

Written contribution of Switzerland on the occasion of the Fourth Annual Subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Program

Agenda Item 4: Contribution of the Environment Assembly to the High Level Political Forum

Switzerland would like to thank the Secretariat for this valuable first draft of a contribution to the 2017 High Level Political Forum (HLPF).

Back in 2012, the Rio+20 summit not only created the HLPF, but also adopted a mandate to negotiate the Sustainable Development Goals. Switzerland would like to request that this is reflected and added in the response of UNEP to the President of ECOSOC.

Overall and as mandated through UNEA resolution 2/5, UNEP should aim to use “*existing products and processes*” in its endeavor to provide input to the HLPF. This means in particular the following:

- We need to strengthen Global Environment Outlook (GEO) as the one global assessment of the environment, without transforming it into a Sustainability Report.
- We see great value in using the Environment Management Group (EMG) as a vehicle to discuss ways to deliver on the environmental dimension of the SDGs. The anticipated EMG nexus dialogues will be instrumental in achieving it.

Furthermore, Switzerland would like to raise a number of more concrete points and ask the Secretariat to address them in a new version of the response by UNEA to the President of ECOSOC:

- 1) The exchange among other UN Agencies, as well as UN Agencies together with member states and stakeholders should be accounted for. The HLPF must facilitate the dialogue and use different kinds of platforms to engage in discussions. Plenary statements and side events are not sufficient.
- 2) Indicator work is key for the success of the implementation of the SDGs. However, Switzerland insists that UNEP does not forget to use the *existing* indicators and the *internationally agreed* environment goals as a starting base before looking for and creating new indicators.
- 3) Switzerland acknowledges the role of the regional level in the implementation of the SDGs. However, we judge the extent to which the regional level can provide input as limited. National contributions remain at the core of SDG implementation. Member states are to choose in which forum to engage at the regional level. In the case of Europe, it is difficult to decide which regional fora to engage with, what the specific outcomes will be, and to what extent UNEP plays an overarching role in it.
 - In that regard, we have a specific question: What are the mentioned “*regional mechanisms already established by the UN regional commissions*” mentioned in paragraph 11 of the draft?
- 4) Switzerland would like to stress that in order to have the voice of the environment heard by the HLPF and across the UN, and to have it heard by member states and stakeholders alike, a ministerial outcome is vital.
- 5) On governance, the following must be clearly distinguished: UNEP does have a reporting obligation under ECOSOC and UNGA as a functional body. However, UNEP shall not place itself under (reporting) obligations to the HLPF. There can be guidance by the HLPF on how to deliver inputs to the HLPF. However, UNEP shall remain independent to what extent and to what specific processes of the SDG implementation it responds to. And: The contributions shall be reciprocal, as the HLPF has to provide input back to UNEP and UNEA.
- 6) On timing, Switzerland sees the contribution to the HLPF as an opportunity to use results of resolutions adopted at the second UNEA and bring it to the HLPF 2017. The progress made on those resolutions and the link to the subprograms could also be an essential contribution towards the HLPF this year. Similarly, we recommend using UNEA 3 results including the ministerial outcome for the HLPF in 2018.
- 7) Finally, a word on representation at the HLPF: Switzerland believes that UNEP and the UNEA Presidency should aim for an alternative platform than simply a speech in the general debate. It must be a broader and more effective platform along the theme of “delivering on the environmental dimension the 2030 Agenda”, where UNEP and the UNEA President are at central stage.