United Nations Environment Programme
5 January 2017

Committee of Permanent Representatives to the
United Nations Environment Programme
Sub-Committee Meeting
Thursday 13 October 2016
9:30 am – 12:30 pm
United Nations Office at Nairobi, Gigiri
Conference Room 4

MEETING SUMMARY

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

1. H.E. Ms. Julia Pataki, Chair of Committee of Permanent Representatives and Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Romania chaired the meeting. She welcomed new members to the Committee of Permanent Representatives. Several delegations expressed concern over the handling of correspondence addressed to Chairs of Regional and Political Groups. One delegation representing a group of countries proposed the addition to the agenda of two additional agenda items as follows:

    - Agenda Item 3. Establishment and structure of informal working group
    - Agenda Item 4. Discussion of Joint Bureaux Retreat

    Many delegations supported the proposal. The meeting adopted the agenda as amended.

Agenda Item 2: Progress in the Implementation of the Programme of Work and Budget

2. At the invitation of the Chair, Ms. Sheila Aggarwal-Khan, Head of the Programme Strategy and Planning Team at UN Environment, provided a comprehensive update on progress and implementation of the Programme of Work. The update covered the seven areas of sub programmes and their accomplishments and included a film on UN Environment's work in Afghanistan.

3. Ms. Theresa Panuccio, Director, Office for Operations and Corporate Services, updated the meeting on the Budget and financial overview of UN Environment. The Environment fund had received less funding than anticipated owing to several factors such as: devaluation of currencies; other priorities for donors and: the inability to cash in on universal membership. The Secretariat was working on strategies to address these concerns. Areas that had suffered

Document prepared by the Secretariat

included communications and staffing. On the bright side, there was an increase in the Global Environment Facility and earmarked funding. On the budget for the 2017 Session of the UN Environment Assembly, the Director expressed appreciation to the European Union for the pledge of US$ 500, 000. She noted that the there was still a large deficit of the budget of US $2 million, which did not include communication costs or expenses for side events.

4. In the discussion that followed, Member States recognized and appreciated efforts made to: highlight UN Environment's strengths and challenges; showcase linkages with the Sustainable Development Goals and Multilateral Environmental Agreements and; demonstrate progress made on normative work. On the latter, they requested specific details on how the work of the UN Environment Programme was making the world better and for greater clarity on impacts at national level beyond the adoption of policies. The examples on addressing disasters in Nepal and renewable energy were commended. One representative stressed that the Programme of work and not UN Environment Assembly preparations were the essence of the Committee's work.

5. Member States made a number of requests to the Secretariat including: circulation of background information before the meeting; information on the fate of the reporting tool developed by the Secretariat to track the implementation of resolutions after the first session of the UN Environment Assembly and; more substantial information in writing, especially on specific outputs and how they translated into different programmes and activities at the lower levels. The meeting proposed: a future discussion on how to improve the Committee's oversight role and how the Committee could be kept better informed on programme implementation ahead of the Annual Sub-Committee meeting as well as informal meetings where the Committee to make deep dives into each sub program individually. This would help ensure a comprehensive understanding of the whole programmatic exercise and implementation needs and thus enhance the Committee's capacity to monitor implementation of the work programme.

6. One member sought clarification on the criteria used to determine the countries that are considered to have engaged in an ecosystem based approach, noting that his country had not been reflected. Another noted with appreciation UN Environment's efforts to address marine litter and emphasized the need for more work at the grassroots level, including engaging local leaders, product manufacturers and academia.

7. On the budget, Members were urged to contribute to the Environment Fund as only 46 member states had contributed. They were also requested to contribute to the financing of the third session of the UN Environment Assembly. The meeting was informed that the Nordic Council of Ministers, had decided to provide US $120,000 in support the third session of the UN Environment Assembly to help to offset the current deficit. Members requested for: a breakdown on multi-year funds and how they were spread out; more details on the use of the Environment Fund; information on differences in expenditures between the sub-programmes

and; clarification on how expenditures of multilateral environment agreements were accounted for.

8. One member was expressed concern over the possibility that the Environment Fund could be used to finance the third session of the UN Environment Assembly as opposed to other priorities like work program activities. He questioned whether that the sum of US $ 300,000 reflected as a balance from the 2016 session of UN Environment Assembly had not been diverted from other priorities. Concerns were also raised over the impact of the status of the environment fund on universal participation in the 2017 Environment Assembly and on translation and interpretation.

9. A representative of the Major Groups and Stakeholders noted that there were several missing linkages between the Sustainable Development Goals and Chemical Waste sub-programme and that most countries listed as having lead controls were developed countries and not necessarily developing countries or countries in transition in which UN Environment was working. A representative of women's major group complimented the Secretariat on report, describing it as informative and asked how this information can be taken to the grass roots.

10. In the responses from the Secretariat that followed, Ms. Aggarwal-Khan, clarified that the maps in the presentation on ecosystem based adaptation reflected progress in UN Environment's performance and not progress made by specific countries without UN Environment assistance. However, efforts were underway to provide an online interactive map reflecting both scenarios. A title change to this effect was suggested to avoid confusion. In response to a question on why the Cartagena Convention on Biological Diversity was not included in the presentation, Ms. Aggarwal-Khan informed the meeting that the results had been captured in the last biennium.

11. Responding to a question on the scope of environmental governance. Ms. Elizabeth Mrema, Director, Law Division, explained that it cut across the other sub programs and legal work undertaken was often reported under the respective sub-program. She stressed the need for further work on synergies especially on Multilateral Environmental Agreements, including how the biodiversity strategies could lead to targets of Sustainable Development Goals. She noted that there were gaps in the implementation of Multi-Lateral Environment Agreements, which was essentially handled at the national level. This highlighted the need for a framework for implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements at the national level.

12. Ms. Noronha, Director, Economy Division, thanked the Stakeholders for being vigilant with their observations and looked forward to engaging with Committee in a deeper discussion on the sub programmes. The Economy Division had spent a lot of time on air quality and the Executive Director has provided $200,000 to spearhead activities in this area. Mr. Maarten Kappelle, Sub-Programme Coordinator for Chemical and Waste thanked IPEN for its comments which would be taken into account. He clarified that only Sustainable

Development Goals of the most significance to UNEP's work had been reflected and others would be considered during the next reporting cycle. On the phasing-out of lead paints, only 66 countries had sufficiently comprehensive regulations.

13. Ms. Panuccio, informed the meeting that the budget and expenditures presentation would be distributed to member states and that Umoja improved the possibility for more in-depth reporting. On the 2017 UN Environment Assembly budget, she clarified that it reflected documentation, meeting facilities, translation and interpretation. On the effects of the shortfalls, communication and resource mobilization were among the areas affected. She would make the changes in response to the comment on the way the balances from the 2016 UN Environment Assembly were reflected.

14. The Chair informed the meeting that the Secretariat would respond to all questions raised. She urged member states that had not contributed to the Environment Fund and preparations for the 2017 UN Environment Assembly to raise the issue of contributions with their capitals.

Agenda Item 3: Establishment and structure of the Informal Working Group

15. Under agenda item 3, the Chair informed the meeting that the role of the informal working group was to provide a platform to discuss priorities and other matters that were important for the 2017 UN Environment Assembly. She assured the meeting that the Informal Working Group was not meant to replace the Committee. Although, the proposal was to have two representatives for each regional and political group for greater efficiency, all members were welcome.

16. A member state speaking on behalf of a political group, highlighted failure by the Secretariat to observe proper protocol with respect to the correspondence on the informal working group. A letter concerning the structure of the informal group, addressed to Chairs of the Regional or Political groups was circulated to member states. Furthermore, it had a deadline of less than 24 hours, making it impossible for the Chair to coordinate with the group. She reminded the meeting that it was the responsibility of the Chair of a regional or political group to communicate with the members of the group not the Secretariat's. She emphasized that the structure of the informal working group should be an open-ended so that all member states could participate. Several representatives indicated that they had not yet received the letter from the Secretariat on the informal working group.

17. Member states supported the call for the informal working group to be an open-ended to allow all interested countries to participate. They stressed the need to avoid an artificial two-tiered hierarchy of members and observers, which could be counter-productive. Pragmatism would help ensure a balance between efficiency and inclusiveness.

18. Members called for the provision of appropriate timelines and for a deadline for the informal working group to come up with an action plan for implementation by Committee of

Permanent Representatives. One Member cautioned against attempts to reinvent the wheel in terms of the Rules of Procedures and suggested that the Working Group focus on the contentious issues within the Rules. She noted that the Rules gave the UN Environment Assembly Bureau no inter-sessional role. Another noted that the Chair's document on lessons learned should be used as a guide to discuss issues and not as a tool to limit discussions on matters of importance.

19. The meeting agreed to discuss the agenda of the informal working group in a Subcommittee meeting on 18 October 2016. The Chair thanked members for all the comments and pragmatic approach and reiterated that there was no hidden intent for artificial hierarchy or lack of transparency on the matter of circulation of communication. It was clear that members would like to have an open ended informal open-ended working group and this would be respected.

20. The Chair requested the Secretariat to send letters to all the Chairs of regional and political groups on the upcoming meetings so that they could share the information with their members. She further requested the Secretariat, to prepare a draft agenda for the informal working group for consideration at the next Subcommittee meeting. The draft was to take into consideration all comments made and to be sent to members for comments. She pointed out that the first informal working group meeting should be held as soon as possible, given the limited time before the Joint UN Environment Assembly and Committee Bureaux Retreat.

Agenda Item 4: Discussion on the Joint UN Environment Assembly and Committee Bureaux Retreat

21. Turning to the next agenda item, the Chair informed the meeting that the Joint Bureaux retreat would be held from 27 to 28 October 2016. The draft agenda had been sent out to all members of the two bureau and inputs from regional groups had been requested. The draft addressed the following agenda items: Preparation of the 2017 UN Environment Assembly: Possible themes and criteria; Re-imaging of the high level segment; Way forward on the Stakeholder Engagement Policy; Executive Directors strategy of engaging stakeholders, especially private sector; Outcome of 2017 Environment Assembly; Visibility of UN Environment Assembly; Processes and deadlines of resolutions; Follow up on resolutions by Committee of Permanent Representatives; Communication, including participation of non-resident Member States; Support of the Secretariat; Preparations for the Committee of the Whole including selection of Chairs; How regional fora and regional meetings could support preparations of UNEA 3; Road map and action plan. Representatives of Regional and Political Groups were invited to the retreat on observer status and would have lunch with bureau members.

22. Member states welcomed the joint bureaux retreat whose goal was to ensure convergence and cooperation. They reiterated the importance of adequate legal advice on Rules of

Procedure and the handling of political issues and for follow up to the request for a briefing on the Rules. A member was of the view that the retreat should fully be a joint meeting between the bureau and cautioned against exclusion in any of the sessions. Another was concerned over the absence of an agenda item dedicated to challenges to be addressed and lessons learned by delegations, regional and political groups; the clarity of roles and; the disconnect between the UN Environment Assembly Bureau and the realities on the ground. Some were of the view that the outcome of the Joint Bureaux meeting should be submitted to the Committee for its endorsement.

23. The Chair assured the meeting that there is no secrecy and noted that the separate UN Environment Bureau meeting would be its first face to face meeting since the 2016 UN Environment Assembly. The Chair noted that comments had been received from members on the initial agenda. She agreed that the role of the Committee should not be discussed in the absence of Committee Bureau members.

Agenda Item 5: Other Matters

24. Under other matters, one member informed the meeting that comments by his country on the Chair's document entitled lessons learned, had not been circulated to members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives. In response, the Chair requested that all documents including Note Verbales that are sent to the Secretariat with a request for circulation to member states be circulated and uploaded on the Committee Portal.

25. Mr. Jorge Laguna-Celis, Secretary of Governing Bodies informed the meeting that there is a current effort to make information available in a more efficient and user friendly manner through the portal. Nevertheless, he assured members that Note Verbales would be distributed as PDF attachments if Member States so requested. He also highlighted efforts to enhance the engagement of non- resident member states through remote means.

26. Mr. Laguna-Celis, introduced the staff of the Governance Affairs Office under its three units: Governing Bodies Unit, Civil Society Unit and Partnerships Unit. The Chair requested the Secretariat to circulate the list of staff and to invite the UN Office at Nairobi to make a presentation to the Committee especially on translation and interpretation. One delegation commended that Secretariat for its work on improving the Committee Portal, observing that notwithstanding the glitches highlighted during the meeting, it was important to recognize improvements.