and through written inputs. He noted that a number of non-resident missions had provided inputs. He also thanked regional offices for their support to the consultation process. The deadline for the submission of inputs on the theme had been extended to 12 January 2017.
5. In the discussion that followed, Bureau members congratulated the Committee on the agreement and expressed support for the choice of pollution. They emphasized the need to define the working theme as soon as possible in line with the deadline as this would facilitate the early submission of resolutions for the 2017 Environment Assembly. Similarly, the process and timelines for work on the theme had to be agreed as soon as possible. In addition, in line with the new communication strategy, the title should be simple, short and appealing to the public. One member informed the meeting that his Group had yet to discuss the proposal for an action plan.
6. The President stressed the importance of title of the theme which would help define its scope. To this end, he suggested having in-depth discussion and proposed that agreement be reached during the next meeting of the Bureau of the UN Environment Assembly.
7. On the scope of the theme, Bureau members agreed that it would cover not only what UN Environment could contribute in terms of its work programme, but also seek to attract wider contributions and reflect the broader efforts of other organizations and partnerships. This could include engagement with other Ministers as well as coordination with Multi-lateral environment agreements such as Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, Montreal Protocol, or Minamata Convention on Mercury. Work on the theme should also take into account the outcomes of the meetings of the Conference of the Parties of multi-lateral conventions. This approach was in line with the role of UN Environment as the leading global authority on the environment. One member cautioned that the mode of collaboration with the Multi-Lateral Agreements should recognize the fact that they had their own Governing structures.
8. The Chair of the Committee noted that the Joint Bureaux Retreat had also recommended engagement between the UN Environment Assembly and other entities. She informed the Bureau that the Secretariats of different multilateral environmental agreements would be

invited to the Fourth Annual Sub-Committee meeting of the Committee where a discussion on the performance of the programme of work would take place.

9. The Deputy Executive Director of UN Environment informed the meeting that the Secretariat would develop the outline of the report for the theme by early February 2017 in time for discussion at the Fourth Annual Sub-Committee meeting of the Committee. The title could be agreed upon by late March 2017, after the outline was finalized. The Chair of the Committee noted all documentation should be sent out one month before the Fourth Annual Sub-Committee meeting. She suggested that the Committee could start working on the title in January 2017, in parallel with the work on outline document.
10. **The Bureau endorsed pollution as the theme of the 2017 Environment Assembly. It further agreed on a broad scope that could engagement other relevant entities. The decision on the title would take place at a later stage.**

Agenda Item 3: Update on the consideration by the United Nations General Assembly of the Report of the United Nations Environment Assembly and linkages to the 2017 meeting of the High Level Political Forum.

11. At the invitation of the President, Ms. Elizabeth Mrema, Director, Law Division provided the following update on the consideration by the United Nations General Assembly of the Report of the United Nations Environment Assembly and linkages to the 2017 meeting of the High Level Political Forum:
 - The Economic and Financial Committee of the UN General Assembly (also known as the Second Committee) was expected to adopt a draft resolution of the UN Environment Assembly that would subsequently be submitted to the UN General Assembly.
 - The resolution laid the groundwork for a strengthened relationship between the UN Environment Assembly and High Level Political Forum in context of sustainable development. It also recognized the commitment of the UN Environment Assembly to effectively implement the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
 - The UN Environment Assembly had a unique opportunity to influence global discourse on sustainable development by the next meeting of the High Level Political Forum to be held on 10-19 July 2017 (with a ministerial segment on 17-19 July).
 - The President of Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has requested the President of the UN Environment Assembly and heads of various governing bodies of major global and environmental treaties and intergovernmental bodies to provide written inputs to the session of the High Level Political Forum by 28 April 2017 whose theme was “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world.”

12. The meeting agreed that the Secretariat would compile possible inputs and views in a consolidated note for discussion amongst Member States during the Fourth Annual Subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to be held on 6-10 March, 2017. The outcome of the meeting would feed into the submission that the President of the Assembly will make at the meeting of the High Level Political Forum to be held on 10-19 July, 2017 in New York.

Agenda Item 4: Dates for the next Bureau Meeting.

13. The President proposed 15 February 2017 as the date for the next Bureau meeting, which would take place in the context of a joint meeting of the Bureaux of the UN Environment Assembly and Committee of Permanent Representatives. A member suggested that the Bureau of the UN Environment Assembly hold a brief meeting before the Joint Bureaux Meeting.

Agenda Item 5: Other matters.

Friends of the UN Environment Assembly

14. The Chair of the Committee requested more information on the initiative of the Friends of the UN Environment Assembly recently launched in Geneva. She suggested the [initiative](#) would benefit from targeting Member States without resident representation in Nairobi. She alerted the Bureau of the possibility of duplication of efforts and confusion and requested the President to clarify on structure and mandate of the initiative.

15. The President and other members highlighted the importance of such initiatives in efforts to raise the profile of the UN Environment Assembly in Geneva, New York and at international fora. However, they emphasized the Friends of the Chair in Geneva was a an informal gathering of Member States interested in raising visibility and enhance communication about the UN Environment Assembly in their respective duty stations. It was not meant to interfere with the role of the Committee of Permanent Representative or UN Environment Assembly Bureau and had no decision making role.

16. Referring to discussion on visibility at the last Bureau meeting, a member of the Bureau reminded the meeting of the agreement on arranging a meeting with the Secretary General elect to discuss the UN Environment Assembly.

Review of resolution implementation

17. In response to a request from the President for an update on progress in implementation of resolutions and mechanisms on monitoring implementation of resolutions, the Deputy Executive Director of UN Environment informed the Bureau that a progress report on the

implementation of resolutions including financial issues, challenges and case studies from Member States would be prepared by the Secretariat and considered during the Fourth Annual Sub-Committee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, to be held from 6 to 9 March 2017. On financing the implementation of resolutions, he highlighted the need to plan for new resolutions since it could not be reflected in a budget that had already been adopted.

18. One member noted that the 2017 Environment Assembly was short and few resolutions were expected. He was of the view that the Committee of Permanent Representatives should effectively exercise its mandate on the issues relating to the link between the budget and the resolutions so that the UN Environment Assembly could focus on the theme.
19. The Chair of the Committee informed the meeting that at the Fourth Annual Sub-Committee meeting, the Committee expected to have a political analysis of programme of work that identified impacts of resolutions under the framework of seven sub-programmes.
20. The Deputy Executive Director of UN Environment assured the meeting that the Secretariat would comply with its obligations to report in line with the request from Member States. Resolutions went beyond what the UN Environment Programme could do. The Secretariat would endeavor to provide information about the impact of the resolutions on the world by reporting on compliance by the Executive Director and on the global impact on the world which would include partnerships.
21. Citing the example of a World Bank meeting in the Netherlands on natural capital or environmental wealth, in which he had participated, the President responded that this was the best way to approach the mandate. He also noted that suggestions on partnerships with other international organizations would be considered as a critical part of the process in defining the theme.
22. The meeting closed at 5:46 pm.