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United Nations Environment Assembly of the

United Nations Environment Programme

Second session

Nairobi, 23–27 May 2016

Report on the work of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme

Note by the Executive Director

Pursuant to paragraph 11 of the Governing Council decision 19/32, a compilation of the minutes of the meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) adopted since the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP, held in June 2014, is available on the “list of information documents” page on the official website of the second session of the Environment Assembly: http://web.unep.org/unea/pre-session-documents-information-documents.

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**Compilation of the minutes and reports of the meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP held since the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly in June 2014.**

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| 27-31 October 2014 | Second annual subcommittee meeting of the CPR and the 128th meeting |
| 13 January 2015 | 129th meeting |
| 31 March 2015 | 130th meeting |
| 16 June 2015 | 131st meeting |
| 26-30 October 2015 | Third annual subcommittee meeting of the CPR and the 132nd meeting |
| 19 January 2016 | 133rd meeting |
| 15-19 February 2016 | Second meeting of the open-ended CPR |
| 3 May 2016 | 134th meeting  \*Minutes of this meeting is not included in the present report as it has not yet been adopted. |

Report by the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives on the second meeting of the annual subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme

Chair: H.E. Mr. Sunu Soemarno, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Indonesia

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 11 of decision 27/2, on implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) decided to establish a subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives that would meet annually for a period of five days to review, with the support of the secretariat, the medium‑term strategy and programme of work and budget, in a manner coherent with the budgetary cycle of the United Nations, to be endorsed by the Committee of Permanent Representatives and for the governing body’s approval, and to oversee their implementation and accountability by the secretariat.
2. Accordingly, the second annual meeting of the subcommittee was held at the headquarters of UNEP in Nairobi from 27 to 31 October 2014. The fifth day of the meeting was held as the 128th meeting of the Committee.

II. Opening of the meeting

1. The meeting was opened at 2.45 p.m. on Monday, 27 October 2014, by Mr. Sunu Soemarno, Permanent Representative of Indonesia and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP, who welcomed participants, including those attending from capitals and members in Addis Ababa and Geneva viewing the proceedings of the meeting via videoconference.
2. The meeting was attended by 86 participants from 53 members and 1 observer.
3. The Chair welcomed new members of the Committee and bade farewell to departing members, thanking them for their contribution to the work of the Committee.
4. At the suggestion of a representative, the subcommittee observed a minute of silence in memory of the son of the representative of Malawi, who had died in an attack by unknown assailants on the previous day.
5. In his opening statement, the Executive Director of UNEP, Mr. Achim Steiner, welcomed the participants to the meeting. He emphasized that the agenda for the meeting focused on a review of UNEP activities, in particular lessons learned from the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly and their implications for the second, and looking ahead to its future work. Feedback about the first session had been extremely positive owing to, among other things, the amount of work mandated and the guidance provided to the secretariat. In broader terms, the voice of the United Nations Environment Assembly had been welcomed into the wider United Nations family and the international policy arena. He provided an overview of the agenda and presentations and reports that had been prepared for the meeting, noting that during the meeting UNEP would report on the significant progress it had achieved in virtually every aspect of its programme of work. In terms of the budget, by June 2014 UNEP had secured more than 70 per cent of the regular and extrabudgetary resources for the year, which had allowed for the early implementation of activities and strategic priorities.

III. Adoption of the agenda

1. The following agenda for the annual subcommittee segment was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/CPR/SC/2014/1/Rev.1):

1. Opening of the meeting.

2. Adoption of the agenda of the second annual subcommittee meeting of the Committee.

3. Review of the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the road map to the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

4. Half-yearly review of the progress of implementation of the medium-term strategy for 2014–2017 and the programme of work and budget for 2014–2015, including regional delivery.

5. Evaluation findings on UNEP.

6. Lessons learned and road map towards the medium-term strategy for 2018–2021 and the programme of work and budget for 2018–2019.

7. Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on “Post Rio+20 Review of Environmental Governance within the United Nations system”.

8. Briefing on UNEP initiatives:

(a) Special programme to support institutional strengthening at the national level for implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the Minamata Convention and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management;

(b) Climate and Clean Air Coalition;

(c) Climate Technology Centre and Network;

(d) Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services;

(e) 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns.

9. Strengthening the science-policy interface, including the sixth Global Environment Outlook report and UNEP Live.

10. Other matters.

11. Closure of the meeting.

IV. Review of the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the road map to the second session

1. The subcommittee took up the item at its 1st session, on the afternoon of Monday, 27 October 2014. The Chair recalled that preliminary discussions on the matter had been discussed at the meeting of the subcommittee held on 7 October 2014, and stated his expectation that the discussion at the present meeting would build on comments and suggestions raised during that meeting.
2. Introducing the item, Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, gave a presentation reviewing the first session of the Environment Assembly and outlining the proposed road map to the second session. The presentation summarized the contents of a note prepared by the secretariat on the matter. The outcomes of the session included high-level discussions on the post-2015 development agenda and on illegal trade in wildlife; 17 resolutions, including the ministerial outcome document, and two decisions; a fruitful dialogue with non-governmental organizations and associated side events; and 11 cluster messages prepared by the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum at its fourteenth session preceding the Environment Assembly. There had been no consensus reached on the stakeholder engagement policy, however.
3. In his assessment of the first session, he drew attention to the successful convening of the Environment Assembly as the principal platform on global environmental policy, aided by a shared political will and the effective engagement of partners; timely financial support to participants from developing countries; and improved use of information and communications technology to service the meeting. On the other hand, there had been limited opportunities for major groups and stakeholders to engage in the high-level segment; parallel events had proved difficult to cover for small delegations.. Lessons learned from the session included the need for further discussion on the themes, structure and timing of the high-level segment and ministerial dialogues; the need for better understanding of the roles of and interaction between the open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and the bureaux of the Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives; and the need for greater communication and use of technology to manage the complex information exchanges involved. In conclusion, he summarized the main elements of the road map to the second session of the Environment Assembly, including the timetable of meetings and events, follow-up on resolutions and decisions adopted at the first session, contributions that the Environment Assembly might make to the post-2015 development agenda, the use of regional ministerial environment forums, a possible process for the development of a stakeholder engagement policy, the process for the development of draft resolutions and decisions for the second session, and logistical considerations.
4. One representative made a general statement in which he expressed his strong support for UNEP efforts to improve the environment, including the atmosphere and water resources. He commended in particular the progress achieved in the context of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, urging countries that had not yet done so to ratify the instrument, and efforts to ensure the availability of sound science to shape policy. Nevertheless, given the recent 150 per cent increase in the UNEP regular budget allocation, the Programme had a responsibility to the global community to report on how wisely it was using the new resources. He said that he looked forward, therefore, to hearing at the present meeting about the implementation of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) and the imminent introduction of Umoja, the enterprise resource planning tool, which would be implemented throughout the United Nations system from June 2015. In the light of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of Rio+20, “The future we want”, in particular in relation to strengthening UNEP governance as well as its responsiveness and accountability to member States, and paragraphs 42 to 55, on engaging major groups and other stakeholders, Governments should discuss with the UNEP secretariat how to ensure optimal collaboration between UNEP, its member States and other stakeholders in order to achieve real improvements in every aspect of the environment. UNEP had been shown a great deal of trust through a strengthened mandate and additional resources and it was time for the Programme to demonstrate meaningful results.
5. Responding to the statement, the Executive Director said that UNEP was one of the few United Nations entities in which both the budget and expectations were increasing. Although a 150 per cent increase in the regular budget allocation sounded extremely significant, in the past it had received very little from the regular budget. Savings had been made by improving staff productivity, reducing overheads and imposing tighter rules for travel, which had also helped to reduce the Programme’s carbon footprint.
6. UNEP was fully committed to Umoja and IPSAS, but faced a tight schedule for their implementation. Umoja was one of the most challenging enterprise resource planning systems in the world and there had been virtually no additional resource allocations for the increased workload associated with its implementation. He remained confident, however, that UNEP would meet the deadlines and milestones of the revised implementation schedule.
7. UNEP benefited from record numbers of partnerships with major groups and stakeholders, including the private sector, including the UNEP Finance Initiative, the Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short lived Climate Pollutants and initiatives related to energy efficiency and buildings. It had also played an understated role in the 2014 Climate Leadership Summit, introducing technological, financial and energy enterprises to the Summit. He expressed the hope that the present meeting would help to convince participants that their investment in UNEP was already demonstrating good returns.
8. Many representatives said that the first session had for the most part been successful in raising the profile of the global environmental agenda and enhancing the role of UNEP, although some difficulties had been encountered that would provide lessons for the second session. Several congratulated the UNEP secretariat for its role in preparing for and conducting the session. A number of representatives expressed satisfaction at the resolutions and decisions that had emanated from it, as they had provided guidance on a number of strategic directions and substantive issues of importance to UNEP. The ministerial outcome was also commended, although some representatives expressed disappointment at the lack of any reference therein to the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. Some representatives suggested that the implementation of the ministerial outcome of UNEA-1 should also take into account the discussions on the GEO-6 and HLPF. One representative, recalling the challenging discussions on budgetary matters, advised continued financial caution and fiscal discipline. That caution extended to the length of meetings, and the second session should also be of five days’ duration. Many representatives expressed disappointment at the failure to reach agreement on the stakeholder engagement policy and the relevant rules of the rules of procedure at the first session, and underscored the importance of making early progress on those issues during preparations for the second session.
9. On the matter of lessons learned, several representatives said that the themes for the high-level segment should be limited to just one or two at most, in order to facilitate interactive debate on a topic of global or strategic importance. The selection and preparation of the themes should commence early, and thought should be given to how to maximize the involvement of ministers in interactive discussion and in the decision-making process at the second session. In addition, some representatives said that the ministerial statement or outcome document should be prepared well in advance in order to avoid last-minute discussions at the session itself.
10. Many representatives stressed the need for greater collaboration between the bureaux of the Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives in order to ensure the timely preparation of all issues related to the second session, including the preparation of draft resolutions and decisions and supporting documentation. A number of representatives expressed concern that the open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives could not fulfil its mandate in an efficient and timely manner during preparations for the first session, and urged that measures be undertaken to ensure that it properly performed its functions in preparing for the second session. One representative, supported by another, said that all discussions of the open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives should be held in plenary in order to enable the full engagement of all delegations. Several representatives said that greater efforts should be made to promote interaction between permanent representatives in Nairobi and non-resident representatives, including through the use of information and communications technology. Some representatives said that adequate preparation for the second session of the Environment Assembly would reduce the need for parallel meetings, allowing small delegations to engage more effectively in negotiations and discussions.
11. With regard to the road map to the second session, a majority of representatives favoured a February 2016 date for the second open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, rather than the January 2016 option. A majority of representatives favoured maintaining a five-day session of the Environment Assembly and not extending it. A number of representatives expressed interest in the action plan for the implementation of resolutions that was being finalized as an internal tool, and urged that the Committee be informed of the progress of implementation on a regular basis. One representative supported by several mentioned that the action plan should be shared when it is developed in order to effectively and efficiently implement the resolutions taken by the Environment Assembly. One representative said that the action plan should include special consideration for the capacity-building needs of developing countries. Several representatives said that, in the build-up to the second session, there was a need to explore synergies with other bodies and organizations in order to avoid duplication of effort and to ensure the effective use of resources; such bodies included the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. In addition, a number of representatives highlighted the important role that could be played by the regional ministerial environment forums in the preparations for the second session, in line with decision 27/2 of the Governing Council. Finally, on the matter of logistics, some representatives expressed concern about holding certain events outside the United Nations compound in Nairobi, given the transactional and other costs involved.
12. The Deputy Executive Director responded to the issues raised. On the draft stakeholder engagement policy, he said that there was a need to continue consultations both through informal discussions among member States, facilitated by the President of the Assembly, and through formal discussions at a later stage, for example at the next open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives. With regard to the regional ministerial environment forums, he said that different regions had different realities. In line with decision 27/2, those forums for which UNEP served as secretariat were invited to contribute to the work of the governing body of UNEP; however, their main function was information and knowledge exchange rather than setting the agenda for the second session of the Environment Assembly.
13. With regard to the date of the second open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, he noted that most representatives preferred the February date. While that would severely limit the time available for the editing and translation of documents, the secretariat would endeavour to meet the requirements of member States. On the matter of the implementation matrix that was under preparation as an internal management tool, the secretariat would share the action plan with the member States and keep them informed of progress. Further guidance from member States was welcome, as many had institutions and specialists that could play an active role in the implementation of the resolutions and decisions of the Environment Assembly. Additional resources needed to be mobilized in order to fully implement the resolutions. On the themes for the high-level segment of the second session, he noted the preference for a maximum of one or two issues for discussion, and the need for early selection of those themes.
14. Turning to logistical matters, he said that the capacity within the Gigiri compound of the United Nations Office at Nairobi had been severely stretched at the first session of the Environment Assembly, and it was not certain when plans to expand the capacity would be realized. Additional tents performed a useful function for certain events but were not appropriate for meetings. Further discussions were needed on that important matter. On the organizational arrangements for meetings, he said it would be a challenge to complete all the business of the second session within five days if the second open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives was conducted in plenary only. However, the secretariat would adopt an imaginative approach to the challenge and, with political will, solutions could be found.
15. He noted the challenges faced by non-resident missions in contributing to the discussions at subcommittee meetings. Information would be regularly updated on the web portal, and it was to be hoped that improvements in connectivity would enable greater use of information technology, for example videoconferencing. On synergies with other bodies, specifically on a question raised regarding cooperation with the International Renewable Energy Agency, he said that UNEP had cooperated with the International Renewable Energy Agency in assisting countries, with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and other sources, in increasing access to renewable energy. A good example was provided by the geothermal development in Kenya.
16. Concluding the item, the Chair said that he would prepare a set of recommendations based on the discussions in readiness for the 128th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to be held on Friday, 31 October 2014.

V. Half-yearly review of the progress of implementation of the medium-term strategy for 2014–2017 and the programme of work and budget for 2014–2015, including regional delivery

1. The subcommittee, chaired by Ms. Roxane de Bilderling, Vice Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and the Ambassador and the Permanent Representative of Belgium, took up the item at its 2nd session on the morning of Tuesday, 28 October 2014. The representative of the secretariat introduced a programme performance review progress summary for January 2014–June 2014 and presented key performance results in the implementation of the UNEP programme of work for 2014–2015 and the medium-term strategy for 2014–2017 during the period between 1 January and 30 June 2014. Recalling that the programme of work contained seven subprogrammes, namely, climate change; disasters and conflicts; ecosystem management; environmental governance; chemicals and waste; resource efficiency and sustainable consumption and production; and environment under review, she provided an overview of progress achieved in two or three key areas of focus under each subprogramme, noting that progress during the reporting period had been substantive. She also provided an overview of the UNEP budget, which she said was very positive, with expenditures of $169 million out of a total income of $222 million from all sources as at 30 June 2014, representing 74 per cent of the total budget. While the overall budget was on track, securing additional non-earmarked contributions from member States, which helped to give more flexibility to UNEP to deliver on its programme of work, remained a challenge.
2. In the ensuing discussion, most of the representatives who spoke thanked the secretariat for the information provided. Several of them expressed satisfaction at the progress achieved under the various subprogrammes. Two representatives expressed regret that the information presented through PowerPoint presentations had not been provided to member States prior to the current meeting, despite of the fact that the presented document stated that supplementary information would be shared prior to the meeting. One of them, supported by another, suggested that future progress reports refer directly to the expected accomplishments and indicators of the programme of work and requested that the secretariat produce for future discussion a brief note, if possible in a table format, outlining the status of progress in achieving such accomplishments and indicators. One representative asked the secretariat to clarify how it intended to engage with member States in order to implement the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its first session in the lead up to the second session.
3. Many representatives suggested that future reports consistently outline progress achieved during the reporting period in addition to cumulative results and highlight the specific contribution by UNEP to achievements to which other actors had also contributed. One representative said that reports should also present obstacles or delays encountered by UNEP. Another, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, requested that future progress reports explain how UNEP had delivered on its activities at the regional level.
4. The Deputy Executive Director thanked representatives for their comments and said that the secretariat welcomed additional guidance from the Committee on the desired format and content of future half-yearly reports presented for the first time at the current meeting. Regarding requests for the inclusion of additional indicators of success, he said that these would be incorporated in yearly reviews and it would be challenging to include them in six-monthly reviews. Regarding regional delivery, information on the UNEP presence in specific countries was available through UNEP Live, which was still under construction and would continue to increase transparency around the geographical presence and country-level work of UNEP.
5. The representative of the secretariat added that UNEP had sought to report on both short-term and longer-term progress in its half-yearly report, but this was a challenge that it continued to try to overcome. With regard to expected accomplishments, progress could be reported six months into implementation of the programme of work, but not necessarily at the indicator level.
6. Representatives then made specific comments on the information provided by the secretariat on each of the subprogrammes and budget performance.

A. Climate change

1. Regarding the climate change subprogramme, representatives sought clarification regarding the relationship between the expected accomplishment in the programme of work concerning the number of countries that were implementing renewable energy initiatives and the achievement reported in the progress report, which referred to UNEP support for countries to strengthen their national capacities to gain access to and deploy climate financing; UNEP efforts to help countries to mobilize resources for clean energy; the number of countries that were expected to be ready to implement projects in the context of the enhanced mechanism for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (REDD)-plus by the end of 2014; the expected dates of release of the *Africa’s Adaptation Gap* report for 2014 and the global mitigation gap report; and details about UNEP support for an additional 33 countries in the implementation of ecosystem-based and other climate adaptation approaches.
2. Responding to comments, the Deputy Executive Director said that UNEP was implementing a number of programmes to provide support to member States in the area of energy efficiency, but its work was weaker with respect to renewable energy. It was therefore working in collaboration with the International Renewable Energy Agency to boost its capacity in this area. With regard to the UN-REDD programme, UNEP was working with partners to support 56 countries preparing to implement REDD-plus projects, and 12 were expected to complete the REDD readiness phase by the end of 2014. Regarding *Africa’s Adaptation Gap* for 2014, it would be launched at the fifteenth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, which had requested the report.

B. Disasters and conflicts

1. Regarding the disasters and conflicts subprogramme, one representative queried how UNEP had contributed to the groundwork done in the Syrian Arab Republic, given that it had no staff operating in that country. The Deputy Executive Director said that UNEP had deployed experts to the Syrian Arab Republic as part of the joint mission by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations, and additional staff had provided support from Geneva. The contribution by UNEP had been positively assessed by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

C. Ecosystem management

1. Regarding the ecosystem management subprogramme, one representative suggested that additional information could be provided on how the regional seas conventions had contributed to achieving expected accomplishment (b) in the programme of work for 2014–2015, on increased country use of ecosystem approaches to sustain ecosystem services from coastal and marine systems, and sought clarification regarding the relationship between that accomplishment and work on marine litter being carried by the regional seas conventions.
2. The representative of the secretariat stressed the importance of the integration of marine litter in the larger framework of ecosystem management. UNEP was working to create a baseline so that reporting by countries on ecosystem approaches adopted at the national level and within the regional seas programmes would form the basis of a comprehensive approach to further work, including on marine litter.
3. One representative said that the performance by UNEP under the subprogramme could not be evaluated on the basis of the information provided in the performance review progress summary, which did not explain how UNEP was working with partner organizations or what its contribution was to the activities referenced. The summary made no reference to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, nor did it identify how the UNEP regional offices helped countries to implement their national biodiversity strategies and action plans.
4. The Deputy Executive Director said that UNEP was undertaking substantial work to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020, including by supporting between 70 and 80 countries in developing their national biodiversity strategies and action plans, as part of its GEF portfolio. The half-yearly report did not include this information because it was not intended to be a detailed report.

D. Environmental governance

1. Regarding the environmental governance subprogramme, noting that developing and enforcing environmental governance was extremely challenging for many African countries, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that UNEP had considerable experience in developing environmental law and should provide greater support to countries in that regard, upon request. He commended, in particular, the Poverty-Environment Initiative of UNEP and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as being relevant to all three pillars of sustainable development and to an integrated approach to the sustainable development goals. It was to be hoped that UNEP would increase support to African countries under the Initiative.
2. Other representatives sought clarification regarding the role of UNEP in formulating the sustainable development goals, noting that UNEP had considerable expertise in relation to environmental data that could inform the discussions on the indicators of the sustainable development goals, not only for explicit environmental targets but also for those with an implicit ecological component. One representative asked for more information on recent developments with regard to synergies between multilateral environmental agreements.
3. The Deputy Executive Director responded that UNEP was very active in the post-2015 process, including in the inter-agency technical support team on the post-2015 development agenda and co-leading task teams with other United Nations entities under the supervision of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. In addition, UNEP had established a post-2015 strategic team with members from many UNEP offices and New York helping to formulate strategic goals. He said that UNEP work was continuing on facilitating synergies among multilateral environmental agreements, including the biodiversity-related instruments, a number of whose conferences of the parties had adopted or were considering adopting synergies-related decisions.

E. Chemicals and waste

1. Regarding the chemicals and waste subprogramme, one representative commended the International Environmental Technology Centre in Osaka, Japan, as a centre of excellence on waste management issues, and asked for more information on the Global Waste Management Outlook being developed by UNEP and on the Global Partnership on Waste Management and opportunities for member States to participate therein. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed the view that more needed to be done to help countries in the implementation of sound chemicals management policies. Only 83 countries, or 47 per cent of countries, had reported the required data under the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management to date, with only 5 reporting in 2014. He urged countries to ratify the Minamata Convention on Mercury to allow for its entry into force and said that he looked forward to the outcome of an impact evaluation of the Strategic Approach Quick Start Programme by UNEP. The importance of the Quick Start Programme was also emphasized by other representatives.
2. Responding to comments, the Deputy Executive Director said that the project design of the Global Partnership on Waste Management is planned to be completed by December 2014 and implemented in 2015, while the Global Waste Management Outlook would be completed by December 2015.

F. Resource efficiency and sustainable consumption and production

1. Regarding the resource efficiency and sustainable consumption and production subprogramme, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed regret regarding the omission of energy from the choice of high-impact sectors and said that the section of the review addressing demand and lifestyles was weak. Another representative expressed surprise that information in the six‑monthly report on lifestyles focused on the South, suggesting that a focus on lifestyles in the North would also be valuable.
2. Responding to comments, the Deputy Executive Director said that UNEP was engaged in a number of activities related to energy efficiency, including through the Copenhagen Centre on Energy Efficiency, which was part of the UNEP collaborating centre in Denmark under the partnership between UNEP and the Technical University of Denmark, and the “Sustainable energy for all” initiative. He said that UNEP was working on strengthening its activities on renewable energies in collaboration with the International Renewable Energy Agency.
3. Noting that consumption issues were as important as those associated with production, he said that UNEP was working with the World Health Organization to address worrying trends, in developed countries in particular, with regard to the health impacts of consumer choices. The International Resources Panel was considering the issues of expiry dates and remanufacturing, which were also important North-linked themes under subprogramme 6.
4. One representative noted that the Green Growth Knowledge Platform was increasingly being used by policymakers and institutions as a resource for policy design since it provided easy access to information for countries and regions.

G. Environment under review

1. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, stressed that each Global Environment Outlook (GEO) process should help countries as a matter of course to use relevant and reliable data, and called for more information to be provided in that regard under the subprogramme.

H. Budget performance

1. Many representatives expressed satisfaction with improvements in staff productivity and overheads and thanked the secretariat for sharing project cost estimates. Several representatives commended efforts by UNEP to improve the efficiency of its work, including through strategic partnerships.
2. One representative asked how UNEP productivity figures compared with those of other United Nations entities. He sought clarification regarding the proportion of UNEP staff performing administrative functions, efforts to minimize overlap in the administrative work of UNEP and that of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the criteria used to select projects for 2014–2015 and efforts to create synergies with, and minimize duplication of, work being carried out by other international entities.
3. One representative sought clarification regarding differences in figures for the planned budget on different pages of the document under review. The Deputy Executive Director apologized for round-up differences, which were due to the fact that UNEP had not yet closed its books for 2014. The representative of the secretariat also clarified the difference between planned budget and budget allocations which could include activities over several years.
4. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed concern that, although funding pledges for 2014 were 23 per cent higher than for 2013, they still implied receipts of only $84 million compared with the approved budget of $110 million, and asked how the prudent approach adopted by UNEP of planning expenditures of only $80 million would affect the programme of work. He noted that the outcome document of Rio+20 had sought secure, stable, adequate and increased financial resources for UNEP from the regular budget of the United Nations and voluntary contributions, and he urged developed countries to honour their commitments in that regard. He also welcomed the transfer of 23 posts from the Environment Fund and extrabudgetary resources to the United Nations regular budget allocation for 2014–2015.
5. Several representatives expressed concern regarding the preference of member States for making earmarked and trust fund contributions, which currently significantly outweighed contributions to the Environment Fund, and sought clarification on steps being taken by UNEP to redress the situation and mobilize resources. One representative urged all member States to increase their contributions to the Environment Fund.
6. Responding to the concern about the imbalance between contributions to the Environment Fund and earmarked funding, the Director of the UNEP Office for Operations noted that a recent $12.4 million non-earmarked contribution from Norway would raise the total of non-earmarked receipts for 2014 to $107 million, which was very close to the $110 million target. He noted that the delivery of the programme of work was sometimes subject to delays owing to the fiscal specifics of different countries, which meant that they provided their contributions in allotments. He suggested that the categorization by UNEP of its funding sources might need to be adjusted, since a fully non-earmarked contribution was essentially equivalent to an Environment Fund contribution. In terms of the prudent approach, the programme of work was based on projections of contributions to the Environment Fund, but funds were not spent until they had been received and activities were aligned with anticipated funding allotments.
7. One representative sought clarification regarding the impact of the use of the Programme Information Management System (PIMS) to manage subprogramme portfolios on the mandate to manage the subprogrammes of the Committee of Permanent Representatives. He asked whether the enterprise resource planning project, Umoja, was intended to replace PIMS and, if so, when it would do so. Another representative said that he looked forward to the implementation of Umoja because of its potential to increase accountability and transparency, and he expressed satisfaction at the introduction of IPSAS.
8. Responding to comments, the Director of the UNEP Regional Office for Europe said that Umoja would replace PIMS and would eventually include a programme management module. Noting the magnitude of the task, he said that the Umoja rollout had been postponed until 2015 and some Umoja modules would likely not be in place until 2017. UNEP was currently preparing for stage 2 (of a total of 4 stages) in the Umoja installation, and was working with other United Nations entities to ensure a smooth transition to the new system. He pointed out that Umoja had initially been installed in United Nations peacekeeping entities, which worked according to a very different business model to UNEP and said that the cost of Umoja installation was included in overheads. He said that a recent audit had provided a positive assessment of UNEP work with IPSAS in 2013. He noted that IPSAS would affect budget reporting on certain items by UNEP.
9. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said there was a lack of information on the specific funding streams used for each subprogramme and on how much had already been spent on projects in each subprogramme during the reporting period. Such figures would be valuable as they would show which projects were more financially risky. The representative called for actual expenditures to be shown against expected expenditures in an annex to the reports on each of the subprogrammes. Two representatives called for more detailed information on cross-funding between programmes.
10. Responding to concerns, the Deputy Executive Director noted that the detailing of expenditures by activities was problematic in the six-monthly report, owing in part to IPSAS. Much more detail would be included in the annual report. The secretariat would endeavour to provide more estimates in the six-monthly report, however, and he sought clarification from representatives on their preferred format for those estimates and other specific information that they would like to see included. Noting that the matter required further consideration to ensure informed decision-making on fund allotment, he said that figures as at the end of September showed that certain programmes had been funded more than had been expected, particularly with earmarked funding, while others, such as environment under review and chemicals and waste, were currently underfunded. He noted that the recent audit had not resulted in any new critical observations with regard to the UNEP financial accounts for the past two years and previous recommendations had been addressed.
11. A number of representatives expressed concern that 95 per cent of contributions to the Environment Fund had been provided by only 15 member States; in the light of the universal membership of the governing body of UNEP, they stressed the importance of all member States contributing to the Environment Fund according to their ability to do so.
12. The representative of the secretariat said that UNEP needed to broaden its funding base, and he called on member States, in particular middle-income countries, to increase their contributions to UNEP. He expressed satisfaction that several least developed countries were making contributions to the Fund, which he described as symbolic, and outlined efforts by UNEP to attract funding from regional banks.
13. One representative asked for more details on value for money in the context of UNEP activities, including a comparison with other United Nations entities, as well as on the long-term efficiency goals of UNEP and ensuring savings on administrative costs. He asked whether there was any overlap between administrative functions at the United Nations Office at Nairobi and UNEP and within UNEP divisions, and ways in which overlaps could be minimized. He sought clarification regarding selection criteria for priority projects in each division, and ways in which UNEP maximized synergies and minimized duplication of effort with other international entities.
14. The representative of the secretariat highlighted the two UNEP review processes. The first, a programme approval group, was chaired by the Executive Director and included all the division directors and subprogramme coordinators, and reviewed concepts for all the subprogrammes together with expected accomplishments and outputs for the coming five years; the second, a project review committee, was chaired by a representative of the Office for Operations, and reviewed full project proposals, including GEF and non-GEF projects. Both bodies reviewed relevant project audits and other recommendations with respect to UNEP activities. As regards rationalizing administration between the United Nations Office at Nairobi and UNEP, the latter was obliged to carry out preliminary activities to ensure compliance with audit recommendations and the programme of work before submitting requests to the United Nations Office at Nairobi for the provision of services such as those related to human resources and overall financial review. Any request for a new post by programme officers or division directors was always subject to careful consideration.

VI. Evaluation findings on UNEP

1. The subcommittee took up agenda item 5 at its third session, on the afternoon of Tuesday, 28 October 2014, which was chaired by Ms. Roxane de Bilderling (Belgium). Introducing the item, Mr. Michael Spilsbury and Mr. Michael Carbon of the UNEP Evaluation Office gave a presentation summarizing the findings of the evaluation synthesis report, 2012–2013.
2. Mr. Spilsbury commenced the presentation with a summary of the role, mandate, architecture and key activities of the Evaluation Office, which itself was externally reviewed by the United Nations Evaluation Group. Turning to the findings presented in the report, he said that the evaluation had been wide ranging, and included information drawn from the midterm evaluation of the medium-term strategy 2010–2013; evaluation of the disasters and conflicts subprogramme and the environmental governance subprogramme, and the Sudan country programme; a review of the “synergies decisions” of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions; a review of the Mediterranean Action Plan; and a gender review. The report also presented a new analysis of project performance across more than 40 project evaluations. The evaluation, he said, provided feedback into planning processes and into continuing operations.
3. Continuing the presentation, Mr. Carbon summarized the strategic findings of the report. With regard to the mandate of UNEP, there was strong alignment across all subprogrammes, and the goals of the medium-term strategy were consistent with the capacity-building and technical support mandate, although a review was needed of the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building. The medium-term strategy was also found to be consistent with current and emerging environmental priorities; however, cross-cutting issues, such as gender and poverty, were poorly articulated, and UNEP should introduce programmatic indicators linking those issues to the work of UNEP on environment and development. In the area of programme planning, the role of the programme frameworks in the planning cycle should be strengthened so that they were more closely aligned with the results-based management processes of UNEP. With regard to accountability and authority, the matrix approach adopted for the 2010–2013 medium-term strategy did not provide clear lines of authority and accountability, and there was a need to enhance the role of the subprogramme coordinators in overseeing the programmatic dimension of the matrix management model. Furthermore, the process of developing divisional workplans should be fully instituted as a component of the programme management and accountability processes. On the role of the regional offices, the evaluation had found that they were yet to fulfil their potential and required further strengthening. Concluding the strategic findings, Mr. Carbon said that UNEP should now move towards establishing a full results-based budgeting system.
4. Resuming the presentation, Mr. Spilsbury summarized the results of the project evaluation. The overall performance was solid, with a slight improvement in the biennium 2012–2013 compared with 2010–2011. Performance according to a range of evaluation criteria was predominantly “moderately satisfactory” or above, but there was no room for complacency, as there was plenty of scope for UNEP to improve its performance to the “satisfactory” or “highly satisfactory” categories. Reasons for poor scores included lack of clarity in project strategy and design; suboptimal financial administration; and, in particular, a lack of project-level monitoring.
5. In the ensuing discussion, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the evaluation report, in particular its focus on the key areas of strategic relevance of the medium-term strategy; the progress made by UNEP in achieving the anticipated outcomes and impacts of the strategy; business processes, systems and structures; and the human resources and financial mechanisms associated with the delivery of the strategy. He concurred with the recommendation that the impact of UNEP needed to be felt at national level in order for it to deliver the key components of its subprogrammes, namely, the promotion of capacity-building, the implementation of pilot projects and the provision of long-term country support. With regard to monitoring, greater use of outcome milestones was required to ensure that programme performance reports gave a clearer indication of progress towards the achievement of expected accomplishments.
6. On the matter of the regional offices, he noted the finding of the evaluation report that while progress had been made in building the “One UNEP” approach and coordinating the implementation of subprogrammes at the regional and national levels, there was still room for improvement in collaboration between divisions and regional offices, and greater involvement of regional offices in the medium-term strategy planning process. Urgent action was required to rectify that shortcoming. With regard to the multilateral environmental agreements, he supported the finding that there was a need for greater linkages between them through a system-wide approach. He also noted that lack of evaluative data weakened the UNEP results framework, making it more difficult to assess performance. For UNEP to operate effectively, he continued, there was a need to mainstream ecosystem management approaches at the national level; improve inter-agency coordination mechanisms; and clearly outline gender equality targets in the medium-term strategy. In conclusion, he called for equitable geographical representation in the use of human resources.
7. Another representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries said that the report provided a very good evaluative analysis and indication of lessons to be learned. However, further improvements were needed in the uptake of recommendations, and a more systematic approach was required. The organization- and programme-level results were of greatest benefit when they were reflected in the medium-term strategy and programme of work; that would have the added benefit of demonstrating that UNEP was a learning organization, which would in turn encourage increased contributions to the Environment Fund and strengthen the role of UNEP as the leading advocate on environmental matters. It was also important that Governments were made aware of the results of evaluations and that UNEP was accountable to the Environment Assembly for implementing the evaluation recommendations. UNEP should continue training staff on results-based management, and should make such training mandatory for all professional staff.
8. Turning to specific matters, she said that the matrix organization of UNEP posed several challenges, as noted in the report, which indicated that the “One UNEP” culture still seemed to be largely absent. Confusion remained as to the respective roles played by divisions and subprogrammes in the allocation of human and financial resources, and there was a need to strengthen the role of subprogramme coordinators to ensure that they became the acknowledged first allocators of resources. She asked for guidance from the secretariat on several issues, including mitigation of the problems identified with regard to the results framework, under the present medium-term strategy as well as the medium-term strategy for 2018–2021; the better integration of the use of divisional workplans in programme management systems; the resolution of issues related to accountability and authority in the implementation of subprogrammes; and the implementation of the training and learning strategy to assist staff capacity development. Turning to budgetary matters, she expressed concern at the inadequacy and unpredictability of resources, due in part to the overreliance on extrabudgetary resources external to the Environment Fund, which was not consistent with the aspirations of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of Rio+20.
9. On the environmental governance subprogramme, she expressed support for the evaluation recommendation that the strategy be further developed; that would enable UNEP to support countries in achieving greater synergy in implementation of the multilateral environmental agreements. On the disasters and conflicts subprogramme, she raised questions related to the strengthening of the role of the disaster risk reduction team within UNEP; cooperation between UNEP and other United Nations bodies, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction; and the evaluation of the Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at Local Level programme. With regard to the Mediterranean Action Plan, she expressed surprise at the evaluation finding that the European Union-funded projects did not always align with the priorities of the Mediterranean Action Plan, as the European Union was the largest voluntary cash donor to the Plan and was fully aware of those priorities.
10. Turning to project performance, she said that while 62 per cent of project performance by UNEP was rated as satisfactory, there was still scope to improve performance by focusing on the longer-term impact and sustainability of projects. Increased collaboration between subprogrammes at the project level could improve project performance. There was also a need for significant improvement in project monitoring and in the availability of financial data to donors. On the matter of project performance ratings, she queried some apparent inconsistencies between those in the UNEP evaluation report and those in the annual monitoring report of the GEF Least Developed Countries Fund. Finally, she welcomed the improvements in gender mainstreaming in the core business processes of UNEP, although it needed to be strengthened within projects.
11. Mr. Spilsbury responded to several of the issues raised. On the issue of lack of evaluation data, he said that in the midterm evaluation of the medium-term strategy there was a limited number of projects for which data were available; that was because many projects had commenced in 2010 and had yet to reach their final evaluation stage at the time of the study. He welcomed the comments on the Mediterranean Action Plan, and said that he had not been aware that the evaluation pertaining to the alignment of European Union-funded projects with the priorities of the Plan were not accepted by the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention). He said that projects under the GEF Least Developed Countries Fund were evaluated according to the same rating scale as was used for the UNEP evaluation, and he would look into the matter of any possible discrepancy in the findings. Finally, he said that an evaluation of the Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at Local Level programme had been planned for 2014, but that funds had not been available to support it.
12. The Deputy Executive Director also addressed a number of the issues raised. On the matter of training in results-based management, although it was not compulsory under United Nations rules, UNEP ensured that all of its managers undertook it. Regarding the relative roles played by divisions and subprogrammes in resource allocation, procedures had been improved in line with the recommendation of the Evaluation Office on the matter. Measures had also been undertaken to institute and implement divisional workplans, though the revision of the accountability framework would take time.
13. With regard to the disasters and conflicts subprogramme, he said that coordination with other United Nations agencies was in place. A joint emergency response unit had been set up within the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and UNEP was the coordinator of the environment component of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. The joint emergency response unit was known as the Joint Environment Unit between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNEP. On the matter of fostering collaboration between subprogrammes at project level, he said that that was an important question. Various methods were being employed to encourage that, including setting up some small funds that made finance available to projects that cut across divisions or subprogrammes. With regard to ensuring compliance with the recommendations of the Evaluation Office, he said that all managers were required to report back to the Deputy Executive Director at monthly meetings on how they were putting in place systems to ensure compliance.

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VII. Lessons learned and road map towards the medium-term strategy for 2018–2021 and the programme of work and budget for   
2018–2019

1. The subcommittee took up the item at its 3rd session on the afternoon of Tuesday, 28 October 2014, which was chaired by Ms. Roxane de Bilderling (Belgium). A representative of the secretariat gave a presentation on the road map towards the medium-term strategy for 2018–2021 and the programme of work and budget for 2018–2019, both of which were to be ready in time for the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. The medium-term strategy would outline context, overall strategic focus and business strategy, while the programme of work would define subprogramme strategies, performance framework and budget. A further document, the strategic framework for 2018–2019, would be created in tandem to streamline the governance process and would comprise the agreed objectives of the medium-term strategy and the results framework of the programme of work. The strategic objective document would be reviewed in New York by the Committee for Programme and Coordination within the framework of the UNEP governance process. The road map covered the first two stages of strategic planning – development and review – but not delivery.
2. The representative of the secretariat outlined progress made and the next steps to respond to the following lessons learned: strengthening strategic relevance through alignment to global, regional and national priorities; moving towards results-based budgeting; introducing more coherent programme planning; encouraging better regional integration; improving governance and accountability processes; harnessing in-house knowledge and expertise better; responding more flexibly to emerging issues; using improved performance indicators; and showing greater awareness of the operating environment. He described the schedule for the road map in the coming years and explained that there were four avenues through which member States could have a bearing on consultations: the Committee of Permanent Representatives; regional offices; multilateral environmental agreement secretariats; and major groups and non-governmental stakeholders.
3. Following the presentation, a number of representatives praised the road map but indicated that there might be room for improvement with regard to the budget aspect. One representative commended the use of results-based budgeting, but said that budget projection estimates should be produced before establishing a corresponding medium-term strategy. Another requested clarification as to how the budget was incorporated into the strategy, how the narrative part of the programme of work was expressed in actual figures and how to ensure that the budget figures remained feasible. More information was also requested on subprogramme frameworks, including a list of projects and projected costs. One representative said that the subprogramme frameworks should be ready six months before its implementation and shared with member States when requested.
4. One representative suggested improving the road map by inserting a reference to the foresight process carried out by UNEP in 2011 that had defined 20 emerging issues and was still very valid, and also by using the “vision refresh” as the single concept underpinning all the other steps in the key activities of the road map, rather than as a component in itself. A number of representatives pointed out the omission of the sixth Global Environment Outlook report (GEO-6), which was especially significant given that the priorities of the strategy were similar to that process. The regional office could use the results of the regional consultations for GEO-6, in addition to those of the scientific panels mentioned in the report, to prepare the regional priorities.
5. One representative requested that the next medium-term strategy should give more focus to regional and country delivery, in particular by promoting capacity-building, pilot projects and long‑term support for individual countries and clarifying roles and responsibilities at the national, regional and global levels. He also requested more information on the proposed product line to support countries in implementing the sustainable development goals.
6. There was general appreciation for the mention of extensive consultations with member States and other groups, although one representative cautioned that the individual expertise of member States should be taken into account in order to motivate them for active engagement. Another representative added that if UNEP intended for the strategy to be truly systemic, better coordination would be needed with other United Nations entities to ensure that activities did not overlap. Similarly, to enable more representatives of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to be involved in the ambitious calendar for 2015, the secretariat should seek to enlarge the caucus of permanent representatives in Nairobi. There was also broad consensus to move the annual subcommittee meeting from September to October in order to promote deeper discussion of the strategy in the context of the post‑2015 meetings scheduled for September. Given the complexity of the road map schedule, a number of representatives also suggested that the Committee’s oversight role could be enhanced by a session explaining the entire process described in the road map, with particular attention to the different roles, powers, responsibilities and timelines with respect to both the New York-based institutions and the Committee and the Environment Assembly.
7. One representative expressed the view that the next medium-term strategy should be clearer and more succinct than it had been in the past, while others requested operational and measurable indicators to guide evaluation. One representative asked for clarification of the “case studies” which the secretariat intended to use to demonstrate implementation. One representative asked to see more overarching ambitions related to the impact of UNEP on people and the environment: UNEP could not achieve such ambitions alone, but it could make a significant contribution to challenges over a longer term than just four years.
8. A majority of representatives expressed concern that the strategy would not be flexible enough to integrate new priorities as they emerged and that no mention had been made of the lessons learned from the medium-term strategy for 2010–2013. The secretariat’s suggestion to wait until September 2015 to release the first draft, as opposed to sharing progressive drafts following each consultation process with member States, was also questioned, with one representative requesting that an initial draft be issued before January 2015.
9. Representatives of the secretariat responded to the issues raised. One representative explained that GEO-6 had not been mentioned in the document since it was implicit under the term “existing environmental assessment and early warning processes”. He provided clarification regarding the drafting process: an initial draft would be prepared and shared with the Committee at the first consultation; as consultations progressed, the draft would be amended in an interactive manner to reflect the Committee’s comments; a final draft would be released in the autumn of 2015, reflecting the outcome of the post-2015 agenda; and subsequent comments could be included into the draft strategy thereafter. Evaluation was also an ongoing process and the results of formal assessments of previous strategies would be incorporated into the 2018–2021 strategy. With regard to cooperation, he said that UNEP intended to hold discussions with United Nations entities and strategic partners in advance of the drafting stage of the strategy. Acknowledging that the development of the budget was a complex process, he explained that there were three main categories which fed into the budgeting calculation: funding projections (the scale of funds to be received); activities (how much it cost to deliver results); and staff knowledge (use of staff knowledge of the cost of bringing about a global impact). Combining the three elements to create a results-based budget was more an art than a science. He welcomed comments on the “vision refresh” and the need to make the documents more succinct. As regards flexibility, further consultations with the Committee would be required to discuss current and future priorities and indicators.
10. The Deputy Executive Director added that the secretariat was planning for seven years into the future, and so optimum flexibility would be required to react to decisions by the Environment Assembly and emerging events. Responding to the question on country and regional operations, he said that it was critical for UNEP to strengthen regional offices; recruit regional subprogramme coordinators; and receive additional budgetary resources for regional activities. He also emphasized that the next medium-term strategy would have more of a human face and provide examples of the positive effects of UNEP activities on human life and well-being.
11. Concluding the item, the Chair said that she would prepare proposals based on the discussions in readiness for the 128th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, to be held on Friday, 31 October 2014.

VIII. Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on “Post Rio+20 Review of Environmental Governance within the United Nations system”.

1. The subcommittee took up the item at its 4th session on the morning of Wednesday, 29 October 2014 under the chairmanship of Mr. Konrad Paulsen Rivas, Rapporteur of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and Permanent Representative of Chile. Representatives had before them a 2014 report by the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations System, entitled “Post Rio+20 review of environmental governance within the United Nations system” (JIU/REP/2014/4), authored by two inspectors, and a non-paper produced by the secretariat on observations on the Joint Inspection Unit report on the Post-Rio+20 review of environmental governance within the United Nations system.
2. Mr. Tadanori Inomata, Inspector of the Joint Inspection Unit, gave a presentation on the 2014 report, which he said had sought to assess the current status of environmental governance in the context of the institutional framework for sustainable development agreed upon at Rio+20, and followed up on a 2008 management review of international environmental governance by the Unit.
3. He said that the 2014 report had identified improvements in a number of areas since the 2008 review, but had found that many of the constraints to the efficient use of resources for environmental activities identified in 2008 persisted, including a fragmentation of multilateral environmental initiatives, blurred responsibility and accountability among United Nations entities for environment-related activities, and inadequate efforts to measure total resources devoted to environment activities as a basis for strategic planning and resource projection and allocation.
4. In closing, he said the report contained 13 recommendations that sought to achieve further synergies and increase efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources for environmental activities across the United Nations system, including recommendations to establish a common understanding of the division of labour among entities for environment-related activities through system-wide strategies, to initiate regular reviews by the Environment Assembly of the effectiveness of multilateral environmental agreements, and to develop, within the Environment Management Group, an evaluation policy and guidelines specific to the environment to promote environmental and social sustainability across the United Nations system.
5. In the discussion that ensued, all the representatives who spoke expressed their appreciation to the Joint Inspection Unit and the co-authors for the report. Many of them expressed satisfaction at the finding that considerable progress had been achieved in international environmental governance since 2008. Several representatives also thanked UNEP for its non-paper and expressed overall support for the observations contained therein.
6. One representative expressed concern about the scope, methodology and recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit report, which he said appeared to be more of an advocacy document than an analysis of measures to improve efficiency. He said that several of the proposed recommendations failed to recognize existing mandates and lines of authority of the various actors in the United Nations system and he urged all concerned to carefully review those mandates and the concerns expressed by member States at the current meeting and in other meetings.
7. Responding to comments, Mr. Inomata said that the primary concern of the Joint Inspection Unit was the effective use of resources provided by member States to intergovernmental organizations within the United Nations system. Its recommendations sought to improve effectiveness, pointing to gaps in management and governance. In order to produce the report, the Unit had taken into account the mandates given to UNEP and other organizations in decisions adopted by member States at sessions of the Governing Council of UNEP and major sustainable development conferences. Developments since Rio+20 included the clear need to implement international environmental governance within the institutional framework for sustainable development and repeated calls by Member States in the General Assembly and other forums for results-based management.
8. Several representatives made comments about specific recommendations contained in the report.
9. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the implementation of recommendation 1, which suggested that the Environment Assembly request the Executive Director of UNEP to present a biennial report on environment-related activities performed by United Nations organizations to assist member States in defining system-wide environmental strategies, could be challenging, as any system-wide strategy developed by UNEP would need to be endorsed by the General Assembly, governing bodies of other United Nations entities, or conferences of the parties of multilateral environmental agreements. Another representative expressed support for recommendation 1, stating that a biennial report would help member States to get a picture of environmental programmes within the United Nations system and enhance the coordinating role of UNEP within that system.
10. Many representatives said that they could not support recommendations 2 and 3, which provided for UNEP assessments of nuclear energy and nuclear radiation, stating that these issues fell within the purview of other entities, notably the International Atomic Energy Agency.
11. Mr. Inomata said that both issues were addressed in the context of sustainable development in Agenda 21 and that UNEP had a role to play in environmental emergencies, which included man‑made disasters.
12. On recommendation 6, according to which the General Assembly would delegate to the Environment Assembly the authority to review the annual reports of the three conventions adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 in order to review their effectiveness, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that information on the feasibility and legal implications of the recommendation was needed, since only one of the treaties adopted at the Conference is administered by UNEP. She expressed regret that the recommendation on effectiveness did not build on the analysis contained in section D.1 of the report regarding the role of UNEP and other agencies in helping countries to build the capacity to implement multilateral environmental agreements. Another representative suggested piloting the implementation of recommendation 6 with respect to the Convention on Biological Diversity, for which UNEP provided secretariat services.
13. On recommendation 4, concerning the oversight of project proposals by the Office of the Chief Scientist to ensure project quality and promote a strong science-policy interface within UNEP, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the current project review system was satisfactory. She also cautioned against any suggestion that might involve strengthening the resources of the Office of the Chief Scientist given the need to balance resources across UNEP. Another representative asked whether the Office of the Chief Scientist currently oversaw the scientific quality of the work of UNEP at the project level. Another suggested that the Office of the Chief Scientist did not have the capacity to review individual projects and cautioned against redefining its responsibilities.
14. Regarding recommendation 5 on the development of guidelines to prevent conflicts of interest of technical and scientific experts in the field of the environment, many representatives said that such conflicts of interest were not exclusive to the environmental field and supported a broader, United Nations system-wide approach to the issue.
15. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, supported by another, said that it was positive that recommendations 7 to 9 recognized the role of the Environment Management Group in ensuring greater integration of environmental issues into the United Nations system, but said that the report failed to recognize that the participation of members in the Group, as well as the Group’s recommendations, were voluntary. Another representative expressed support for recommendation 7 while stressing that any norms or standards produced by the Environment Management Group would need to be implemented by its members.
16. As for recommendation 13, on the development by the Environment Management Group of an environmental evaluation policy and standards and guidelines to assist the Environment Assembly and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development to strengthen the institutional framework for sustainable development, many representatives expressed reservations about the proposal and said that the Group lacked the authority to require, and could at best invite, organizations to conduct evaluations.
17. Responding to comments, Mr. Inomata said that while the Environment Management Group was a voluntary forum, it had the advantage of being an inclusive one in which the representatives of specialized agencies, programmes and organs of the United Nations, including secretariats of the multilateral environmental agreements, so guidelines could be discussed for decision by member States. The report did not suggest that the Group engage in evaluation, but if member States agreed on guidelines to evaluate environmental activities, the Executive Director could then report to the Environment Assembly and other forums. What was important was to create a common understanding of a division of labour among entities and ensure communication flows about what each entity was doing at the global, regional and national levels.
18. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed support for recommendation 10 on updating the definition of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination sector programme classification relevant to environment-related activities, which she said was an important but difficult task. She said an analysis in the report of why environmental expenditure reports by the United Nations had been discontinued would have been welcome.
19. The Inspector said that the expenditure reports might have disappeared in 1995 owing to technical difficulties associated with communication between entities, which was no longer an issue given advances in communications technologies.
20. Many representatives said that they could not support recommendation 11 on developing a system-wide framework to measure and monitor the resources required by United Nations entities for the implementation of environmental protection and sustainable development, with one stating that it would be more productive to consider what could be achieved with available resources and that the issue should be seen in the wider context of the post-2015 development agenda.
21. Many representatives expressed support for recommendation 12 on mainstreaming environmental sustainability into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and integrating climate change into country programmes, but one, on behalf of a group of countries, said that the effective participation of experts from multilateral environmental agreements in country programmes did not seem realistic and that focal points for multilateral environmental agreements in UNEP regional offices could play a leading role in that regard instead.
22. Drawing attention to the body of the report, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, lamented that no formal recommendation had been included on programme support costs, which were discussed in section 2 of the report. She said that in another section of the report it was suggested that UNEP might be strengthened by being freed from administrative responsibilities towards multilateral environmental agreements, but she urged consideration of this proposal only after UNEP had released a report on its relationship with the multilateral environmental agreements for which it provided secretariat services at the second open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR). She also suggested that the Committee consider over the following months whether the response to certain recommendations contained in the report, such as recommendations 1, 7 and 9, could form part of the implementation of resolution 1/11. Another representative welcomed further consideration of the recommendations contained in the report at a later stage.
23. The Executive Director expressed appreciation to the Joint Inspection Unit for its contribution to the consideration of how to move forward in the field of environmental governance, taking into account the Rio+20 outcome document. He said that the role of the Joint Inspection Unit was to give member States a systemic perspective and examine how the system might work better in the future. While he was not in a position to provide comments on the report, there was no reason why the Environment Assembly, as a forum dealing with strategic, system-wide environmental issues, could not ask the multilateral environmental agreements to report on their progress.
24. Regardless of whether specific recommendations contained in the report offered a basis for consensus, it was undeniable that the environmental governance system was fragmented and governed in an incoherent manner. While maintaining the status quo of fragmentation might be easier and the time might not be ripe for decision-making, it was important to examine the United Nations system as a whole and reflect on the efficacy of multilateralism in the field of environmental sustainability and how the system could evolve for the better. He therefore invited the subcommittee to reflect on the issues raised in the report in order to consider whether the current global environmental governance system was fit for purpose and what the role of the Environment Assembly in this area should be. Specifically, he asked them to reflect on how to enable the Assembly to play a catalytic, facilitative role in creating a more coherent strategy for the environmental dimension of sustainable development, taking into account that it provided a forum for meaningful, strategic discussion among ministers in order to reflect on how to move the governance agenda forward for consideration by relevant intergovernmental processes.
25. Mr. Inomata expressed his appreciation for all the comments provided and the great degree of interest in the Joint Inspection Unit report. He said that a representative of the Unit would continue to engage with the Committee on the report, to which members of the Chief Executives Board were expected to provide a formal response that would be circulated to the member States and the Environment Assembly, among other bodies, for further discussion.

IX. Briefing on UNEP initiatives

A. Special programme to support institutional strengthening at the national level for implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the Minamata Convention and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management

1. The subcommittee took up the subitem at its 4th session on the morning of Wednesday, 29 October 2014 under the Chair, Ms. Rosemary Mukasa, Vice-Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uganda. The representative of the secretariat noted that a team at the Chemicals Branch of the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics was working on the establishment of an executive board, secretariat and trust fund for the special programme and intended to build on the lessons learned from relevant existing programmes with UNEP involvement, such as the Quick Start Programme of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management and the institutional strengthening programme of the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol. The special programme would maximize complementarity and synergy with other financial mechanisms, such as GEF. The establishing team also intended to install an administrative process, which would be as lean as possible in order to ensure that funds provided to countries under the special programme were maximized.
2. All the representatives who spoke commended the progress made towards establishing the special programme since its creation was mandated by resolution 1/5.
3. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, looked forward to inputs to help complete the establishment of the special programme from other forums, including the intergovernmental negotiating committee of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, the Open-ended Working Group of the Strategic Approach and the conferences of the parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions. He welcomed the recognition of the need for the UNEP team working on the special programme to collaborate with the secretariats of the multilateral environmental agreements and to draw on the experiences of and lessons learned in the context of other programmes. He expressed satisfaction with the proposed next steps towards the establishment of the programme. He queried text in the document under review which appeared to state that the disbursement of funds from the trust fund of the special programme would take place before the special programme began its operations.
4. Another representative, commending the leadership demonstrated by UNEP in working with countries to facilitate best practice in chemicals and waste management, said that combating pollution represented a nexus between the environment and public health, protecting human populations from many non-communicable diseases. He supported the focus of the UNEP team leading the programme on implementation at the national level and encouraged using the comparative advantages of UNEP, including its broad perspective, considerable experience and significant convening power. He said that implementation workshops and additional focus on mainstreaming would be welcome.
5. One representative expressed concern at the length of time being taken to fill staff positions in the Chemicals Branch, which were crucial to the launch of the special programme, while another stressed the importance of operationalizing the special programme as soon as possible. He also strongly endorsed the emphasis placed by the secretariat on using the special programme to facilitate capacity-building across all multilateral environmental agreements on chemicals and waste and to further mainstream chemicals and waste issues at the national, regional and global levels.
6. One representative asked about the relationship between the Special Programme and the capacity-building and technical assistance mechanism foreseen under Article 13 of the Minamata Convention, stating that their mandates and governance structures were distinct.
7. The representative of the secretariat thanked representatives for their comments and for supporting the establishment of the special programme. He said that the suggestion in the review text that the disbursement of funds would take place before the special programme began its operations was the result of an editing error. Disbursements would begin as soon as an executive board had been established and appropriate procedures had been put place. The launch of the special programme would apply the lessons learned from work by UNEP on institutional strengthening in the framework of the Multilateral Fund and also in administering the Quick Start Programme of the Strategic Approach. He noted that two out of three vacancies at the Chemicals Branch were in the final stages of being filled, two more vacancies were to be advertised, and the recruitment for a senior executive position was at an advanced stage. He concurred with the view expressed regarding the distinct mandates of the special programme and the Minamata Convention, noting that the mandate of the special programme was broader in scope; the two would need to work together to ensure they complemented each other.

B. Climate and Clean Air Coalition

1. The subcommittee took up the subitem at its 4th session on the morning of Wednesday, 29 October 2014. The representative of the secretariat noted that the Climate and Clean Air Coalition had increased the number of its partner numbers from 7 at its launch in 2012 to 96 by September 2014, and that contributions or pledges of $56 million had been secured for the period up to 2017, of which $26 million had already been allocated. The mandate of the Coalition had been extended until 2022, and the secretariat expected that the allocations by the Coalition for capacity-building activities would increase over time. The example set by the Coalition had stimulated the adoption by several countries of national initiatives to tackle short-lived climate pollutants.
2. All the representatives who spoke commended the work of the Coalition and the increase in the number of its partners. Several representatives highlighted the potential of the Coalition to help implement policies for the reduction of short-lived climate pollutants at the national and subnational levels, and said that it served as a vehicle for its partners to share experiences in ways that improved national policies. One representative remarked that the World Bank had begun mainstreaming the reduction of short-lived climate pollutants into its broader efforts and looked forward to a multiplier effect from the activities of the Coalition as international banks, overseas development agencies and domestic policymakers started to use the reduction of short-lived climate pollutants as a criterion in their decision-making processes. Another representative suggested that the Coalition might consider more decentralized interaction, possibly through regional-specific or interest-specific meetings, which could enhance its agility.
3. Several representatives asked how long it would be before the Coalition could demonstrate a significant global reduction in short-lived climate pollutants as an outcome of its work. One representative referred to the need to establish causality between action and impacts and to fill data gaps, saying that the Coalition should place more emphasis on the health and development gains from the reduction of such pollutants, instead of focusing so heavily on the effect on mortality rates.
4. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noting that regional assessments of short-lived climate pollutants under the Coalition were currently limited to one such assessment, which was ongoing in Latin America and the Caribbean, with a second planned in the Asia-Pacific region, asked whether there were plans to conduct a regional assessment in Africa. He welcomed scientific work being undertaken out by the Coalition on the environmental impact of the use of kerosene for lighting, asking when the outcome of that work would be available and whether it would result in a new initiative to address the pollution caused.
5. Another representative said that it was significant that initiatives such as the Global Green Freight Action Plan had been included in the action plan emanating from the high-level summit on climate held in New York in September 2014. One representative welcomed the positive reception given to proposals for new actions to reduce the emission of short-lived climate pollutants presented by the Coalition at the Climate Summit, since they would have the result of scaling up emission reduction activities on the ground.
6. Responding to comments, the representative of the secretariat said that he could not give an immediate answer on the timing of any future regional assessment of short-lived climate pollutants in Africa, but that the findings of a short paper on kerosene pollution presented at the Climate Summit could be made available and were being developed into a full-fledged study, which could be used as the basis for addressing kerosene issues in the future. He agreed with the view expressed that sound waste management had a key role to play in combating short-lived climate pollutants and said that more figures showing the outcome of work by the Coalition and a broader definition of the benefits of such reductions would be made available in the future. The Coalition has already begun working on making its procedures more efficient.

C. Climate Technology Centre and Network

1. The subcommittee took up the subitem at its 4th session on the morning of Wednesday, 29 October 2014. The secretariat noted that requests from the national designated entities under the initiative had increased rapidly through 2014 and currently totalled 24 from a broad range of geographical regions and sectors, with equal distribution between adaptation and mitigation technologies. Challenges included the administration of a broad range of different actors, a network of 17 technology-providing institutions, national designated entities and an expanding number of stakeholders.
2. In the ensuing discussion, one representative said that the Climate Technology Centre and Network was of high priority for his country, and a national designated entity would be appointed within the coming weeks. He congratulated UNEP for putting together an excellent team to manage the process. Noting that 24 countries had already submitted requests for technical assistance, he encouraged developing countries to submit further requests to take advantage of the services offered by the Climate Technology Centre and Network.
3. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the report and expressed appreciation for the financial support that had enabled the operationalization of the Centre. He requested further information on the project entitled “Promoting accelerated transfer and scaled-up deployment of mitigation technologies through the Climate Technology Centre and Network”, including the activities to be undertaken and the intended beneficiaries. He also noted that the Centre aimed to facilitate public-private technology partnerships and twinning arrangements to assist implementation of projects, investment in climate technologies, and sharing of good practices, and requested more information on the sectors that would be targeted and the timelines for those activities. In conclusion, he urged that the Centre fast-track the finalization of the knowledge management system on climate technologies, which would facilitate the collection and dissemination of information on technologies for climate change mitigation and adaptation.
4. The representative of the secretariat responded to the issues raised. He confirmed that the Climate Technology Centre and Network offered services for both mitigation of and adaptation to climate change; it was a request-based service provider, so it was incumbent upon countries to assess their needs and submit requests as appropriate. He would submit information on public-private partnerships and twinning arrangements on a bilateral basis.

D. Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

1. The subcommittee took up the subitem at its 5th session on the afternoon of Wednesday, 29 October 2014, which was chaired by Ms. Rosemary Mukasa, Vice-Chair the Committee of Permanent Representatives and Deputy Permanent Representative of Uganda. Introducing the item, the representative of the secretariat gave a presentation on the current status of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. The Platform, he said, was an intergovernmental mechanism established in 2012 to strengthen the science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services. A five-year work programme had been initiated in 2014; a number of assessments were under way; and task forces had been established to develop and coordinate activities on capacity-building, knowledge and data management, and indigenous and local knowledge. He summarized the considerable progress that had been made in 2014, with the implementation of the work programme on schedule, a trust fund established and a budget secured for the first two years of the work programme (2014–2015). Regional and subregional assessments would be further considered at the next IPBES plenary meeting, with the expectation that they would be carried out in the period 2015–2017, and a global assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services was planned for 2016–2018. The third meeting of the Plenary of the Platform would be held in Bonn, Germany, from 12 to 17 January 2015.
2. Following the presentation, one representative congratulated UNEP for the work undertaken so far, and requested further information on the operational modalities for the United Nations organizations collaborating in the Platform. The representative of the secretariat said that collaboration between those entities – UNEP, UNDP, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations – had been strong since the inauguration of the Platform, and had been formalized at the second meeting of the Plenary of the Platform through the adoption of the collaborative agreement. Each entity was formally approving the agreement through its own internal processes, and the logos for all four organizations would feature on the documents for the third meeting of the Plenary of the Platform.

E. 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns

1. The subcommittee took up the subitem at its 5th session on the afternoon of Wednesday, 29 October 2014. Introducing the item, the representative of the secretariat said that the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns had been in gestation since 1992 and had finally been established in 2012. It was at once multinational, multi-layered and multi-stakeholder; had a 10-member board; and currently reported to the Economic and Social Council. UNEP acted as secretariat for the framework and worked to define the meaning of sustainable consumption and production and the capacity needs; improve awareness of relevant issues; and scale up activities with the aim of sharing best practices. She outlined the key milestones in the framework’s history and the challenges it faced. The way to accelerate implementation was to empower national focal points; enhance interministerial cooperation and stakeholder action at the national level; nominate more national focal points; ensure more active participation of the private sector and financial institutions; and secure predictable and adequate finance for the trust fund. She emphasized that major progress had been made in the previous year to get the framework up and running and strengthen the secretariat’s capacities.
2. Following the presentation, representatives praised the rapid progress in the scaling up of the framework’s activities and the emphasis on fundraising. The sustainable public procurement programme, in particular, attracted unanimous praise as it would help a great many countries. One representative, highlighting the fundamental role of the national focal point, suggested that more regional meetings should be arranged as a way of sharing information and scaling up activities. Another representative said that that the best way to raise resources to increase the profile sufficiently to bring about the required practical changes in lifestyles was through Governments and high-level forums. The framework board, for its part, should collaborate closely with the national focal point to promote the adoption of national programmes on sustainable consumption and production. Two representatives observed that, although the linkage between sustainable consumption and production and the sustainable development goals was useful, the broader notion of a new approach to humankind’s relation to the environment and goods needed to be fostered in the narrative of the post‑2015 agenda. One representative also requested UNEP to provide more support to sustainable lifestyles and education, since this would feed into the framework of programmes.
3. With regard to reporting lines, one representative said that the framework should report to a high-level political forum; another reiterated the view that the Economic and Social Council was the most appropriate reviewing platform because higher-level forums should not be encumbered with reviewing the implementation of individual programmes. That representative also suggested that the paper produced by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals should be called a chair’s summary and not an outcome document, especially as that document would form one of the bases for negotiating the post-2015 agenda.
4. Responding to comments, the representative of the secretariat confirmed that the framework would continue to operate at a higher level and more intensively, but essentially must function across many levels, including the national and regional levels, rather than as a top-down mechanism.

X. Strengthening the science-policy interface, including the sixth Global Environment Outlook report and UNEP Live.

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1. The subcommittee took up the item at its 6th session on the morning of Thursday, 30 October 2014. The session was chaired by Ms. Julia Pataki, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Romania and the Vice-Chair of the Committee. Representatives had before them a note by the secretariat on strengthening the science-policy interface, including GEO-6 and UNEP Live, and the final statement of the first global intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder consultation on the sixth Global Environment Outlook report held in Berlin from 21 to 23 October 2014 (UNEP/IGMC.2/Rev.2).
2. Ms. Jacqueline McGlade, Chief Scientist and ad interim Director of the UNEP Division of Early Warning and Assessment, briefed the subcommittee on efforts undertaken by UNEP to implement Environment Assembly resolutions 1/4 (Science-policy interface) and 1/10 (Different visions, approaches, models and tools to achieve environmental sustainability), including in the planning and process for producing GEO-6 and in further developing UNEP Live.
3. She said that considerable progress had been achieved in several areas, including the expansion of partnerships with centres of excellence and research networks; the production of guidelines and procedures to ensure the scientific credibility of assessments and to help actors use a wide range of information, including traditional and indigenous knowledge; the promotion of country adoption of open data policies; the continued expansion of UNEP Live, which currently included data from more than 80 countries, development banks and other entities; the development of a national reporting system to help countries to collect and use data and avoid duplication; the provision of support to multilateral environmental agreements in streamlining reporting and data quality assurance; supporting communities of practice so that data and regional perspectives might be shared in their original language; and building country and agency capacity to develop targets and goals that could be underpinned with indicators in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.
4. With respect to GEO-6, a global intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder consultation had been held in Berlin from 21 to 23 October 2014. Participants at the consultation had produced an outcome statement that outlined the structure and modalities of the GEO-6 report and a revised timeline for the delivery of its various components, including regional assessments and a summary for policymakers.
5. In the ensuing discussion, most of the representatives who spoke thanked the secretariat for the information provided. Many commended progress achieved in the implementation of resolution 1/4, with one commending the consideration of traditional knowledge in the GEO-6 process. Two representatives welcomed the revised timeline for GEO-6, which they said would make it possible to produce a report that was responsive to the post-2015 agenda negotiations and outcomes.
6. One representative sought clarification regarding efforts to incorporate social sciences and ensure the broad participation of developing countries in the elaboration of GEO-6.
7. Ms. McGlade responded that UNEP was working with disaggregated statistics and had a strong relationship with the International Council for Science, which had a strong social sciences council, and was working to build capacities at the regional level, as broadening regional participation was a key part of the GEO-6 process.
8. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, supported by another, sought clarification regarding the format, expected dates of release and target audiences of the GEO-6 products. She also suggested the need to ensure rigorous moderation of the communities of practice envisaged in the GEO-6 process and to ensure geographic, gender and disciplinary balance within those and other working groups, to clarify the relationship between the GEO-6 process and UNEP Live and the role of the multilateral environmental agreements within UNEP Live, and to reflect further on how GEO-6 could contribute to supporting the post-2015 development framework. She stressed the need to consider all six of the official languages of the United Nations in UNEP Live and the GEO-6 process and indicated that *The European Environment - State and Outlook 2015* would form the basis of the contribution by the European Union to GEO-6.
9. Another representative asked for more information about steps being taken by UNEP to collect data from member States for the UNEP Live website. He asked about the relationship between the gap analysis referred to in paragraph 5 of Environment Assembly resolution 1/4 and the gap analysis referenced in paragraph 18 of the note prepared by the secretariat before representatives at the current session.
10. One representative highlighted the need to ensure government involvement in the GEO-6 process so as to secure the credibility, acceptability and policy relevance of the GEO-6 conclusions.
11. Another sought clarification on the terms of reference and mandates of and nomination processes for the various experts and bodies to be involved in the GEO-6 process described in annexes 1 and 2 of document UNEP/IGMC.2/Rev.2. Many other representatives emphasized the need to revisit the nomination criteria for various groups involved in the GEO-6 process, which, one said, had not been discussed during the consultations in Berlin.
12. Responding to comments, Ms. McGlade said that the secretariat would welcome comments on the proposed nomination criteria and that procedures would be in place to establish clear mandates, enable government review of data and moderate and reflect, in a transparent way, any scientific or political differences that might emerge. More information on the GEO-6 process would be sent to member States in due course. Regarding the date of release of GEO-6, it had been decided that it would be no later than 2018, which would afford member States some flexibility. The aim was to finalize the report by the end of 2017 for translation so that it could be made available in the six official languages of the United Nations.
13. With regard to UNEP Live, the secretariat would produce, in the lead up to the second session of the Environment Assembly, a detailed plan that would include an explanation of how the UNEP Live website would facilitate the work of multilateral environmental agreements and create links between regional and global reporting.
14. One representative requested information about the budget for the GEO-6 process and the anticipated budget of UNEP Live for both 2014 and 2015. Another expressed concern that, according to a representative of the secretariat, subprogramme 7 of the UNEP programme of work was underfunded, and lamented the fact that no budget estimates had been provided during the consultations in Berlin.
15. Ms. McGlade said that UNEP was confident about the availability of resources for both GEO‑6 and UNEP Live, whose overall budget was $23.6 million over 4 years.

XI. Other matters

1. One representative provided an overview of the work of Pax Romana, a faith-based civil society organization working in the areas of human rights and sustainable development. He invited representatives to contribute to its work, stressing that environmental protection had an important spiritual component.
2. Noting that much of the work of UNEP was aligned with the teachings of the main world religions, the Deputy Executive Director said that UNEP was reflecting on how better to engage faith-based organizations in its work and outreach efforts.
3. One representative requested an update on the forthcoming first meeting of the International Environmental Forum for Basin Organizations. The Deputy Executive Director confirmed that the first meeting would be held in Bangkok from 26 to 28 November 2014 and would include expert and ministerial segments.

XI. Closure of the meeting

1. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the meeting was declared closed at 12.30 p.m. on Thursday, 30 October 2014.

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Minutes of the 128th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme

**Agenda item 1**

**Opening of the meeting**

1. The meeting was opened at 9.45 a.m. on Friday, 31 October 2014, by Mr. Sunu Soemarno, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP.
2. The meeting was attended by 97 participants from 53 members of the Committee and two observer missions.
3. At the invitation of the Chair, the Committee observed a minute of silence to pay tribute to the late Mr. Michael Sata, the former President of Zambia.
4. Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP, welcomed the participants to the meeting and thanked those who had been present at the second annual meeting of the subcommittee for their engagement and constructive participation.

Agenda item 2

Adoption of the agenda of the 128th meeting of the Committee

1. The agenda was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/CPR/128/1).

Agenda item 3

Adoption of the minutes of the 127th meeting of the Committee, held on 17 June 2014

1. The Committee adopted the minutes of the 127th meeting on the basis of the draft minutes (UNEP/CPR/128/2).

Agenda item 4

Replacement of the Vice-Chair in the Bureau of the Committee

1. The Chair said that following the departure of Mr. Bart Ouvry, former Permanent Representative of Belgium to UNEP, the members of the group of Western European and other States had nominated Ms. Roxane de Bilderling, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Belgium, to the office of Vice-Chair of the Committee for the period 10 October 2014–30 June 2015. Pursuant to the relevant rules of the rules of procedure of the United Nations Environment Assembly, applicable also to the Committee, the nomination had been communicated by the Executive Director, through his letter dated 9 September 2014, to members. Since no objection had been received, the election had been effected as at 10 October 2014.
2. The Committee took note of the election of Ms. de Bilderling as Vice-Chair of the Committee.

Agenda item 5

Report of the Executive Director

1. The Executive Director drew attention to his written report entitled “Executive Director’s update to the Committee of Permanent Representatives” and its addendum, published on account of the great deal of activity that had taken place over the previous month since the distribution of the report.
2. With regard to the programme of work, he said that implementation was on track both for 2014 and the entire biennium. UNEP was fulfilling its mandate of bringing the environmental sustainability agenda to crucial sectors through a network and partnership approach in many countries and regions. The secretariat was showing increasing agility in responding to guidance, such as that set out in the resolutions adopted by the Environment Assembly at its first session in June 2014. The Programme’s partnerships with other members of the United Nations family, the private sector and civil society had been strengthened, with many initiatives improved as a consequence, and a resulting multiplier effect.
3. He provided various specific examples of the Programme’s successes: scientific work on short-lived climate pollutants, such as black carbon and methane, had led to the topic being taken up by the World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO); its collaborative work with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the context of hosting jointly the secretariat of the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (UN-REDD Programme) was providing support to 56 countries; and publications such as the *Africa’s Adaptation Gap* report provided decision makers with the best available science for policy development. Significant progress had been achieved on the procedural infrastructure for the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns, whose secretariat was hosted by UNEP; the Partnership for Action on Green Economy was active in 61 countries, addressing various aspects of green economy; UNEP had contributed to work on financing for renewable energies in partnership with the private financial sector. He highlighted a recent side event on the Minamata Convention on Mercury held in New York during the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, expressing the hope that the Convention would enter into force within the coming two years and said that there were great expectations of the forthcoming Twenty-Sixth Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, to be held in Paris in November 2014.
4. He drew attention to UNEP work being carried out in response to resolutions and decisions adopted by the Environment Assembly at its first session, including on the sixth Global Environment Outlook report (GEO-6), UNEP Live and the implementation of the first global gender and environment outlook reporting process.
5. He stressed that UNEP remained as active as ever in its engagement with the entire United Nations system, including in the development of the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals, assisted by enhanced capacity in its New York office. UNEP was involved in the United Nations Development Group and in promoting an environmental sustainability management agenda through the High-level Committee on Management and the system-wide coordination on environmental matters through the High-level Committee on Programmes.
6. The senior management team of UNEP had been strengthened by recruitments in 2014 of new division directors and convention secretariat staff, among others. As part of a strengthened UNEP, work was under way to establish five subregional offices. An agreement had been finalized in that regard with Samoa for an office to be co-located in Apia with the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, which would strengthen support for small island developing States.
7. The Deputy Executive Director, Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, was working with the secretariats of the multilateral environmental agreements hosted by UNEP to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the relevant programmatic and operational frameworks. The implementation of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) and the enterprise resource planning project, Umoja, were also vital to operational reform. UNEP had been fully compliant with the new accounting standards as at 1 January 2014 and was on track to implement Umoja by June 2015. Finances were also in good order, with 86 per cent of the Environment Fund budget for 2014 secured. He expressed his gratitude to the countries which had invested in the programme of work, noting that Norway was the most significant contributor of extrabudgetary funding, providing unrestricted financing to the programme of work without imposing national conditions on spending. He encouraged more countries to provide resources to the Environment Fund in order to enhance the stability of UNEP.
8. He provided an overview of recent and forthcoming meetings, including the climate negotiations in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. He suggested that there had been a gear change in attitudes to climate change, as exemplified at the Secretary-General’s Climate Leadership Summit held in New York in September 2014, at which political leaders had affirmed the science on climate change, expressing a high level of confidence in the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. All countries, irrespective of wealth and size, had understood the impacts of climate change; the private market had shown increased leadership and clarity of focus; and corporations had pledged unprecedented levels of contributions to a low-carbon economy. This shift would be instrumental in converging global and national interests to climate change.
9. In the ensuing discussion, many representatives thanked the Executive Director for the quality of his report. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that it was crucial for all relevant documents to be received by members in advance of meetings. Another pointed out that the secretariat had made great improvements on that front. The suggestion was also made to ensure that presentations be disseminated to delegations unable to attend meetings of the Committee, perhaps through greater use of the regional and subregional offices and the Committee’s web portal.
10. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, called for the strengthening of the system-wide coordination of environmental issues by UNEP. Referring to the Executive Director’s written report, he welcomed the activities of the Environment Management Group, including a recent meeting of its senior officials held in New York on 25 September 2014, and asked that the Committee be kept abreast of developments in that regard, in particular on the system-wide strategy on environment. Another encouraged UNEP to take into account the work of related initiatives and other spheres, working in coordination with other United Nations entities; a healthy environment for all was an important component in the fight against issues such as poverty and inequality.
11. One representative commended the work of UNEP in the field of sustainable consumption and production, whilst another encouraged UNEP to ensure the implementation of decisions of the Environment Assembly at its first session and prepare for the second session, not least by securing the legitimacy and broad ownership of GEO-6.
12. As regards funding, one representative said that the examples of projects enumerated by the Executive Director were encouraging and demonstrated that private capital investment was now becoming a viable option for fundraising. Given that donor budgets were currently tight, broadening the funding base was a pressing issue, and all efforts by UNEP to leverage further funds were greatly appreciated.
13. Two representatives, one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed regret that information regarding initiatives and dialogues in their countries and regions had not been included in the Executive Director’s report.
14. One representative expressed satisfaction with progress achieved in many areas of the programme of work during the beginning of the current biennium. Another signalled that the successful implementation of IPSAS and Umoja was of great interest to donor and recipient countries, affording the United Nations Office at Nairobi with an opportunity to demonstrate its leadership in the reform process; he cautioned against any further delays in implementation. He also expressed the hope that UNEP would focus on the areas where it could provide the greatest value, including on critical issues such as clean air, chemicals and the science-policy interface. Several representatives expressed their support for regional offices as bodies of paramount importance for raising resources, setting the prioritization of projects and guaranteeing better representation of member States in Nairobi and better engagement of UNEP at the grassroots level. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, commended the co-location of the subregional office in Samoa with the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme.
15. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the UNEP initiative to partner with Governments to establish a global baseline of ecosystem-based adaptation, urging developing countries to make use of the initiative. He welcomed the launch by UNEP of the ecosystem-based adaptation for food security project in Malawi and suggested that it should be replicated as a model. He applauded the Environment Assembly for ensuring a continued focus on the illegal trade in wildlife, including timber, on the international agenda. He encouraged member States to contribute to discussions on that issue in order to ensure the adoption by the General Assembly of a strong, action-oriented resolution on the issue. He requested more frequent updates on the work of the multilateral environmental agreements and on important relevant meetings taking place around the world.
16. Many representatives praised the leadership shown by UNEP in the context of the Minamata Convention on Mercury. One representative, noting that a number of workshops about the Convention had been held, providing participating countries with information on every aspect thereof, urged that more such workshops be held in all the regions leading to the full operationalization of the Convention. Another representative expressed appreciation for the synergies process among the chemicals and waste conventions and called for further progress in that regard by enhancing cooperation and coordination between those conventions and the Minamata Convention.
17. One representative said that a number of accredited stakeholders had been unable to register for participation in the second annual meeting of the subcommittee and the 128th meeting of the Committee, which was in clear contradiction with the rules of procedure in respect of stakeholder participation. He strongly urged the secretariat to ensure that stakeholders were invited to meetings of the Committee.
18. The Chair noted that the issue of stakeholder participation in sessions of the Environment Assembly and meetings of its subsidiary bodies was in a transitional phase, but the Committee could decide to invite stakeholders to participate in its meetings. One representative said that the rules of procedure of the Environment Assembly, which were applicable to the Committee, were clear in granting the right to attend meetings as observers to stakeholders that met the criteria for accreditation to the Committee. More flexible accreditation criteria were being developed. Another representative said that a more pressing issue than stakeholder participation was to ensure that all member States were represented in Nairobi. Another representative insisted that stakeholder participation could not be discussed at the present meeting, not having been included in the agenda for the meeting. Moreover, any decision on the issue was the responsibility of the Environment Assembly. He stressed that stakeholder participation should not be allowed to dilute the intergovernmental nature of UNEP.
19. Responding to comments, the Executive Director said that his report was an informal document providing an overview of relevant activities rather than a comprehensive update. He confirmed that UNEP would endeavour to provide updates on the system-wide strategy on environment, the success of which was largely dependent on UNEP having the credibility to coordinate other organizations. He encouraged representatives of member States to advocate for environmental sustainability in meetings of the governing bodies of other United Nations entities.
20. The secretariat would indeed meet the deadlines for Umoja and would make every effort to provide representatives with more, but not excessive, information, including on the multilateral environmental agreements. The Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity had been invited to provide the Committee with a briefing on the outcomes of the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.
21. With regard to funding and leveraging resources, he said that a breakdown of donors was available from a presentation on the UNEP website, which showed that many countries were lagging behind the voluntary indicative scale of contributions. He encouraged representatives to back increased funding for the environment in their capitals. Funding for the regional offices was due to be taken up in discussions on the second half of the budget for the biennium in the coming weeks. Although the regional offices would certainly be strengthened, he urged representatives to voice their support for UNEP funding to their representatives in the Fifth Committee in New York to ensure that financial resources would be provided on a more regular basis.

**Agenda item 6**

**Follow-up to the high-level segment of the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly: sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda, including sustainable consumption and production**

1. The Chair drew attention to notes by the secretariat on the planned activities of the UNEP secretariat to implement the ministerial outcome of the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, which had been circulated to members prior to the meeting.
2. Introducing the item, the Executive Director said that UNEP had systematic follow-up and implementation plans for the outcomes of the first session. He drew attention to the Programme’s significant engagement in the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals and said that UNEP remained committed to demonstrating the importance of an integrated approach to the goals. He expressed concern about a perception of the prioritization of poverty in the goals and the disaggregation of the work of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, noting that a reduction in the number of goals might mean the loss of important aspects identified during the process led by the Open Working Group. He said that the outcomes of the high-level segment of the first session of the Environment Assembly, on the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda, including sustainable consumption and production, had been communicated to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development as well as to a stock-taking event held in September 2014 by the President of the General Assembly and a three-day general debate in the Second Committee of the General Assembly. He invited member States to provide guidance on the role of the United Nations Environment Assembly in respect of the High-level Political Forum, in particular to avoid duplication of effort.
3. Regarding the illegal trade in wildlife, the Executive Director said that he was pleased to see that the issue had recently permeated various arenas which had not previously judged it relevant to their agendas, but he was conscious that any relaxation of focus on the topic could be disastrous, given that wildlife was being decimated at alarming rates. The focus of UNEP work on the illegal trade was the strengthening of legal and regulatory systems in collaboration with partners such the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals and other stakeholders.
4. He noted that UNEP had agreed to provide support for the strengthening of national legislation, including to harmonize it with international standards, in various countries, addressing, for example, situations in which poaching was a crime in one country but merely an offence in a neighbouring country, which made it extremely difficult for national law enforcement agencies to work together. UNEP was also working to combat the demand for illegally sourced wildlife products through its Green Customs Initiative, and also by the use of goodwill ambassadors and partnership with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). He confirmed that the UNEP secretariat would continue to host the African Elephant Fund and was committed to supporting a conference on the illegal trade in wildlife to be held in Brazzaville in the first quarter of 2015, as well as follow-ups to the Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference, held in London in 2014, another similar meeting to be held in Botswana in 2015 and a planned conference in the United Republic of Tanzania.
5. In the ensuing discussion, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed satisfaction that the outcome document of the high-level segment of the first session of the Environment Assembly had sent a strong message on the post-2015 development agenda to the High‑level Political Forum. Another representative commended the ambitious post-2015 targets contained in the outcome document of the first session. Yet another stressed the importance of ensuring that the themes selected for the high-level segment of the second session of the Environment Assembly in May 2016 were policy-focused.
6. One representative pointed out that the notes by the secretariat used terminology and phrasing that were not contained in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and that had not been agreed upon by member States, in particular the phrase “eradicate poverty while staying within the planet’s safe operating space”. He said that the concept of “the planet’s safe operating space” was not scientifically well-founded, and he stressed that a term such as “the green economy” must not be allowed to overshadow the importance in the post-2015 development agenda of poverty eradication, economic development and social inclusion. Sustainable development must be viewed in all of its three dimensions: social, economic and environmental. His call to adhere to previously agreed language in documents of the secretariat was supported by another representative.
7. Two representatives, one of them speaking on behalf of a group of countries, stressed the importance of tackling the demand side of the illegal trade in wildlife. The latter also called for UNEP assistance to legal systems in African countries, where poachers often avoided conviction thanks to expensive and high-quality legal defence. He also drew attention to a lack of material resources, such as night-vision equipment, helicopters and trucks, to combat wildlife poaching in Africa and stressed that local communities living alongside wildlife must be given incentives to support wildlife protection. Another representative concurred, saying that it was important to strengthen support for local communities in which the illegal wildlife trade contributed significantly to the local economy by finding alternative sources of income for the households involved. He also called for actions to combat the illegal trade in forest products (timber and charcoal) to match the strong action against the illegal wildlife trade.
8. Two representatives, each speaking on behalf of a group of countries, asked UNEP to help harmonize the work of disparate initiatives and upcoming international conferences focused on illegal trade in wildlife. One of them praised Environment Assembly resolution 1/3 , in which the Assembly had called on the General Assembly to consider illegal wildlife trade at its sixty-ninth session, and also looked forward to the submission to the General Assembly of a draft resolution on the issue, prepared by the Group of Friends on Poaching and Illicit Wildlife Trafficking, which had been established at United Nations Headquarters in 2013 by Germany and Gabon. He called on the UNEP secretariat to provide more information on a number of themes connected with the illegal wildlife trade, namely, the environmental impact of wildlife trafficking; the implementation of the commitments contained in resolution 1/3; cooperation between UNEP and the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime; and the umbrella project on environmental crime, which was being developed under the environmental governance subprogramme of UNEP.
9. One representative said that efforts by UNEP to combat illegal trade in wildlife must not stray into the realm of enforcement, diluting or duplicating other high-level political action, but must be focused on knowledge, analysis and communication. Another representative, however, commended the involvement of UNEP in the Container Control Programme being implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Customs Organization and other bodies, which had been extended to countries in East Africa (Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania). He highlighted the significance of the convening power of UNEP in addressing wildlife issues.
10. Responding to comments, the Executive Director pointed out that the terminology and phrasing used in the documents before representatives departed from that used in the Rio+20 outcome document because the report was citing contributions made by member States to the Rio+20 debate rather than adhering to the text of its outcome. He expressed his appreciation for comments on the role of UNEP in the ongoing work on the sustainable development goals, stressing that the dynamics would change as the Open Working Group moved the process forward towards the summit planned by the Secretary-General in September 2015.
11. As regards the remarks on action by UNEP to combat the illegal trade in wildlife, the Executive Director questioned whether it was the place of UNEP to develop community-based responses connected with livelihoods. Noting that combating the illegal trade in wildlife was a complex, multi-tiered and multisectoral issue, he said that he disagreed to some extent with the suggestion that UNEP should stay out of enforcement issues, since UNEP was already working successfully with, for example, the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime and also in various initiatives with INTERPOL. He expressed scepticism about the value of some conferences and events that were being organized as national or multinational initiatives to discuss action against the illegal trade in wildlife, noting that the millions of dollars spent on convening such events might be better spent in providing resources for the African Elephant Fund, which currently amounted to less than $1 million. He noted that since the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly in June 2014, an estimated further 50 container loads of illegal ivory had been shipped from Africa; far greater resources were required in the front line of the battle against the illegal wildlife trade.

**Agenda item 7**

**Road map to the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly**

1. The Chair noted that the recommendations of the Chair on the road map to the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly and on the preparation of the medium-term strategy for 2018–2021 and the programme of work and budget for the biennium 2018–2019 had been circulated to members. The recommendations were based on the discussions at the second annual meeting of the subcommittee and the meeting of the Bureau of the Committee. He invited members to suggest possible improvements to the recommendations.
2. In ensuing discussion, several representatives commended the Chair for providing the recommendations, which they viewed as a part of a process by which the Committee of Permanent Representatives would actively participate in preparations for the second session. One representative requested the inclusion of an additional paragraph in the recommendations stating that the secretariat’s action plan for the implementation of the decisions and resolutions of the Environment Assembly, currently being developed as an internal document of the secretariat, would be made available to the Committee for its consideration. With regard to the road map on the medium-term strategy, he said that the recommendations should contain a commitment by the secretariat to share a first draft of the medium-term strategy by January 2015 and a final draft by October 2015.
3. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, encouraged United Nations system-wide partnership in the implementation of the decisions and resolutions of the Environment Assembly and welcomed UNEP cooperation with FAO and WHO.
4. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that it would be important to ensure that the open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, to be held in early 2016, made good preparations for the second session of the Environment Assembly and that the secretariat submitted the pre‑session documents in good time. Another representative said that the recommendations could usefully go into more detail concerning the process for the drafting of the Assembly’s resolutions and decisions, and also concerning the selection and choice of themes of the high-level segment.
5. One representative emphasized that the open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives must not be considered to be a new governing body of UNEP, but merely the main locus for preparing for the sessions of the Environment Assembly, and he questioned some of the wording used in the Chair’s recommendations. His points were strongly supported by another representative.
6. The Committee agreed that the discussion of the issue of stakeholder representation would be postponed until the 129th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives. Several representatives sought clarification on the process for finalizing the draft stakeholder engagement policy and amending the rules of procedure to enable stakeholder participation in meetings of the Committee.
7. The Deputy Executive Director said that the secretariat was committed to sharing with the Committee its action plans for the implementation the resolutions of the Environment Assembly at its first session, and that commitment could be included in the Chair’s recommendations.
8. There was some discussion about the process for amending the Chair’s recommendations and approving the Chair’s report on the second annual meeting of the subcommittee. One representative said that the recommendations could be endorsed by the Committee at its 129th meeting once they had been amended to reflect comments made at the present meeting and submitted in writing. The report on the second annual meeting of the subcommittee could not be endorsed by the Committee of Permanent Representatives since it was entirely the responsibility of the Chair.
9. The Chair invited representatives to submit their suggestions for amendments to the recommendations in writing by 10 November 2014.

**Agenda item 8**

**Report of the subcommittee**

1. Given the time constraints at the meeting, the Committee agreed that members would submit comments in writing to the secretariat on the report of the subcommittee by 10 November 2014.

**Agenda item 9**

**Other matters**

1. No other matters were discussed.

**Agenda item 10**

**Closure of the meeting**

1. The Chair declared the meeting closed at 1.15 p.m. on Friday, 31 October 2014.

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Minutes of the 129th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme, held on 13 January 2015

Agenda item 1

**Opening of the meeting**

1. The meeting was opened at 9.35 a.m. on Tuesday, 13 January 2015, by Mr. Sunu Soemarno, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP.
2. The meeting was attended by 94 participants from 62 members of the Committee and one observer mission, and 10 participants from 6 international non-governmental organizations.
3. The Chair welcomed the following new Committee members: Mr. Virgilio Marques Faria, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Angola; Mr. John Matthew Feakes, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of Australia; Mr. Vincent O’Neill, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, and Mr. Garvan McCann, Deputy Head of Mission of Ireland; and Mr. Abdulmonem Annan, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.
4. He bade farewell to the following members who had recently departed the Nairobi duty station, thanking them for their contribution to the work of the Committee: Mr. Ambrosio Lukoki, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Angola; Mr. Geoff Tooth, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of Australia; and Mr. Ghorm Said Malhan, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia.
5. The Chair welcomed the guest of honour Mr. Sameh Shoukry, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, who began his address by congratulating the secretariat and the Committee for the success of the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, held in Nairobi in June 2014.
6. Mr. Shoukry highlighted the two major milestones on the environmental calendar to be tackled in 2015, namely, crafting a global post-2015 development agenda and reaching consensus on a new legally binding agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. He emphasized the need in those endeavours to build on previous efforts and lessons learned, to focus on reaching agreements that were supported by clear means of implementation and to seek country-driven, transparent processes that would avoid rewriting or reinterpreting any convention or internationally agreed principles and provisions.
7. He outlined the socioeconomic consequences of drought over the past four decades, including the loss of biodiversity and the increase in internal and cross-boundary migration, and called on member States to coordinate efforts for developing mechanisms that would ensure the transfer of environmental technologies from developed to developing countries and to build institutional capacity. He also stressed the importance of collectively finding a way to include desertification in sustainable development financing in the context of the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).
8. He concluded by underlining the ongoing support of Egypt to the strengthening of UNEP and reiterated his country’s commitment to remaining engaged with all parties in the collective efforts to achieve sustainable development and poverty eradication around the world.

Agenda item 2

Adoption of the agenda

1. The agenda was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/CPR/129/1).

Agenda item 3

Adoption of the minutes of the 128th meeting of the Committee, held on 31 October 2014

1. The Committee adopted the minutes of the 128th meeting on the basis of the draft minutes (UNEP/CPR/129/2), as orally amended.

Agenda item 4

Report by the Executive Director on the activities of the secretariat in the last quarter of 2014

1. Introducing the item, the Executive Director drew attention to his written report entitled “Executive Director’s update to the Committee of Permanent Representatives”, summarizing activities since the previous meeting of the Committee held on 31 October 2014. Highlighting the busy calendar for the period, he said that an initial action plan for the implementation of the resolutions and decisions adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its first session had been circulated to the Committee for information. The programme performance report, which would be distributed in the coming weeks, would bear testament to the dynamic and intense year of UNEP work in 2014.
2. He highlighted a number of meetings that had been held. He urged all representatives to give due consideration to General Assembly resolution 69/223 on the report of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme, which set out important procedures including in terms of reporting by the Environment Assembly to the General Assembly. A number of significant decisions had been adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals at its eleventh meeting, including a zero nominal growth budget for the next triennium. The tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Twenty-Sixth Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer had been held in Paris in November 2014. He paid tribute to the Executive Secretary and the Ozone Secretariat for enabling parties to make progress on the question of addressing hydrofluorocarbons as part of the broader challenge of climate change, and he commended the record level of replenishment of the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol at some $507 million. The outcome of the first meeting of the International Environment Forum for Basin Organizations, held in Nairobi in November 2014 and co-hosted by UNEP, had highlighted the importance of regular meetings of the Forum and of considering the establishment of similar subregional forums, in particular to address the issue of transboundary management of basins.
3. A breakthrough had been elusive at the twentieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, held in Lima from 1 to 14 December 2014, but the outcome had been sufficient. In order to achieve agreement at the twenty-first session, to be held in Paris in 2015, two fundamental issues needed to be addressed, namely finance and the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, the latter of which should be recognized by political leaders worldwide as requiring dynamic and urgent attention. In terms of financing, there was a general sense among delegations that financial resources were insufficient to begin to address the magnitude of mitigation and adaptation measures required. Disentangling the commitments made in Copenhagen in 2009, at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties, and their financial means of implementation, would be key to moving forward. He stressed the need to recognize the enormous investments related to climate change being made by most countries at the national level and to pay attention to the potential for domestic financial and capital markets to engage in financing the transition to a low-carbon economy. While domestic climate action had been in its nascent stages at the time of the fifteenth session, virtually all countries were now taking action in response to climate change in terms of assessment, adaptation and mitigation. The Secretary-General of the United Nations had prioritized climate change alongside the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals as the focus of his work in 2015 and was calling on the entire United Nations system to work on those matters. He drew attention to efforts under the Green Climate Fund and Financing for Development and said that UNEP was aiming to shift the focus from the uncertainty, risks, threats and disasters related to climate change to risk management and opportunities. The renewable energy revolution that had been unfolding over the previous decade had in large part been propelled by increasing climate change awareness.
4. UNEP continued to play an increasingly important role in making available the latest scientific information for decision-making. The *Emissions Gap Report 2014*, building on the most recent work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, suggested that the global economy would have to reach a point of zero net carbon dioxide emissions in the second half of the century in order to limit global warming to 2 degrees Celsius, requiring a fundamental shift in the provision of energy, infrastructure and technology for every country. The findings of the *Adaptation Gap Report 2014* suggested that the world was completely unprepared for the challenge of adaptation, especially developing and emerging economy countries that were on the frontline of climate change. In Africa, for example, countries would have to divert resources away from investment in development simply to maintain the status quo. Greater attention needed to be paid to climate-proofing investments and leveraging resources at the point of infrastructure design, among other things.
5. He reported that the Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short-lived Climate Pollutants now had over 100 members and had received around $60 million in pledges, while the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD Programme) provided support to some 60 countries with pledges totalling around $75 million. The One Gigaton Coalition, launched by the Government of Norway and UNEP at the climate talks in Lima, was intended to demonstrate the benefits of measures implemented by countries to achieve energy efficiency. The Climate Technology Centre and Network, hosted by UNEP, had drawn enormous interest from around the world, stimulating technology cooperation and enhancing climate technology development and transfer. A UNEP mission was travelling to Seoul to take part in a planning meeting of the Green Climate Fund, which had been capitalized at over $10 billion; while insufficient, that figure represented a huge leap in the right direction from the zero balance of two years earlier. UNEP had been actively involved in the development of the synthesis report by the Secretary-General entitled *The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet*, which was intended to synthesize discussions on the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals, articulating a vision for the future. The intense calendar of relevant upcoming meetings was critical to maintaining the substance and cohesion of the sustainable development goals and ensuring that they were underpinned by science and that the capacity to monitor their implementation was assured.
6. UNEP had commissioned a report entitled “Inquiry into the design of a sustainable financial system: policy innovations for a green economy” to consider how capital and financial markets could be incentivized for green economy investment. Countries were increasingly looking to fiscal systems as a key tool for accelerating investment in sustainable development.
7. Stressing that partnership remained fundamental to the implementation of the UNEP programme of work, he highlighted the signing of two new memorandums of understanding, one with the League of Arab States and the other with the Organization of American States. He provided an overview of the winners of the Champions of the Earth Award for 2014 and recent managerial appointments in UNEP. Recruitment was under way for the positions of head of the UNEP New York Office at the level of Assistant-Secretary-General and the Director of Operations and Corporate Services; he appealed for support from member States in identifying suitable candidates for the positions. He highlighted the appointment of Mr. Janez Potočnik as co-Chair of the International Resources Panel following the retirement of Mr. Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker.
8. UNEP continued to invest heavily in the enterprise resource planning project, Umoja. The coming months until its launch in June 2015 would be challenging in terms of staff training and the introduction of new procedures.
9. Turning to the financial situation, he said that provisional figures indicated that in 2014 the Environment Fund had achieved a new high of $94 million, while extrabudgetary resources totalled $150 million and GEF revenue over $100 million. The current portfolio was worth around $333 million and the implementation rate for 2014 was $140 million. Noting that the financial evolution of UNEP was on the right track, he highlighted that Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden had all increased their contributions to the Environment Fund by 15–40 per cent, with Norway providing unrestricted financing of the programme of work at the highest level. Discussions were under way with China on the extension of a one-off contribution of $6 million to the programme of work. He drew attention to contributions by Iraq, Italy, Kazakhstan, Spain and the Gulf Cooperation Council and encouraged member States that were not currently contributing to do so in order to meet the implementation of the ambitious programme of work.
10. In closing, he urged member States to ratify the Minamata Convention on Mercury to ensure its early entry into force. Some 128 countries had become signatories with 9 having ratified the Convention; 50 ratifications were required prior to its entry into force.
11. In the ensuing discussion, many representatives thanked the Executive Director for his extensive and interesting written report and oral statement. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, called for greater emphasis in the Executive Director’s report on the results of activities in line with the request made by the governing body for a shift in emphasis from the delivery of outputs to the delivery of results. Another representative concurred, requesting that the Executive Director’s written report contain clear reference to the results framework, linking UNEP activities with overall goals and ambitions. Another representative said that given the multitude of activities, it was important that countries and United Nations entities work in a coordinated manner.
12. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that 2015 would be marked by the adoption of a new climate change agreement and a post-2015 development agenda, both of which would require a great deal of effort by UNEP. Another representative, also speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that 2015 would require a tremendous effort of coordination and goodwill in order for agreements to be reached, including on climate change, financing for development and the sustainable development goals, to the satisfaction of all concerned. He urged the secretariat to ensure that the Committee was provided with the latest information on such matters. Common issues of critical importance were resources for implementation, finance, technology transfer and capacity-building; given the magnitude of the existing environmental challenges, he urged all countries to step up their efforts in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.
13. One representative welcomed the contribution by UNEP to achieving elements of a draft text of a climate change agreement at the twentieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change to pave the way for a legally binding agreement to be agreed upon at the twenty-first session to be held in Paris in 2015. He called for the participation of all parties to the Framework Convention in elaborating the agreement and in cutting emissions of greenhouse gases. He recognized the importance of adequate financial support for the implementation of post-2012 commitments for developing countries and of the efficient use of available resources. A number of representatives stressed the importance in terms of a climate agreement of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capacity.
14. Two representatives, both speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the reference in the Secretary-General’s synthesis report to the United Nations Environment Assembly and one expressed satisfaction at the acknowledgement of its role as a forum to support and facilitate the review of the implementation of the environmental dimension of the post-2015 agenda. One expressed satisfaction at the reference to specific UNEP work in a number of areas, including financing sustainable development. He asked the secretariat to provide a comprehensive briefing on UNEP work on financing sustainable development and how it fitted into the landscape of meetings and events.
15. One representative said that policy dialogue was a key feature of meetings, conferences and workshops through which UNEP delivered results and should therefore be enhanced. He encouraged UNEP to continue to work in partnership with institutions, bodies, research networks and other United Nations entities.
16. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, looked forward to the introduction of Umoja for its potential to increase accountability and transparency and expressed satisfaction at the introduction of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS). He said that the implementation of IPSAS and Umoja would be major achievements for the United Nations Office at Nairobi and were likely to drive improvements in UNEP, enabling a better delivery of the medium‑term strategy and programme of work. Another representative also welcomed progress on IPSAS and Umoja and expressed satisfaction that UNEP had developed a clear road map towards the Medium-term strategy for 2018–2021 and programme of work and budget 2018–2019 on the basis of lessons learned. The road map was particularly helpful in enabling member States to identify the different phases of development of the medium-term strategy and programme of work. He welcomed the fact that initial work was being undertaken on the budget prior to the development of the medium-term strategy and programme of work for 2018–2019, stressing the importance of taking budget considerations into account when programme planning. It was best practice, he said, to establish budget projection estimates before setting a corresponding medium-term strategy and programme of work. Budget projection estimates should be based on realistic funding projections and the need to stabilize UNEP funding. He looked forward to the publication of the annual performance report 2014 to be based on expected accomplishments for the reporting period, highlighting the specific role of UNEP in the activities included in the report and setting out actual income and expenditure against expected income and expenditure for each subprogramme from each of the funding streams.
17. A number of representatives thanked the secretariat for providing a plan for the implementation of the resolutions and decisions adopted by the Environment Assembly at its first session. Two representatives expressed regret regarding the lack therein of timelines for implementation, especially, said one, with regard to Environment Assembly resolutions 1/5 on chemicals and waste and 1/7 on strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme in promoting air quality. One representative asked that regular updates be provided to member States and other stakeholders on progress made in implementation. He suggested that, as an instrument for securing adequate resources, the plan should indicate the implementation possible within existing resources – and mainly those in the Environment Fund – and he requested that the Committee be kept abreast of the evolving financial situation in order that it might suggest prioritization of activities for implementation if necessary..
18. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, highlighted the post-session editorial amendment of Environment Assembly resolution 1/5, as a result of which the annex to the decision, entitled “Strengthening the sound management of chemicals and waste in the long term”, had been removed. He stressed the need for a clear linkage between the document and the resolution and requested consultation with the secretariat in that regard.
19. Several representatives emphasized the importance of the first meeting of the International Environment Forum for Basin Organizations, which had allowed participants to identify regional issues and exchange experiences. It was to be hoped, said one, that similar meetings could be convened at the regional level in order to improve the management of basin organizations and that UNEP regional offices would be involved in such meetings. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that important contributions to discussions on sustainable freshwater governance had been made at the first meeting of the Forum. Welcoming UNEP work on water quality guidelines, he expressed the hope that UNEP would continue to give the matter the attention it deserved in line with its mandate and in synergy with other entities in the framework of UN-Water. Two representatives welcomed the offer by Egypt to host the second meeting of the Forum.
20. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the strengthening of the UNEP New York office and looked forward to the position of head of that office being filled. The office would play an important role in linking the decisions of the Environment Assembly with the work of the General Assembly and other United Nations entities. He said that the implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development was a work in progress and no effort should be spared by world leaders in that regard. The mandate for the consolidation of UNEP headquarter functions was clear and further effort was required in that regard. Commending the progress made with respect to the West African subregional office, he said that the strengthening of regional offices was key to helping countries in the development and implementation of national environmental policies; progress in the establishment of the remaining subregional offices was crucial. He suggested that each subregional office should have its own programme of work and report on the implementation thereof, and he sought clarification regarding the status of the liaison office in South Africa. He expressed grave concern that of the six UNEP subprogramme coordinators appointed to date, not only was none from the African region but all hailed from the same region.
21. Two representatives welcomed the Declaration of Havana on the occasion of the fifth summit of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), held in Cuba on 8 December 2014.
22. One representative welcomed UNEP engagement in combating the illegal wildlife trade, stressing the need for comprehensive, joint action. He drew attention to important meetings in that regard, including in Botswana in March 2015 to review progress on actions agreed on at the London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade in 2014. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that he was gratified by the attention accorded by the Environment Assembly at its first session to the illegal trade in wildlife, following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 68/193 on strengthening the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity, and he requested that the secretariat provide information to members on the latest plans and developments with regard to the illegal trade. Highlighting the importance of the link between environment and health, he also requested information on the road map on alternatives to DDT as presented to the expert group on DDT of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants Africa in Geneva in November 2014.
23. One representative commended countries that had provided funding to support UNEP, including those that had provided non-earmarked funding and new donors. He sought clarification regarding a note by the secretariat to the Committee of Permanent Representatives containing an update on budget preparations for the programme of work 2016–2017**,** which seemed to indicate that staff costs were being transferred from the Environment Fund to the regular budget allocation and that that allocation had been increased to close to $50 million. He asked whether the Environment Assembly at its first session had endorsed such an increase in the regular budget allocation and he cautioned that his Government would not be able to support, endorse or join consensus on a regular budget allocation of over $35 million given that it had anticipated zero growth in that regard. He stressed that a $50 million regular budget allocation for UNEP represented a 150 per cent increase compared with the previous biennium and suggested that, with so many competing global priorities across the United Nations system, it would be pragmatic to review UNEP progress in making efficient and effective use of the current allocation prior to endorsing such an increase.
24. One representative praised the *Emissions Gap Report* series as providing invaluable, trusted, policy‑relevant and evidence-based information to inform discussions on climate change. He requested that the gap analysis be extended to intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs), including an analysis of mitigation actions delivered by such contributions and their consistency with the outcomes for different temperate outcomes, which could encourage the ambition of member States. He said that he would be keen to see by May or June 2015 a gap report containing information on the impact of intended nationally determined contributions on the temperature goal of 2 degrees Celsius and by mid‑November an additional section on the gap post-2020 on all contributions submitted.
25. Issues raised by individual representatives included the challenges posed by poor air quality, both indoor and outdoor, and the need for greater attention to be paid to the matter, including full implementation of resolution 1/7 on strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme in promoting air quality, and the importance of UNEP work in bridging the gap between science and policy, including in the context of the sixth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6) report. In that regard, one representative stressed the need for broad ownership and legitimacy of the GEO-6 report and looked forward to the nomination of experts for the report assessments.
26. One representative commended progress made with regard to the Climate and Clean Air Coalition and the Minamata Convention. Another representative expressed the hope that the Minamata Convention ratification instruments would be deposited without delay. Two representatives expressed satisfaction with progress made on marine plastic debris, in particular, said one, in the implementation of resolution 1/6 on marine plastic debris and microplastics and with the recognition of a young Dutch engineer, Mr. Boyan Slat, for his ingenious solar and sea‑powered system to transport marine plastics to shore. One representative commended the programmes of the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns, while another welcomed UNEP leadership of the One Gigaton Coalition, which was based on cooperation among stakeholders including civil society.
27. A number of representatives described activities and initiatives in their countries and regions. One representative drew attention to activities in Latin America and the Caribbean to protect forests and reiterated a request made to the Executive Director to hold a regular forum on forests in the region. Another representative provided an overview of the priority accorded to the creation of green energy for development in his country and an initiative to cover irrigation canals with solar panels which, in addition to generating power, helped in reducing evaporation and keeping the panels cool. One representative said that, as a member of the polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) Basel Action Network, she was pleased to see the progress made towards the elimination of PCBs, and that she would like to share their experience and progress made in this regard.
28. One representative asked the secretariat to provide an unbiased summary of the outcome of the twentieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, in particular with regard to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and finance for adaptation and mitigation.
29. Responding to comments, the Executive Director said that his report to the Committee at its regular meetings had not been intended to provide comprehensive information such as that contained in the annual progress performance report, which was firmly results-based. The written report was a relatively new feature of his briefing to the Committee, containing an update on UNEP activities with highlights and hyperlinks to further information. He cautioned against adding to the burden of reporting and stressed the need to recognize the different functions of the various reports available. In terms of the implementation plan for resolutions and decisions of the Environment Assembly, he said that a commitment to timelines could only be made once resources had been secured.
30. He expressed satisfaction at the positive response to the first meeting of the International Forum on Basin Organizations and noted that the secretariat would consider the convening of similar regional forums. He thanked Egypt for its offer to host the second meeting of the Forum. He undertook to follow up on the possibility of convening regional basin organization forums and to provide a summary of the outcomes of the twentieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change and their implications for the calendar of climate-related events in 2015.
31. With regard to the regular budget allocation to UNEP, he said that the figure of $49 million had been included in the budget considered by the Environment Assembly at its first session; it was, however, subject to decision-making by the General Assembly. He undertook to discuss the matter further in a bilateral meeting with the representative who had raised the issue. While an increase of 150 per cent sounded dramatic, the Programme had been operating with a regular budget allocation of around $7 million per annum.
32. With regard to recruitment issues, he stated that, geographical representation across the professional levels from P-4 to D-2 within UNEP was good. He would undertake, however, to consider the matter further and to ensure that each region was well represented among UNEP staff and he said that he would provide a briefing to the Committee on sustainable development financing. UNEP continued to work on the issue of the illegal wildlife trade and was currently identifying, in collaboration with the secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, a rapid intervention programme to help countries to conform with their international commitments by updating their national legislation. Preparations were under way for the forthcoming meeting of the Policy Committee of the Secretary-General at which the illegal wildlife trade would be addressed.
33. There was a lack of consensus with regard to DDT; some believed that it was essential owing to its effectiveness in combating malaria despite the risks it posed, while others felt that it should be phased out given the severity of the risks and that viable alternatives did exist. UNEP work with the scientific community focused on whether alternatives were available, how to test them and how to restrict and monitor the use of DDT by means of existing instruments. Given that the serious human health impacts of DDT had been known for many years, the lack of available alternatives highlighted a failure to invest in such alternatives.
34. He highlighted two areas in the UNEP portfolio at risk of underfunding: first, the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns, second, the chemicals special programme. He noted that the ambitious goal on chemicals was unlikely to be met at current levels of implementation. Noting that UNEP was currently “Umoja-enabled”, he said that implementation of Umoja would begin on 1 June 2015. He noted that UNEP would be represented at the conference on illegal wildlife trade to be held in Kasane, Botswana, in March 2015 and he congratulated Romania for being the tenth country to ratify the Minamata Convention. He looked forward to strengthening the ability of UNEP to work in the Caribbean and expressed his satisfaction that UNEP was finalizing an agreement for a subregional office in that region, which would complete the rapid rollout of subregional offices committed to under the budget and programme of work for the current biennium. In closing, he expressed his deep appreciation to the UNEP staff, which had performed extremely well in 2014 despite significant changes to the senior management team.

Agenda item 5

Recommendations by the Chair of the Committee from the second annual subcommittee meeting held from 27 to 31 October on the road maps to the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the medium-term strategy (2018–2021) and the programme of work and budget (2018–2019)

1. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to his recommendations on the review of the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly and road map to the second session and lessons learned and road map towards the medium-term strategy for 2018–2021 and the programme of work and budget for the biennium 2018–2019. The recommendations were aimed at capturing the main points and areas of convergence that emerged during the second meeting of the annual subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.
2. In the ensuing discussion, many representatives thanked the Chair for the recommendations and said that they provided a useful basis for further discussion by the Committee. Speaking on behalf of a group of countries, one representative said that the secretariat should provide briefings to ensure the full engagement of the Committee in the development processes of the medium-term strategy and programme of work and budget.
3. Several representatives welcomed the recommendation by the Chair to reflect on the lessons learned and the findings of the evaluation of the previous and current medium-term strategy and programme of work and to make reference to corporate strategies, such as Umoja and IPSAS, in the development of the medium-term strategy for 2018–2021 and the programme of work and budget for the biennium 2018–2019. They also supported the proposal by the secretariat that the first draft of the medium-term strategy should be shared with the Committee by January 2015 and the final draft by October 2015.
4. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, emphasized the importance of developing a medium-term strategy and a programme of work that were based on clear priorities and would serve to reinforce the environmental dimension of sustainable development, while taking into account major known threats and foreseeable emerging issues. He also stressed the need for both documents to consider the comparative advantages of UNEP, to explore the possibilities for cooperation with other bodies in the United Nations system and to identify the tasks that were no longer relevant.
5. Concerning the recommendation to take into account the flexibility required to incorporate new issues that may emerge during the period leading up to 2021, one representative called for such flexibility to be reinforced and to go beyond simply leaving room for emerging issues. He gave three reasons for stressing the importance of ensuring flexibility, namely, the mismatch between the current United Nations Environment Assembly cycle and the United Nations financial planning cycle, the recent views expressed by the secretariat of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions as contained in the information note by the UNEP secretariat to the Committee of Permanent Representatives of 6 January 2015 and the need to consider the post-2015 development agenda, which would not be agreed until September 2015.
6. Two representatives, one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, called for effective management of the preparatory process for the second session of the Environment Assembly, including the early identification of the main theme or themes and the preparation of information notes for the high-level segment. One representative also emphasized the importance of ensuring that the open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives was in a position to provide effective and valuable contributions to the second session of the Environment Assembly.
7. With regard to the participation of developing countries, in particular least developed countries and small island developing States, in the sessions of the Environment Assembly and meetings of the open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, urged that secure, stable and adequate resources be identified to support their participation, in accordance with Environment Assembly resolution 1/15.
8. In terms of stakeholder participation, two representatives said that they agreed with the recommendation to hold informal consultations on outstanding issues in preparation for the second meeting of the open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives. One representative suggested establishing small working groups for more effective discussions.
9. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, drew attention to paragraph 2 of Environment Assembly resolution 1/14, in which it called for a review of the functions of UNEP staffing and for its results to be made publicly available by April 2015. He expressed concern at suggestions that the results would be formally provided to Environment Assembly members in 2016, although a draft was to be presented to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in early 2015. He said that member States should receive the draft as soon as possible.
10. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, emphasized the need to stabilize the funding level of UNEP following post-Rio+20 budget increases in order to establish realistic budget projections before setting a corresponding programme of work and budget for 2018–2019 and to ensure that the budget adopted by the Environment Assembly was based on solid estimations and could be fully implemented with a view to raising more resources and attracting donors. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the budget should be based on mandates and agreed that sufficient resources should be raised to ensure success in the implementation of the programme of work.
11. Regarding the budget preparations for the programme of work for the biennium 2016–2017, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the trend for progressively channelling administrative costs, such as the servicing of meetings of the governing bodies, from the Environment Fund to the regular budget allocation. He stressed the need to revisit the calendar of the United Nations Environment Assembly with a view to ensuring greater harmony with the budget cycle of the United Nations Secretariat and the calendars of critical bodies, such as the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. He expressed support for the proposed budget of $49.71 million from the United Nations regular budget and the $2 million from the development account, and urged that paragraph 88 of the outcome document of Rio+20, “The future we want”, be taken into account in the preparation of the programme of work and budget.
12. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, urged that efforts be stepped up to enhance the synergy between UNEP, the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment and other regional groups in line with the drive to involve regional ministerial fora in the work of the Environment Assembly. Another representative asked whether incorporating regional perspectives to strengthen regional and national delivery would have any budgetary implications. He said that his country would be supportive of making use of existing meetings and technology with a view to avoiding unnecessary costs associated with travel to meetings.
13. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, suggested that the regional offices draw on the results of the regional consultations for the GEO-6 report in preparing the regional priorities for the medium-term strategy. He proposed that the secretariat meet with the Committee to discuss regional and global priorities once the regional conferences had taken place in the context of GEO-6.
14. Several representatives endorsed the proposed dates of the third annual meeting of the subcommittee in October 2015 and the second meeting of the open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives in February 2016. One representative asked that future meetings of the open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives be held in January in order to avoid a conflict with the dates of the traditional Chinese New Year festival.
15. Responding to comments, the Executive Director concurred on the need for a certain degree of flexibility to incorporate new issues in the medium-term strategy and the programme of work. He said that a results-based programme of work was being developed on emerging issues. He also noted that UNEP had tools within its budget, such as the Executive Director’s reserve, to cover expenses that had not been anticipated.
16. He welcomed the preparation of the medium-term strategy for 2018–2021 and the programme of work and budget for the biennium 2018–2019 as an opportunity to identify issues that remained at the core of UNEP work and those for which it played a lesser role. He highlighted the role of UNEP in catalysing action that could later become independent.
17. He said that the resources of the Environment Fund, as well as the contributions of a number of countries, had enabled the participation of representatives of developing countries, in particular least developed countries and small island developing States, and other stakeholders in important meetings. He stressed the importance in future budget cycles of freeing up those resources for implementation of the programme of work.
18. Responding to concerns regarding the budget, he urged representatives to take into account that UNEP was a small Programme that had taken on increasingly significant mandates over the years with a concomitant growth of its programme of work and budget. He encouraged representatives to focus on identifying criteria that would allow the institution to expand the activities it offered and preventing an overly bureaucratic budgeting process.
19. He agreed that the budget needed to be based on mandates. Responding to concerns regarding the budgetary implications of incorporating regional perspectives in strengthening regional and national delivery, he said that there would be no associated costs. The item referred to ensuring that regional perspectives were sought at meetings of regional policy forums, such as the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment.
20. Regarding the issue of stakeholder engagement, he noted that the President of the Environment Assembly had initiated an informal process to resolve the current divergence of opinion and enable an agreement to be reached. The President of the Environment Assembly would undertake consultations in the coming weeks and would draw up a proposal for a way forward by the latter half of 2015 in preparation for the second meeting of the open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives and the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.
21. He said that the secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly, was keen to work toward early identification of a theme or themes for the high-level segment of the second session of the Environment Assembly.
22. The Committee endorsed the recommendations of the Chair on the review of the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly and road map to the second session and lessons learned and road map towards the medium-term strategy for 2018–2021 and the programme of work and budget for the biennium 2018–2019.

Agenda item 6

Other matters

1. No other matters were discussed.

Agenda item 7

Closure of the meeting

1. The meeting was declared closed at 12.45 p.m. on Tuesday, 13 January 2015.

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Minutes of the 130th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme, held on 31 March 2015

Agenda item 1

Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

1. The meeting was opened at 9.45 a.m. on Tuesday, 31 March 2015, by Mr. Sunu Soemarno, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP.
2. The meeting was attended by 106 participants representing 66 members and 1 observer mission, as well as 8 participants from relevant international non-governmental organizations and international organizations.
3. The Chair welcomed the participation at the current meeting of the members of the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP, stating that the Bureau had met in Nairobi to discuss preparations for the second session of the Environment Assembly, to be held in May 2016.
4. Ms. Oyun Sanjaasuren, President of the Environment Assembly, expressed appreciation on behalf of the Bureau of the Assembly for the opportunity to attend the current meeting. She said that Bureau members had worked to bring the outcome of the first session of the Environment Assembly to other forums and to make preparations for the second session. The Bureau had met in Nairobi on 30 March 2015 with members of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and the chairs of Nairobi-based regional groups to exchange views on the political objectives of and expectations for the second session, and to brainstorm on a possible theme, or a maximum of two themes, for the high-level segment of the session. Bilateral informal consultations had also been held with a number of members of the Committee to discuss a possible way forward on outstanding issues regarding the stakeholder engagement policy. The Bureau would resume its discussions after the closure of the current meeting.
5. Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP, welcomed participants and said that the discussions held by Bureau the previous day had been extremely encouraging.
6. The Chair welcomed the following new members of the Committee: Mr. Pavel Řezáč, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic; Ms. Majaana Lina Sall, Acting Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the European Union; Mr. Hanan Goder, Chargé d’Affaires and Permanent Representative of Israel; Mr. Quasai Rahed Alfarhan, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Kuwait; Mr. Abdoul Wahab Haidara, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Senegal; Ms. Koleka Anita Mqulwana, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of South Africa; Mr. Abdulmonem Annan, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, based in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania; and Ms. Asma Mubarak Amber, Deputy Permanent Representative of Yemen.
7. He bade farewell to the following departing members, thanking them for their contribution to the work of the Committee: Mr. Lodewijk Briët, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the European Union; Mr. Sándor Kocsis, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Hungary; Mr. Shalom Charles Cohen, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Israel; Mr. Momar Gueye, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Senegal; Mr. Jeffrey Cernyar, Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States of America; and Mr. Munir Ahmed Mohammed Ghalieb, Deputy Permanent Representative of Yemen.
8. The agenda was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/CRP/130/1).

Agenda item 2

Adoption of the minutes of the 129th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, held on 13 January 2015

1. The Committee adopted the minutes of its 129th meeting on the basis of the draft minutes of the meeting (UNEP/CPR/130/2).

Agenda item 3

Report by the Executive Director to the Committee of Permanent Representatives

1. Introducing the item, the Executive Director drew attention to his written report, entitled “Executive Director’s update to the Committee of Permanent Representatives,” which, he said, included highlights of UNEP activities undertaken since the 129th meeting of the Committee, but not those carried out after the release of the report, on which he would brief the Committee orally. He highlighted activities associated with four major events that he said made 2015 the year of multilateralism and sustainable development: the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Sendai, Japan, from 14 to 18 March 2015; the third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Addis Ababa in July 2015; the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, to be held in New York in September 2015; and the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris in December 2015.
2. The decisions adopted at the above-mentioned meetings would have significant implications for the United Nations as a whole as member States turned their attention to implementing them in 2016, and UNEP senior management had discussed the possible need to review the UNEP programme of work and medium-term strategy to ensure they were aligned with priorities emerging from those decisions.
3. The Sendai conference had been a success and, thanks to UNEP efforts, the environmental dimension of disaster risk reduction, including the role of ecosystem resilience in mitigating the risks and impacts of disasters, had been at the centre of discussions at the conference. Through its Finance Initiative, UNEP had also facilitated the launch in Sendai of a new insurance industry initiative, “United for disaster resilience,” and the signing by major insurance companies of a statement in support of disaster risk reduction.
4. Concerning the post-2015 development agenda, significant progress had been achieved over the previous two months, particularly with regard to targets and indicators that would enable parties to monitor progress in the implementation of the sustainable development goals at the national and international levels. Member States were working with the United Nations Statistical Commission. The draft sustainable development goals submitted by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals would likely be adopted, but discussions continued on the ideal number and complexity of proposed targets and the need for targets and indicators that were consistent with an integrated approach and were underpinned by data that countries could effectively collect and measure.
5. Regarding the third International Conference on Financing for Development, a draft outcome document had been produced in preparation for the conference. Significant work remained to be done, however, on issues such as the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, which was inextricably linked to the post-2015 development agenda and the climate negotiations and, if not addressed, risked derailing progress toward reaching agreement under the two processes.
6. With regard to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the eighth part of the second session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action had been held in Geneva in February 2015 and an initial draft for a new climate agreement had been produced. The lengthy draft revealed that considerable work was required before the Paris meeting, but also that Governments were moving toward a new agreement that could help set the world on a path toward staying within a 2-degree Celsius warming above pre-industrial temperatures by accelerating current efforts to tackle climate change, among other things.
7. The 2015 edition of *Global Trends in Renewable Energy Investment*, to be released by UNEP and a number of partners, showed that in 2014 renewable energy investments, excluding large hydropower projects, had exceeded $270 billion, representing a 17 per cent increase from 2013 in spite of the financial crisis and a drastic reduction in the price of fossil fuels. Close to 50 per cent of those investments had been made in developing and emerging economies, including not only China but also African countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritania, Morocco and South Africa, which had invested between $0.5 billion and $1 billion dollars in renewable energy in 2014. Recent Government statements suggested that the upward trend would continue. For instance, India had announced that it would deploy over 100,000 megawatts (MW) in photovoltaic capacity over the following four to five years; as a reference point, total installed capacity in Kenya was 1,400 MW. In South Africa, $14 billion had been mobilized for wind and solar technology since 2011, most of it through domestic investments and financial and capital markets, and the country was on the verge of seeing a levelling of the cost of wind-powered electricity generation with that of coal-fired electricity generation. These figures showed that the Framework Convention on Climate Change had prompted Governments, markets, investors and technology companies to move forward in tackling climate change.
8. In addition to accelerated investments in renewable energy, achieving a carbon-neutral world economy during the second half of the current century would require advancing the energy efficiency agenda and increasing the capacity of countries to sequester carbon through the restoration of forests, soils and coastal zones. In February, UNEP had accompanied the President of France and four of his cabinet members to the Philippines, a country that had suffered the consequences of devastating natural disasters and had taken remarkable steps to respond to climate change; it had invested tens of millions of dollars in building infrastructure and ecosystem resilience, for instance through mangrove rehabilitation and reforestation, and was currently the second largest producer of geothermal energy.
9. He drew attention to the launch at the fifteenth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), held in Cairo from 2 to 6 March 2015, of a new African network of women ministers and leaders for the environment and the release of a number of publications, including the *Africa Mountains Atlas*, the *Africa’s Adaptation Gap 2* report, which conveyed the message that ignoring adaptation in the new global climate agreement would constitute a grave error, *Building Inclusive Green Economies in Africa,* a report on lessons learned from work conducted in Africa on the green economy between 2010 and 2015, and a *Green Economy Scoping Study for Egypt*.
10. Other highlights included the mobilization of public-private partnerships on climate and air pollution and the ramping up of the Partnership for Action on Green Economy; a meeting of Green Growth Knowledge Platform partners on how fiscal policy reforms might support the transition towards a green economy; continued progress under the UNEP inquiry into the design of a sustainable financial system, an initiative launched in 2014 to study how specific countries were financing the green economy, with a final report to be released by the end of 2015; the dissemination of the outcome of the first session of the Environment Assembly on the illegal trade in wildlife, including during the World Wildlife day celebrations, which together with an international conference held in Kasane, Botswana, in March 2015, had helped to raise the profile of the issue; the convening by the Secretary‑General of a policy committee comprising members from UNEP and other partners tasked with implementing a strategy to help countries to tackle the illegal trade in wildlife more proactively; the provision of support to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in preparing a report on the nexus between natural resources exploitation, illegal trade and conflict; the first meeting of authors of the first Global Gender and Environment Outlook, to be launched in 2016; the launch of the UNEP *Our Planet* and 2014 annual reports; and the provision of support to the secretariat of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants to ensure that the back-to-back meetings of the conferences of the parties to the three conventions, to be held in May 2015, were a success.
11. The work of UNEP and the decisions adopted by the Environment Assembly at its first session had had an impact on other forums as well. For instance, marine litter and resource efficiency had been included as themes in the agenda of the Group of Seven summit to be held in June 2015, and UNEP had been invited to attend a meeting to be held in Moscow in April 2015 at which the green economy and its relevance to emerging economies would be discussed in preparation for the Seventh Summit of Heads of State and Government of Brazil, the Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa (BRICS).
12. In closing, the Executive Director thanked Italy for its offer to host World Environment Day 2015 in Milan. He announced the appointment of Ms. Megumi Seki as Deputy Executive Secretary of the Ozone Secretariat and of Ms. Dionyssia Geka as Deputy Director of the UNEP Office for Operations.
13. The deployment of Umoja, which represented the largest administrative reform undertaken by the United Nations Secretariat in many years, would be completed on 10 June 2015, so no transactions would be processed electronically between 15 May and 14 June 2015. UNEP had introduced the International Public Sector Accounting Standards to the Nairobi duty station in 2014, but was still working to produce auditable accounts. The 2014 annual report did not, therefore, include financial figures and should be seen as an advance version of the report. Despite this delay, preliminary figures suggested that UNEP had performed well in 2014 and that its financial outlook remained very positive.
14. Following the report by the Executive Director, Mr. Mahmoud Samir Samy, Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister of Egypt and Vice-President of the Environment Assembly, gave a presentation on the main outcomes of the fifteenth session of AMCEN.
15. In the discussion that followed, most of the representatives who spoke thanked the Executive Director for his written report and oral briefing, with one also thanking Mr. Samy for his presentation.
16. One representative lamented that documents considered at the current meeting contained acronyms that had not been spelled out and were not available in all six of the official languages of the United Nations, which limited the ability of some members to participate effectively in the work of the Committee.
17. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic thanked UNEP for activities it had undertaken in his country, but said that crippling economic sanctions imposed on his country were hindering the implementation of environmental and other projects and impeding the transfer of contributions to UNEP and other bodies.
18. Three representatives, one of them speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that it was essential that the decisions adopted by the Environment Assembly at its first session be implemented, with two suggesting that UNEP provide a detailed progress report on their implementation to the Committee at its meetings in June and late 2015. One said that it was crucial that member States recognize the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities in the climate negotiations.
19. Drawing attention to the written report by the Executive Director, the representative of Japan announced that his country would host the technical support unit for the Asia-Pacific regional assessment to be developed under the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. He commended UNEP for organizing the first global adaptation network forum in Panama City, stating that his country had offered to help developing countries to produce climate impact assessments, which were essential for developing national and local adaptation action plans. Regarding disaster risk reduction, the conference held in Sendai had been a success, resulting in the adoption of a political declaration and a new framework for disaster risk reduction for 2015–2030. On chemicals and waste, he said that an inception and capacity-building workshop on national and city waste management strategies in Africa had been held by UNEP, and he thanked UNEP for recognizing the International Environmental Technology Centre as a global centre of excellence in waste management, stating that his Government would continue to support the Centre’s activities and expected UNEP to continue to support the expansion of such activities, in collaboration with relevant international agencies and frameworks, so as to improve their effectiveness and efficiency, not only in Asia but also in Africa and Latin America.
20. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the launch by UNEP at the World Economic Forum meeting in January 2015 of a progress report under its inquiry into the design of a sustainable financial system and called for updates on UNEP activities regarding green financing and green fiscal reforms at the next subcommittee meeting. He queried the status of the implementation of paragraph 21 of Environment Assembly resolution 1/5 on chemicals and waste, concerning the role of the World Health Organization in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management. He also asked that the progress report on the work of the task team on the effectiveness of administrative arrangements and programmatic cooperation between UNEP and UNEP-administered convention secretariats, to be provided to the conferences of the parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions at their meetings in May 2015, be shared with the Committee.
21. Another representative expressed satisfaction at the success of the third session of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and the third annual conference of the Green Growth Knowledge Platform, the latter of which, he said, had confirmed the experience of his country that economic instruments were effective not only in reducing environmental and human health impacts but also in promoting innovation and new business models and investments that could generate new green jobs.
22. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the report of the Executive Director and commended the involvement of UNEP in ongoing processes, including discussions on the post-2015 development agenda, sustainable development goals, preparations for the third International Conference on Financing for Development, sustainable consumption and production, and climate change. He stressed the need to fully preserve the intergovernmental nature and openness and transparency of the negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda. He commended UNEP for initiating timely discussions on preparations for the second session of the Environment Assembly; ministers participating should give political and strategic guidance to UNEP on the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. The broadest possible participation of all member States in preparations for the second session was very important, particularly with regard to the elaboration of the medium-term strategy and the programme of work and budget.
23. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the coming months would be critical to building the new architecture for sustainable development and UNEP involvement in processes such as the climate and post-2015 development agenda negotiations was welcome, as was its role in helping to define indicators for the sustainable development goals. He requested UNEP to provide regular updates to the Committee on its activities on indicators, and asked whether UNEP membership in the inter-agency and expert group on sustainable development goal indicators had been confirmed. He welcomed the steps taken thus far on the UNEP medium-term strategy, as well as its plan to develop a long-term vision to 2030, which would strengthen results-based management and lead to a more strategic medium-term strategy and programme of work. He suggested that both the medium-term strategy and long-term vision fully take into account the sustainable development goals. Together with another representative, he expressed the hope that the draft UNEP medium-term strategy and programme of work would be available for consideration by the subcommittee at its annual meeting in October 2015. Regarding the preparations for the second session of the Assembly, he welcomed the early preparations for the session, including the meetings held by the Bureau and the joint meetings of the bureaux of the Assembly and the Committee.
24. Concerning Umoja, two representatives, one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, took note of the blackout period and commended UNEP on its efforts to implement the enterprise resource planning system, with one stating that the transition to Umoja was a revolutionary reform that was bound to present growing challenges as implementation progressed, but in the end would bring unprecedented transparency, accountability and efficiency to implementing entities.
25. With regard to the annual report, two representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that they looked forward to reviewing the final version of the report, including financial data.
26. Reacting to the Executive Director’s remarks concerning renewable energy investments, one representative informed the meeting of the recent increase in his country of total photovoltaic installed capacity, and that of the number of people with access to electricity, which was an indication of dedicated efforts to provide energy, and specifically green energy, to all.
27. Responding to comments, the Executive Director said that the International Environmental Technology Centre dealt with a range of waste-related issues, including waste-to-energy and electronic waste matters, and the workshop held in Nairobi in March 2015 had emphasized its global nature. Country requests for UNEP work in the field of chemicals and waste were growing exponentially; UNEP was unable to respond to all such requests but was building partnerships with other organizations and networks of practitioners to tackle chemicals and waste issues, including through the Centre. In view of the number of member State requests, UNEP management had agreed that the chemicals and waste subprogramme would receive greater support in the future.
28. Concerning the implementation of decisions adopted by the Environment Assembly at its first session, UNEP would provide a detailed update to the Committee on the issue in its programme performance report and at the Committee meeting in June, at which it would also report on its work on the green economy. With respect to Environment Assembly resolution 1/5, he had written to the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) to request that WHO assume a more proactive role in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management. WHO had not been able to respond positively owing to financial cuts and the outbreak of Ebola virus disease in West Africa. UNEP and WHO continued to cooperate closely on work on lead, mercury and endocrine disruptors, but Committee members were encouraged to convey to the World Health Assembly, at its meeting in May 2015, the need for WHO to engage more actively in the agenda of the Strategic Approach, as well as in the Climate and Clean Air Coalition and on issues such as indoor and outdoor air pollution.
29. In closing, he said that UNEP was examining the possibility of mobilizing international support to, at a minimum, double Africa’s deployment of renewable energy infrastructure between 2016 and ­2020, given the momentum generated by current efforts, stating that Africa presented a unique opportunity for advancing the energy and climate agendas and transforming any climate commitments made in Paris in December 2015 into tangible action.

Agenda item 4

Briefing on preparations for the sixth Global Environment Outlook report

1. Introducing the item, the representative of the secretariat provided an overview of the preparations for the sixth Global Environment Outlook report (GEO-6) (UNEP/CPR/130/4). She drew attention to the recent meetings of the scientific advisory panel and the high-level intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder group established to provide guidance and support in the elaboration of the report. At their meetings, held in Nairobi, the two bodies had endorsed the process of generating six regional assessments to feed into the global assessment and discussed scientific aspects, as well as organizational and modality issues, underlining the role of the panel in ensuring scientific credibility. She underscored the rigorous peer review process put in place to ensure scientific plausibility, which drew on that of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the guidance of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. The process encouraged the inclusion of indigenous, local knowledge as called for in resolution 1/10 of the United Nations Environment Assembly. Further details on the work of the assessment methodologies, data and information working group, the draft timetable for the process, and revised budgetary information would be made available in due course.
2. In the ensuing discussion, several representatives expressed appreciation for the briefing and satisfaction with the work of UNEP on the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) process, and welcomed the progress made in the preparatory meetings for GEO-6 that had taken place.
3. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, called for further consideration of how the GEO‑6 process was linked to the environmental dimension of the discussions on the post‑2015 development agenda, and highlighted the need to ensure maximum visibility of GEO-6, in particular the summary for policymakers. He sought further information on the content of the regional and global assessments and their target audiences, the timetable for the process, and the data policy of UNEP, notably the Programme’s access to information policy; and he requested regular updates for the Committee on the process.
4. Another representative voiced strong support for UNEP as a knowledge provider, emphasizing its mandate to keep the global environment under review and communicate findings to experts and decision makers, which was the purpose of the GEO process. He expressed support for the regional approach, which would increase the relevance of GEO-6 and enhance ownership of the report. He noted the need to avoid overlap with existing assessment processes, for example on climate change, biodiversity and oceans, and called for the report to pay particular attention to emerging issues and to address environmental challenges in an integrated manner.
5. He stressed the importance of transparent procedures in the GEO-6 process with regard to the selection of teams for the work and the review and approval processes; conflicts of interest should be addressed openly. The process should be in line with the decisions of the Environment Assembly and the report and the summary for policymakers should be launched at a major global event, such as a session of the Environment Assembly, to ensure maximum attention. Follow-up outreach activities should be conducted and sufficient resources allocated to communicating the findings of the report.
6. One representative welcomed the decision to take a bottom-up assessment approach and release regional assessment reports separately. He stressed the importance of ensuring the credibility of data and the conclusions of the report, in order for the UNEP flagship project to be widely recognized by the international community as providing a relevant policy reference for environmental decision-making.
7. One representative welcomed the participation of a greater number of scientists from different countries in the GEO-6 process. Noting that the GEO process should strengthen the capacity of developing countries to generate and manage environmental information, she called for further information on how the process would support capacity-building, especially at the national level.
8. Noting that the results of the regional assessments on the global environment would be presented to the Environment Assembly at its second session, one representative said that methodological criteria should be developed to ensure that GEO-6 was in line with the sustainable development goals and the responses required thereto.
9. Responding to the comments, the representative of the secretariat assured the Committee that regular updates on the process would be provided and the timetable published as soon as it was approved by the high-level intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder group. Regarding the data policy and access to information, she said that UNEP Live provided a platform for dialogue with all countries regarding the possibilities for the publication of information and identification of data provenance and its quality assurance; that also formed part of the capacity-building programme to enable countries to begin putting in place and implementing related policies. She said that a communication strategy was being developed as part of the process, embracing digital aspects, branding and outreach. In addition, at the request of the high-level group, an education process was being developed to focus on digital outreach; bilateral contacts between different groupings of experts; training programmes; and an internationally standardized manual of assessment methodologies which would be part of a major online open course similar to others being developed across UNEP to ensure the availability and accessibility of content. She noted that the GEO-6 products would be made available in the six official languages of the United Nations. With regard to conflicts of interest, the highest level of integrity would be required of experts and they would be asked individually to declare any possible conflict of interest. She assured the Committee that the GEO process would include a methodology to consider current goals, targets and indicators in the light of the future sustainable development goals, and to inform the discussions of the Environment Assembly and the direction of GEO.

Agenda item 5

Contribution of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to preparations for the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

1. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to the expected contribution of the Committee to preparations for the second session of the Environment Assembly (UNEP/CPR/130/5). He called on the Committee at its current meeting and the subsequent meeting in June, first, to achieve a degree of consensus on the political objectives and expectations of the second session to feed into the Bureau discussions, including on the themes of the high-level segment of the session; second, to provide initial feedback on the provisional agenda and structure of the session; and third, to prepare for agreement on the agenda, structure and organization of work of the second open-ended meeting of the Committee and the regular meeting to be held in June. In order to achieve consensus and agreement, he further proposed the organization of two subcommittee meetings, to be held on 12 May and 4 June 2015, dedicated specifically to detailed discussion of the issues.
2. He proposed that at its current meeting the Committee should concentrate on the political objectives and expectations of the second session of the Assembly in order to take advantage of the attendance at the meeting of the Environment Assembly Bureau members.
3. Ms. Oyun Sanjaasuren, President of the United Nations Environment Assembly, gave a presentation on the outcomes of the Bureau discussions held on 30 March 2015. The main points raised included the importance of focusing on the implementation of decisions and agreements made on the post-2015 development agenda; the need to concentrate on effective implementation of the decisions of the Environment Assembly at its first session; and the importance of the coherence of environmental activities at all levels and efficient coordination of environmental issues among different bodies of the United Nations system.
4. The Bureau had stressed the importance of focusing on the post-2015 development agenda and making the second session of the Assembly attractive in substance and format to Governments, major groups and stakeholders. The time frame of the session called for well-planned meetings and maximum use of the intersessional work of the Committee of Permanent Representatives. The Bureau had also urged that member States should not spend a long time negotiating a ministerial outcome document, but rather, such an outcome document should form a significant part of a package of outcomes, including strong resolutions and decisions. The proposed themes of the high-level segment would be discussed by the Committee at subsequent meetings and approved by the Bureau of the Assembly in July 2015. The Bureau had also emphasized that the Assembly should provide a suitable platform for the engagement of major groups and stakeholders in dialogue with member States.
5. In the ensuing discussion, many representatives expressed appreciation for the presentation and thanked the members of the Bureau of the Assembly for their attendance at the present meeting. One representative said that their presence underlined the commitment of all countries to maintaining the momentum of the preparations and demonstrated the support that the Bureau could provide to the process. Another asked for the presentation by the President of the Assembly to be made available to the Committee members.
6. One representative considered that the overarching objective of the second session should be issues related to the governance of UNEP; its goal should be to determine how UNEP could assist member States in realizing their environmental priorities, as documented in the resolutions adopted by the Assembly. The medium-term strategy and programme of work and budget of UNEP should clearly demonstrate a focus on the previously expressed priorities of member States. The outcomes of the session should consist of agreed resolutions submitted by the member States and a road map for UNEP in the form of its medium-term strategy and programme of work and budget; and the outcome of the high-level segment should be a chair’s summary rather than a ministerial outcome document, upon which on previous occasions it had been difficult to reach consensus. The high-level segment should allow for an in-depth exchange of views and should therefore be limited to one theme; the exchange of scripted speeches should be avoided and the Bureau should consider formats used in other forums that were conducive to meaningful discussions. With regard to the contribution of the Assembly to the post-2015 development agenda, the focus should be on the mandate and priorities of UNEP as agreed by member States and on aligning the ongoing activities of UNEP with the most relevant areas of the post-2015 development agenda. The Programme had an important role in implementing that agenda but should avoid pursuing new commitments in that regard. The Assembly should demonstrate in detail how the programme of work and priorities of its first session were being implemented. The second session was an important opportunity to highlight the work of UNEP, but the Programme should have a broader outreach strategy on an ongoing basis.
7. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, endorsed the need for various communication mechanisms to be employed to ensure the effective implementation of the decisions of the second session of the Environment Assembly. He also stressed the importance of discussing the issues of stakeholder participation and the rules of procedure as soon as possible and building consensus in the Committee so that the ministers taking part in the second session would be able to focus on environmental and not organizational issues. He welcomed the work of the Bureau to build bridges between the various positions.
8. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, supported the view that the Environment Assembly at its second session, being one of the first high-level international meetings after the anticipated adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, should continue in its role as the authoritative voice of the environmental dimension of sustainable development. He expressed support for the proposal that the high-level segment discussions focus on the challenges and implementation of the whole environmental dimension of the post-2015 development agenda as a central theme. This might be facilitated, he said, by using specific focused environmental issues as “case studies” to discuss ways of ensuring the role of UNEP in their implementation and the best possible coordination within the United Nations while engaging ministers in discussions on highly relevant environmental themes. He further emphasized that at its second session the Environment Assembly should aim for a high-level negotiated or consensual outcome document.
9. A number of representatives stressed the importance of regional consultations on the draft decisions to be considered by the Assembly. One called on the regional groups to work together to reach consensus on stakeholder participation and the rules of procedure.
10. A number of representatives concurred that there should be one overarching theme for the high-level segment of the second session, and one said that there should be a new theme for every session of the Assembly. They called for agreement to be reached on the theme as soon as possible. Some said that it was important for the Assembly at its second session to follow up on the work at its first session and also to take account of the outcomes of major conferences taking place in 2015. One representative identified the key elements of the session of significance for the environment: interesting high-level dialogue; interactive and meaningful engagement with stakeholders, including the private sector; and side events and seminars to provide arenas for more specific in‑depth discussions. One representative stressed the importance of the right balance between political topics relevant to national implementation and United Nations system-wide issues.
11. One representative said that the theme of the high-level discussions should focus on the challenges and implementation of the environmental dimension of the post-2015 agenda, in line with the role of UNEP as the leading global environmental authority. The emphasis should be on strategic elements such as coordination of environmental work in the United Nations system and strategic partnerships with United Nations bodies, non-governmental organizations and businesses. The theme of the high-level segment should also attract the interest of ministers and stimulate interactive discussion.
12. One representative supported the view that the outcome of the high-level segment should be in the form of a president’s summary. He said that the situation at the first session of the Assembly, with drafting taking place during the session, should be avoided at all costs. Another said that the outcome document had to address the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.
13. A number of representatives stressed the importance of the participation of major groups and stakeholders in the Assembly. Discussions should be open and inclusive, she said. However, the Environment Assembly was an intergovernmental organization and member States alone were able to take decisions. One representative said that one of the lessons learned from the first session of the Assembly was that it was necessary to have a normative framework, particularly with regard to procedure, and that it had to be clear and agreed before the start of the session. With regard to the organizational structure of the second session, it was important to reach agreement on the outstanding issue of stakeholder participation.
14. One representative considered that too many side events during the session posed difficulties for participants and diluted the theme of the session, and he called for them to be greatly reduced in number.
15. Two representatives considered that given the heavy agenda of the first session, maximum use should be made of the second open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives in preparing for the session, and one suggested that parallel meetings would be needed.
16. Responding to the comments, the Executive Director assured the Committee that the Bureau of the Assembly and the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives were working well together in preparation for the second session. The President of the Environment Assembly noted that the Bureau members were required to act as a channel of communication back to their regions; in preparing for the second session, it was important to communicate the ideas and exchange of views emanating from meetings in Nairobi and to receive feedback from the regions throughout the preparatory process.

Agenda item 6

Report of the subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

1. Introducing the item, the Chair drew the attention of the Committee to his report on the work of the subcommittee.
2. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, signalled the request for further discussion at a future date on improving the efficiency of the work of the Committee through its subcommittee, and on the work and organization of the annual subcommittee meeting.
3. The meeting took note of the report.

Agenda item 7

Other matters

1. No other matters were discussed.

Agenda item 8

Closure of the meeting

1. The meeting was declared closed at 1.10 p.m. on Tuesday, 31 March 2015.

**Minutes of the 131st meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme, held on 16 June 2015**

**Agenda item 1**

**Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda**

1. The meeting was opened at 9.45 a.m. on Tuesday, 16 June 2015, by Mr. Sunu Soemarno, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP.
2. The meeting was attended by 99 participants representing 63 members. A participant from one permanent mission in Geneva also took part in the meeting by videoconference.
3. The Chair welcomed the following new members of the Committee: Mr. Dina Mufti Sid, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ethiopia; Mr. Lászlò Eduárd Máthél, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Hungary; Mr. Perks M. Ligoya, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of Malawi; Mr. Erasmo Roberto Martinez Martinez, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Mexico; Mr. Deepak Dhital, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Nepal, based in Geneva; Mr. James Kimonyo, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of Rwanda; Mr. Prasittiporn Wetprasit, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Thailand; Mr. Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ukraine; Mr. Mussa M. Haji, Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania; and Ms. Brenda Muntemba, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of Zambia.
4. He bade farewell to the following departing members, thanking them for their contribution to the work of the Committee: Mr. Shemsudin Ahmed, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ethiopia; Mr. Marcel R.D. Chirwa, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of Malawi; Mr. Dong-Gyou Choi, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea; Mr. Mohamed Ali Nur, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Somalia; Mr. Ittiporn Boonpracong, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Thailand and Ms. Batilda S. Burian, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania.
5. The agenda was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/CRP/131/1).

**Agenda item 2**

**Adoption of the minutes of the 130th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, held on 31 March 2015**

6. The Committee adopted the minutes of its 130th meeting on the basis of the draft minutes of the meeting (UNEP/CPR/131/2).

**Agenda item 3**

**Report by the Executive Director to the Committee of Permanent Representatives**

1. Introducing the item, the Executive Director drew attention to his report entitled “Report by the Executive Director of UNEP, including progress on the implementation of the resolutions adopted at the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly held in June 2014”.
2. He outlined a number of significant processes in which UNEP had been engaged in a scientific, technical, advisory or convening capacity. He noted that 2015 had been and would continue to be a year of intense activity for the international community and the multilateral system, with four major events being held that were closely related to the mandate of UNEP: the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Sendai, Japan, from 14 to 18 March 2015; the third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Addis Ababa in July 2015; the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, to be held in New York in September 2015; and the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris in December 2015.
3. With regard to the third International Conference on Financing for Development, he said that the draft outcome document was in its final stages of elaboration, an intense negotiation and preparatory process was under way and it was anticipated that significant consensus would emerge around the financing for development agenda. The UNEP office in New York was fully engaged in the preparatory process and was organizing a number of events to be held during the Conference in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa and other partners.
4. Regarding the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, the Co-Facilitators of the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda had issued the zero draft of the outcome document for the summit, entitled “Transforming our world by 2030”. The draft included an overall framework for the post-2015 agenda and, in particular, the sustainable development goals, which had received support from member States. UNEP was engaged in providing advice to member States on the development of targets and indicators that would enable parties to monitor progress in the implementation of the sustainable development goals, review functions and ensure transparency, reporting on progress and accountability.
5. Turning to the preparations for the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, he said that there was growing concern among negotiators and heads of State and Government as to how a manageable outcome document would be prepared for the session. In that regard, the two Co-Chairs had been tasked with creating a more concise draft outcome document that would serve as a basis for discussions at the next round of meetings, to be held in September 2015. He noted that the preparation of the intended nationally determined contributions at the national level was generating a great deal of momentum around the world. In that regard, he drew attention to a UNEP report entitled *Climate Commitments of Subnational Actors and Business: A Quantitative Assessment of their Emission Reduction Impact*, which examined the significance of initiatives by non-State actors to cut greenhouse emissions.
6. Concerning the contribution by UNEP to the work of the Climate Technology Centre and Network, which provided technology support to countries in the context of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, significant progress had been made. The network had recently been described as “an incubator” for the United Nations-wide technology mechanism currently under discussion in New York .

13. The Climate and Clean Air Coalition, a voluntary initiative to address short-lived climate pollutants, had 104 members and an active programme of work that focused on gas flaring, black carbon and methane, among other things. The Coalition was a good example of how complementary initiatives could support the climate process.

14. UNEP had been actively engaged in providing advice to the secretariats and member States on technical and scientific issues during the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, held back to back in Geneva in May 2015. UNEP had also prepared a report on electronic and toxic waste, entitled *Waste Crime - Waste Risks: Gaps in Meeting the Global Waste Challenge*, launched during the back-to-back meetings, which had attracted a great deal of international attention. Although many decisions had been adopted during the meetings, parties had been unable to reach consensus on the issues of financing and compliance.

15. UNEP had also participated in the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention), held in Punta del Este, Uruguay, in June 2015, a report of which would be sent to the representatives in due course.

16. Over the previous months, UNEP had been invited to contribute information and enhance engagement in a number of international forums. The Executive Director had been invited to attend the first official meeting of the environment ministers of Brazil, the Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa (BRICS countries), held in Moscow in April 2015, at which the green economy, emerging economies and competitiveness had been the core themes. During the meeting, participants had asked UNEP to contribute and provide advice to the newly established working group on the environment, which sought to identify priority areas of cooperation and consolidate efforts to develop policies aimed at contributing to mitigation efforts and adapting national economies to the impacts of climate change.

17. The work of UNEP had been explicitly recognized at the Group of Seven (G-7) Summit, held in Schloss Elmau, Germany, in June 2015, at which the International Resource Panel, considered a leading authority on the issue of resource efficiency, had been invited to prepare a report on the state of knowledge and to provide specific inputs to the future deliberations of the G-7. In the context of the new sustainable development agenda and goals, it was significant that the G-7 was focusing its attention on resource efficiency and moving toward a low-carbon economy. The Executive Director noted that the G-7 had put marine issues on its agenda for the first time, due in part to resolution 1/6, on marine plastic debris and microplastics, adopted by the Environment Assembly at its first session in June 2014, and to the work of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities.

18. Discussions had been held during the twenty-fifth ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in June 2015, between UNEP, the African Group of Negotiators, the African Union, the African Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Africa on the development of an Africa-led initiative with the objective of doubling the energy infrastructure on the African continent in the following four years, which would represent the single largest step forward in the deployment of renewable energy on the continent.

19. At its sixty-eighth session, held in Geneva in May 2015, the World Health Assembly had adopted a resolution entitled “Health and the environment: addressing the health impact of air pollution”, reaffirming the importance of the joint work undertaken by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNEP through the Climate and Clean Air Coalition to bring black carbon and short-lived climate pollutants to the attention of health and environment ministries around the world.

20. The Islamic Development Bank had expressed a strong interest in strengthening its partnership with UNEP and had, accordingly, invited the Deputy Executive Director to co-chair a session on climate change during the fortieth Annual Meeting of the Islamic Development Bank, held in Maputo in June 2015. The two bodies were in the process of developing a memorandum of understanding to continue their partnership and establish a programme of work based on issues that had been discussed by the Environment Assembly at its first session.

21. The Deputy Executive Director of UNEP had also attended the Thirteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, held in Doha in April 2015. In partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNEP had brought the issue of the illegal trade in wildlife to an international governance domain in which environmental issues were not always present.

22. He drew attention to a number of recent meetings and announced a number of senior appointments in UNEP: Mr. Elliott Harris as Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the New York Office and the Environment Management Group of UNEP; Mr. Jorge Laguna-Celis as Secretary of Governing Bodies; Mr. Jiri Hlavacek as Special Adviser and Head of Multilateral Environmental Agreements Support and Cooperation in the Division of Environmental Law and Conventions; and Ms. Rosemary Semafumu Mukasa as Deputy Secretary of Governing Bodies. He also announced the appointment of Ms. Theresa Panuccio as Director of the Office for Operations and Corporate Services, following the retirement of Mr. Christophe Bouvier.

23. He said that UNEP had completed its accounts for 2014 in compliance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) and that implementation of Umoja, the enterprise resource planning project, which represented the largest administrative and managerial reform project undertaken by the United Nations Secretariat, had begun in Nairobi on 1 June 2015. While the system was bound to present challenges, its deployment had been a success largely as a result of the significant work undertaken by the UNEP, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and United Nations Office at Nairobi joint Nairobi deployment group.

24. Following an earthquake in Nepal in April 2015, UNEP had taken part in an emergency and disaster response mission led by the World Bank, the European Union and the United Nations through the joint UNEP/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs environment unit.

25. World Environment Day on 5 June 2015, hosted by Italy in the context of the Milan Expo, had received an unprecedented response from around the world, with thousands of activities undertaken and pledges made involving 1.2 million participants in 140 countries.

26. Turning to the financial situation, he acknowledged with appreciation the decision taken by the newly formed Government of Belgium to resume its contributions to the Environment Fund. He also explained that UNEP would face a number of challenges in the coming months due to the sustained strengthening of the dollar, which could lead to a potential loss of $8-9 million dollars compared with the projections for 2015. The situation was being managed by reviewing expenditure patterns, matching unrestricted extrabudgetary contributions to the Fund and mobilizing additional resources over the remaining period of the 2014–2015 biennium. He appealed to member States to enhance their support to UNEP through contributions to the Environment Fund, explaining that the situation was expected to have a bearing on the project portfolio as many projects were funded in weaker currencies.

27. Drawing attention to the *Annual Report* for 2014 and the *UNEP Programme Performance Report* for 2014, he expressed his satisfaction at the progress achieved by UNEP to date. He also noted that an update had been provided to the Committee on the progress of implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Environment Assembly at its first session. Work had been initiated on all of the resolutions, although many would be implemented over a multi-biennium period. He encouraged representatives to request briefings with the secretariat for information on specific decisions if required.

28. He concluded his presentation with a selection of visual slides, illustrating the performance of UNEP through indicators of efficiency, effectiveness and productivity. They showed the progress made and the significant effort involved in enhancing the productivity of UNEP while managing an increased volume of finance and portfolio with a declining number of staff. The slide on overall budgetary performance revealed that the demand for its trust fund and the earmarked contributions given to implement its activities had exceeded estimates by more than 100 per cent, a testament to the demand for and visibility of the projects undertaken by UNEP.

29. In the context of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) trust fund, the volume of finance for which UNEP was responsible as an implementing agency was three times higher than had been budgeted.

30. Investments had been made to make the business processes of UNEP more efficient, resulting in a significant increase in the productivity of UNEP staff, despite the decrease in the number of staff from 900 in the biennium 2010–2011 to 840 in the biennium 2014–2015. The quality of management and accountability at UNEP had been confirmed by the virtually zero outstanding critical audit recommendations, which was largely attributable to the performance of the team at the Office for Operations and Corporate Services.

31. In accordance with the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), entitled “The future we want”, in which heads of States and Government and high-level representatives had expressed their commitment to the strengthening of UNEP as the leading global environmental authority, the regional presence of UNEP had been strengthened through the establishment of a number of regional offices.

32. According to independent evaluations of its projects, UNEP had significantly improved its performance over the years. According to the overall outcome ratings for GEF projects by implementing agency, UNEP projects had consistently outperformed those of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank, with a final evaluation rating of moderately satisfactory or better in 90 per cent of cases.

33. He noted that the second tranche of the regular budget allocation increase for UNEP had been included in the programme of work for the biennium 2016–2017, which had been approved by the Environment Assembly, but the regular budget allocations had yet to be approved by the General Assembly. The second tranche was critical in the follow-up to Rio+20 because 94 per cent of the posts covered by the regular budget allocation were directly related to the implementation of the programme of work and 71 per cent of those posts were in the regional offices, while 17 per cent were posts devoted to the implementation of the programme of work at UNEP headquarters, including subprogramme coordinators and the post of Chief Scientist.

34. In the ensuing discussion, many representatives thanked the Executive Director for his comprehensive report and voiced their support for UNEP. Several representatives welcomed his summary of recent events and activities and one representative expressed satisfaction that UNEP was being called upon with increasing frequency to contribute its environmental expertise to other major forums. Many representatives thanked the secretariat for its dedicated work and for its efforts in implementing the outcomes of the first session of the Environment Assembly.

35. Concerning the update on the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Environment Assembly at its first session, a number of representatives called for a more detailed and comprehensive briefing. Several representatives said that information on the implementation of the resolutions was of the utmost importance in preparing effectively for the second session and in assessing the performance of the Programme. One representative requested more information on problems encountered in the implementation of resolutions adopted at the first session and another called for updates specifically on resolutions 1/4 on the science-policy interface, 1/8 on ecosystem-based adaptation and 1/9 on the Global Environment Monitoring System/Water Programme (GEMS/Water). One representative said that such updates should have been provided by June 2015, the halfway point between the first and second sessions of the Environment Assembly. Two representatives proposed that a briefing could take place at a subcommittee meeting in September, with one suggesting that the format of the action plans for the resolutions presented to the Committee in October 2014 should be used for the briefing.

36. A number of representatives asked the secretariat to conduct an analysis of its regional activities and the strengthening of its regional presence, an exercise it had been mandated to undertake in the Rio+20 outcome document. In addition to covering challenges, opportunities, impacts and lessons learned, the analysis should indicate which regions were reasonably well-covered by UNEP activities and identify the biggest gaps in coverage, particularly in view of key funding discussions that would be undertaken later in 2015.

37. The representative of Thailand commended UNEP on the success of the first Forum of Ministers and Environmental Authorities of Asia Pacific. He expressed gratitude on behalf of the Government of Thailand, as co-host of the Forum, to participating countries and said that he expected the shared regional views that had emerged during the Forum to feed into future meetings. Another representative, noting that the Forum was a means of strengthening the regional presence of UNEP, welcomed the opportunity it provided for member States to clarify regional priorities with regard to preparations for the second session of the Environment Assembly and the next UNEP medium-term strategy. He expressed the hope that the outcomes of regional forums would be reflected in discussions at the second session of the Environment Assembly and thanked the secretariat for preparing the first draft of the medium-term strategy for 2018–2021.

38. One representative thanked UNEP for facilitating the Conference on Illegal Exploitation and Illicit Trade in Wild Flora and Fauna in Africa, held in Brazzaville in March 2015, an African Union-mandated conference that had been convened with the objective of developing an African common strategy. At the twenty-fifth ordinary session of the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the necessity of developing regional safeguards and collective solutions to addressing the illegal trade had been recognized; the role of UNEP in integrating various activities was key in that regard.

39. One representative drew attention to the UNEP report entitled *Global Trends in Renewable Energy Investment 2015*, expressing the view that it contained insufficient information on Africa. He said that he would welcome more information on prospects and initiatives in Africa in terms of renewable energy sources. A greater focus on the global South would be interesting and encouraging for developing countries. He asked for clarification on the UNEP approach to the concept of financial and debt sustainability in the context of the market for renewable energy sources and with regard to environmental sustainability. He commended a report by the panel of experts to the second preparatory committee meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development entitled “The transition to a green economy: benefits, challenges and risks from a sustainable development perspective”, which, among other things, outlined the risks facing developing countries. Any celebration of the renewable energy sector needed to be balanced against an awareness of the seriousness of the inherent risks of the sector.

40. One representative expressed her appreciation for the support of UNEP in implementing the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD Programme). The Programme had 58 partner countries, 15 of which were in the Latin America and the Caribbean region. Another representative said that Latin America and the Caribbean had experienced gaps in the implementation of UNEP projects and programmes and appealed for more attention to be paid to the region, which, he said, was of crucial importance environmentally and ecologically.

41. Two representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that they were looking forward to the distribution of two reports by the secretariat on the UNEP policy on access to information: a summary of comments on the policy made by member States and a revised draft of the policy.

42. One representative commended UNEP on its successful and timely deployment of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards and Umoja, the enterprise resource planning project, noting that the Nairobi team had worked extremely hard, exhibiting a cooperative team spirit that would carry them forward as they continued to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the new systems.

43. One representative, referring to the overview of 2014 provided by the Executive Director, sought clarification on the shortfall of $20 million in budgeted income for the Environment Fund and its possible impact on UNEP activities, the unexpectedly high extrabudgetary funding and the increased funding for GEF projects. Voicing her strong support for UNEP as a knowledge provider, she welcomed the more balanced and stronger regional presence of UNEP and the positive feedback from the GEF Evaluation Office on the high project outcome ratings in the UNEP/GEF portfolio.

44. One representative, noting that the need for the prevention of and protection from disasters had been highlighted at the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Sendai, Japan, in March 2015, called on UNEP to prioritize the challenges posed by disasters, including those caused by the increasing environmental damage being inflicted by terrorists internationally.

45. Responding to comments, the Executive Director said that additional information and analysis would be provided on the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Environment Assembly at its first session, possibly using the action plans as a framework, and a strategic analysis of its regional presence would also be produced.

46. He said that further work would be undertaken to refine the data contained in the *Global Trends in Renewable Energy Investment 2015* report; as renewable energy initiatives evolved in Africa, more information would become available. The International Renewable Energy Agency was also a repository of relevant data.

47. On the access-to-information policy, the secretariat was aiming to produce a draft revised policy in August and the revised policy in October 2015, after soliciting input from member States in July.

48. Significant currency fluctuations in 2014 had had an impact on budgetary allocations, necessitating a more proactive management of funds. Unrestricted contributions made by member States for the financing of the programme of work had been used to try to balance the figures. Extrabudgetary funding had also been used in certain areas where funding from the Environment Fund had fallen short.

49. Noting that GEF financing was not in the form of pledges to UNEP, but rather in the form of allocations transacted through UNEP over which it did not have much control, he said that the GEF-5 highest level of approvals of $550 million had been unexpected even though they were for projects that would continue for a period of years.

**Agenda item 4**

**Briefing on the contribution of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the preparation of the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the second open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives**

50. In the discussion on agenda item 4, regarding the second open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, to be held in February 2016, many representatives said that the session should be structured so that no more than two parallel meetings were held at any one time. Parallel meetings made it difficult for smaller delegations with limited resources to play an active role. One representative said that night sessions should also be avoided. Many representatives expressed the view that sufficient funding should be provided by the UNEP secretariat to enable the participation of representatives, including experts from developing and least developed countries. One representative welcomed the readiness of many member States to compromise on the structure of the session.

51. A number of representatives highlighted the importance of adequate and timely preparations and consultations during the intersessional period with the aim of achieving consensus on issues before the Committee at its second open-ended meeting and the Environment Assembly at its second session. Several representatives called for pre-session documents, including draft resolutions, to be circulated well in advance of meetings to avoid lengthy discussions as had occurred in the past. The Committee at its second open-ended meeting should focus on issues relating to the second session of the Environment Assembly. Draft resolutions submitted to the Environment Assembly for its consideration should stress the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development and highlight the Rio+20 principles, especially the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. A number of representatives said that the second session of the Environment Assembly should follow up on decisions adopted at the first session. One representative said that a shorter agenda would enhance discussions and another said that the number of draft resolutions should be limited to enable all member States to engage in discussions thereon.

52. Several representatives welcomed the document entitled “The vision for UNEA-2: a food for thought paper by the Chair of the CPR” on the themes for the high-level segment of the second session of the Environment Assembly. A few representatives said that they would have preferred to have received it well in advance of the present meeting. A number requested more detailed information from the secretariat on the overarching theme and on the two suggested focused priorities before the subcommittee meeting to be held on 30 June 2015.

53. Concerning the overarching theme for the high-level segment, many representatives expressed a preference for the single theme of “Delivering on the environmental dimension of the post-2015 development agenda”, which, they suggested, was of particular relevance as the session would be one of the first high-level international meetings to be held after the anticipated adoption of the post-2015 development agenda. Consensus should be reached as soon as possible on a strategic, forward-looking and well-defined theme that would reassert the leadership of UNEP in global environmental issues and make the most of the opportunity provided by the participation of ministers, promoting real exchanges and guiding in-depth discussions to develop succinct recommendations on environmental goals. One representative stressed the need for practical analysis under an overarching theme, in which the challenges were examined from an integral perspective involving strengthened cooperation between countries and regions. Another representative expressed the view that only one theme should be discussed owing to time restraints, describing the proposed overarching theme as a cross-cutting topic that would enable UNEP to focus on its mandate of tackling international environmental issues.

54. One representative welcomed the proposal to have two focused and specific priorities such as “Healthy People – Healthy Environment” and “Mobilizing resources for sustainable investments” under the main theme, saying that this would enrich the discussions, and suggested that a summary by the Chair would be a suitable outcome for the high-level segment.

55. Concurring with the choice of the overarching theme, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the two focused priorities were of interest and could be appropriate for guiding discussions among ministers and demonstrating the challenges of implementing the development agenda. He questioned whether the umbrella theme and the two headline messages could be given sufficient attention in a two-day period. Concerning the two focused priorities, he expressed a preference for the health theme in which different aspects could be incorporated. The second theme, of investment, could be tackled in a shorter meeting, in a manner similar to that adopted for the discussion on the illegal trade in wildlife at the first session of the Environment Assembly. He asked UNEP to elaborate on the themes and the organization of the high-level segment. He sought clarification on the structure of the ministerial segment, the approach to questions on implementation of the environmental dimension, and how the discussion would be reflected in the outcome of the Environment Assembly. On the suggested change in the cycle of the Environment Assembly sessions from even years to odd years, he asked for an analysis of the consequences thereof. Another representative, drawing attention to the importance of the Environment Assembly as a key international forum for addressing environmental issues, expressed concern that the overarching theme was too broad and would lead to prepared remarks by heads of delegations on a wide range of issues. It would therefore be difficult to distil and agree upon meaningful and actionable outcomes. The focused priority on financing would have already been comprehensively covered at the third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa in July 2015 and, moreover, was likely to lead to contentious and unproductive discussions among member States, which might represent a setback for the Assembly. He proposed the topic of air quality as a more suitable and focused theme for the high-level segment. He sought clarification on the questions that ministers would address; the organization of the themes and the envisaged outcome of discussions. Greater clarity was essential if consensus was to be reached by the Committee on a concrete proposal for the Bureau of the Environment Assembly to consider in July 2015.

56. One representative expressed his satisfaction at the focused priority on health, which, he said, could lead into discussions on many environmental problems. He noted that the issue of decarbonization and the African initiative on renewable sources of energy should be included in discussions on that theme.

57. Another representative said that he did not support the topic of resource mobilization as it was not clear how environment ministers could contribute to such a discussion. He asked for more information on the themes and on several specific questions: how to avoid a contentious and unproductive discussion; how to achieve a meaningful discussion by environment ministers on financing; specific areas of focus; linkages with the outcome of the third International Conference on Financing for Development; and options in terms of the format of the high-level discussions.

58. One representative expressed reservations on the proposal to have two focused priorities under the main theme, suggesting that the theme related to health could infringe on the mandate of other international entities such as WHO and that the second theme of resource mobilization could limit the discussion by focusing attention on public and private investment. A broader discussion was called for in which alternative models other than the green economy model for sustainable financing were considered.

59. Several representatives drew attention to paragraph 56 of the Rio+20 outcome document, affirming that different approaches, visions, models and tools were available to each country, in accordance with its national circumstances and priorities, to achieve the overarching objective of sustainable development; they concurred that, in discussions on resource mobilization for sustainability, that paragraph should be borne in mind and models other than that of the green economy should be recognized and considered.

60. A number of representatives called for the urgent approval of a draft stakeholder engagement policy that took into account the concerns of all member States. They expressed their commitment to the effective and inclusive participation of all stakeholders at the second session of the Environment Assembly, especially representatives of developing countries and least developed countries, and highlighted the key responsibility of member States as decision makers and drivers of the new development agenda.

61. Responding to comments, the Executive Director said that there was an emerging consensus that delivery of the environmental dimension of the post-2015 development agenda and the role of UNEP therein should be chosen as the overarching theme for the second session of the Environment Assembly in order to achieve a focused political agenda. The “Food for thought paper” provided a sound basis for further work and the secretariat would provide more information on the two proposed focused priorities. With regard to the first proposed theme of health under the overarching theme, he said that “Healthy People – Healthy Environment” could act as a productive focus for ministers to explore the framework of the sustainable development goals, linking the goals with a healthy population and healthy ecosystems. On the green economy, he stressed that UNEP was continuing to work on different models and did not only promote one model. The transformations and transitions of the post-2015 development agenda would require a rethinking of investments in many areas including infrastructure; if environment ministers were not involved in the financing of environmental change, their suggestions were likely to be dismissed. Financing challenges were experienced by all countries and examples of best practice by member States would be of interest to ministers.

62. Concerning the structure of the second open-ended meeting of the Committee, he noted that a clear message on arrangements had been communicated and consensus reached on how to proceed. He agreed that effective preparations were essential in ensuring the success of the second session of the Environment Assembly and noted that the secretariat was in the process of updating a paper analysing the advantages and disadvantages of changing the cycle of the Environment Assembly sessions to odd years, which would be circulated to member States.

63. Responding to comments, the Chair said that, at the second open-ended meeting of the Committee, to be held in February 2016, a maximum of two parallel meetings would be held at any one time and, if night sessions were necessary, they would finish by 7.30 p.m. He concurred on the importance of making the best possible use of the intersessional period. With regard to the selection of themes for the high-level segment, the “Food for thought paper” would be amended as discussed and considered anew in the next subcommittee meeting.

**Agenda item 5**

**Report of the subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives**

64. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to his report on the work of the subcommittee.

65. The Committee took note of the report.

**Agenda item 6**

**Election of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives**

66. In accordance with Governing Council decision 19/32 and the principles of rotation and equitable geographical representation among the various regional groups of posts in the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, the following officers were elected by acclamation for the period 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2017, after nomination by their respective regional groups:

Chair: Ms. Julia Pataki (Romania)

Vice-Chair: Mr. John Moreti (Botswana)

Vice-Chair: Ms. Marcela Nicodemos (Brazil)

Rapporteur: Ms. Corinna Enders (Germany).

**Agenda item 7**

**Other matters**

67. One representative requested that interaction with the Executive Director be increased and that other environmental stakeholders be given the opportunity to participate in the discussions of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

**Agenda item 8**

**Closure of the meeting**

68. The meeting was declared closed at 1.10 p.m. on Tuesday, 16 June 2015

Report by the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives on the third meeting of the annual subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme held from 26 to 30 October 2015

I. Opening of the meeting by the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

1. In paragraph 11 of decision 27/2, on implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) decided to establish a subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives that would meet annually for a period of five days to review, with the support of the secretariat, the medium‑term strategy and programme of work and budget, in a manner coherent with the budgetary cycle of the United Nations, and to oversee their implementation and accountability by the secretariat.
2. Accordingly, the third annual meeting of the subcommittee was held at the headquarters of UNEP in Nairobi from 26 to 30 October 2015. The afternoon of the fifth day of the meeting was held as the 132nd meeting of the Committee.
3. The meeting was opened at 9.05 a.m. on Monday, 26 October 2015, by Ms. Julia Pataki, Permanent Representative of Romania and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP, who welcomed participants, including those attending from capitals.
4. The meeting was attended by 91 participants from 57 members and 2 observers.
5. The Chair welcomed new members of the Committee and bade farewell to departing members, thanking them for their contribution to the work of the Committee.
6. She drew the attention of participants to the regional consultations to be held on Thursday, 29 October 2015, which would provide an opportunity to coordinate regional views on any outstanding issues related to the third meeting of the annual subcommittee, and she congratulated the United Nations on the occasion of its seventieth anniversary on 24 October 2015.
7. She said that she would share the task of chairing sessions during the meeting with Mr. John Moreti, Vice Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Botswana.
8. In his opening statement, the Executive Director of UNEP, Mr. Achim Steiner, welcomed the participants to the meeting, including those attending from capitals. He said that the meeting represented a critical step towards the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly and towards defining the 2018–2019 programme of work and budget and the 2018–2021 medium-term strategy of UNEP. He also emphasized the historic significance of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and of the Sustainable Development Goals at the summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, held in New York in September 2015, and said that they would be significant to discussions on the UNEP medium-term strategy and programme of work.
9. He provided an overview of the agenda as well as presentations and reports that had been prepared for the meeting, emphasizing ways in which the UNEP programme of work strengthened sustainability and the environmental dimension throughout the United Nations system and across the sustainable development agenda.
10. He highlighted three items that were critical in preparing for the second session of the Environment Assembly, namely resolutions, the organization and outcome of the high-level segment and the stakeholder engagement policy. He said that the President of the Environment Assembly would provide information at the current meeting on the mandate given to her by the Bureau of the Environment Assembly, in consultation with the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, in relation to the stakeholder engagement policy.
11. With a view to making the Environment Assembly more visible, accessible and interactive, UNEP had launched an online platform ([www.myunea.org](http://www.myunea.org)) at the second Eye on Earth Summit, held in Abu Dhabi in October 2015. He urged representatives to visit the platform, which would feature thematic e-discussions on “Healthy environment – healthy people”, among other topics.
12. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, thanked the secretariat for the preparation of the third meeting of the annual subcommittee and for the timely distribution of pre-session documents. He noted that 2030 Agenda had been adopted as a new universal paradigm for sustainable development and that it provided the framework for poverty eradication and for tackling unsustainability. The central role of sustainable development would require a forward-looking approach and a new way of organizing and planning actions, which meant that UNEP medium-term strategies and programmes of work would need to channel efforts and resources towards achieving the environmental component of the Sustainable Development Goals. He expressed his full commitment to working towards the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda, noting that the latter would shape discussions on the preparation of the second session of the Environment Assembly. He welcomed the overarching theme for the second session “Delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda” and he expressed the hope that the outcome document of the session would set out clear recommendations by environment ministers on the integrated implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda and on the role of UNEP as the leading global authority on environment.
13. He noted that, at its third meeting, the annual subcommittee would review the medium-term strategy and the programme of work and budget and welcomed the progress made on the new medium-term strategy. Highlighting the lack of synchronization between the meeting schedule and the schedule for the approval of the budget, which had resulted in difficulties during the first session of the Environment Assembly, he noted that the approved budget for 2016–2017 may also need to be amended during the second session. He said that he looked forward to an open discussion on the preparatory and organizational aspects of the second session and the second meeting of the Open‑ended Committee of Permanent Representatives taking place in February 2016.
14. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the opportunity afforded by the present meeting to be briefed on the work being undertaken by the secretariat and to take stock of the work carried out during the intersessional period. He welcomed the programme performance review 2014–2015 by the secretariat, which covered a broad spectrum of activities, and recognized the efforts made by the secretariat during the last 18 months of the 2014–2015 biennium of the 2014–2017 medium-term strategy.

II. Adoption of the agenda

1. The following agenda for the annual subcommittee segment was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/CPR/SC2015/2 and Add.1):
2. 1. Opening of the meeting by the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.
3. 2. Adoption of the agenda.
4. 3. Programme performance review 2014–2015, including a review of the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its first session, held in June 2014.
5. 4. Draft medium-term strategy 2018–2021 and programme of work and budget 2018–2019.
6. 5. Update on the stakeholder engagement policy.
7. 6. Initial discussion on the preparation of resolutions to be considered by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its second session, to be held in May 2016.
8. 7. Organization and outcome of the high-level segment.
9. 8. Review of the cycle of sessions of the United Nations Environment Assembly.
10. 9. Strengthening the strategic regional presence of UNEP.
11. 10. Briefing on the final options report of the inquiry into the design of a sustainable financial system.
12. 11. Interactive thematic debate on promoting air quality in the context of healthy environment, healthy people.
13. 10. Other matters.
14. 11. Closure of the meeting.

III. Programme performance review 2014–2015, including review of the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its first session, held in June 2014

1. **Programme performance review 2014–2015**
2. The subcommittee took up the subitem at its 1st session, on the morning of Monday, 26 October 2015. Representatives of the secretariat presented a review of the programme performance of UNEP eighteen months into the biennium 2014–2015, against the results targeted in the medium-term strategy and programme of work for that period. One representative of the secretariat said that the medium-term strategy and programme of work had seven subprogrammes – climate change, disasters and conflicts, ecosystem management, environmental governance, chemicals and waste, resource efficiency and sustainable consumption and production and environment under review – each of which had two or three results areas, termed expected accomplishments. She noted that some indicators had been overachieved, such as climate change, for which all the biennial targets had already been met, while other indicators were at various stages of achievement. She then reviewed the performance of each of the subprogrammes and expected accomplishments in turn, noting those indicators that had been achieved, were on target to be achieved, or were falling below target and required additional effort. A number of the subprogramme performance assessments were accompanied by global maps to show the regional basis of the work of UNEP, as requested by member States.
3. Another representative of the secretariat provided a review of the current budget performance for the biennium. The targeted budget for 2014–2015 was $622.2 million; funding allocated to the UNEP divisions and regional offices totalled $931.8 million; income for the period January 2014 to June 2015 was $940.1 million; and expenditure over that period had been $662.3 million. Looking at budget performance by source of funding, allocations for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and trust funds had been relatively high, as the income received in the period January 2014 to June 2015 had enabled a higher allocation of funding from those sources. Non-earmarked income – the Environment Fund – had not followed this trend, with allocations and expenditures below budget. It had proved a major challenge to get donors to move their earmarked contributions to non-earmarked funds. Member States had committed, at the United Nations General Assembly and at the UNEP Governing Council, to discuss how best to increase allocations to the Environment Fund in order to provide secure, stable, adequate and increased financial resources to finance the UNEP programme of work. A further challenge was presented by the fact that extrabudgetary funding (trust funds, earmarked contributions and GEF trust funds) received for multiple years were currently recorded in the year they were received.
4. Analysing budget, allocations and expenditures by subprogramme, rates of expenditure for each area had generally been good, though allocations in several cases, for example climate change and ecosystem management, were higher than planned budgets, due to the fact that earmarked contributions in those areas far outweighed planned budgets. In addition, UNEP was keeping track of the amount spent on posts versus that for activities; Environment Fund post costs had been kept below the fund budget of $122 million, as requested by member States. With regard to sources of contributions, 38.4 per cent of total income was contributed by member States; 47 per cent by GEF; 7.6 per cent by the European Commission; and 7 per cent by others. Regarding the Environment Fund, 91 of 193 member States had contributed during the 18-month period, while 102 had not, indicating that universality of membership had not yet fully translated into universal responsibility for funding the work of the Programme. The top 15 donors had contributed 93.9 per cent of funds to the Environment Fund, with 93 per cent of earmarked funds coming from another group of 15 donors; further diversification was essential to achieve security and predictability in funding. In conclusion, the representative of the secretariat said that UNEP had given continued attention to strengthening results-based management, and had conducted training on the Umoja enterprise resource planning system and on results-based management.
5. During the subsequent discussion, a number of representatives thanked the secretariat for the information provided and for the effort that had been made to present the information in an accessible format. One representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries said that, in line with a request made at the previous subcommittee meeting, more effort should be made to show how UNEP was delivering its programme of work at the regional level. One representative said that the Pacific region should feature on all maps.
6. Regarding the performance of the various subprogrammes, several representatives expressed satisfaction at the levels of achievement against the indicators under several of the subpgrogrammes, though a number sought explanations for the subprogramme areas where levels of achievement were lower then expected, for example in the areas of disasters and conflicts, chemicals and wastes, and the environment under review, and whether the underperformance was due to funding shortfalls or to other factors. On the matter of disasters and conflicts, one representative said that difficulties experienced in the predictability of funding due to the nature of the subprogramme might be alleviated if greater focus was laid on risk reduction. One representative asked for information on how activities under the climate change subprogramme were being aligned with those undertaken under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, particularly in the context of the forthcoming twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. He also noted with satisfaction the successful implementation of the UNEP Live platform within the environment under review subprogramme.
7. Several representatives raised concerns at the difficulties presented by the skewing of funding towards earmarked rather than non-earmarked contributions, to the detriment of the Environment Fund, and urged that greater efforts be made to encourage non-earmarked contributions. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, requested more information on how UNEP applied a compensation mechanism to overcome funding gaps to ensure that the programme of work was delivered. Another representative asked for further information on the funding of Umoja and on the progress being made in resolving the difficulties faced in the roll-out of the system, especially in view of its imminent implementation at United Nations Headquarters in New York.
8. One representative expressed appreciation for the efforts made by the secretariat to carry out regular assessments across all the subprogrammes and to use those assessments to continually refine the goals and indicators. He also said that there was a need for more contextual information to help understand the reasons for the shortfall in achieving some expected accomplishments, and the efforts being made to address those issues.
9. Responding to the issues raised, the Executive Director first expressed great satisfaction at the quality and breadth of the programme performance report, which represented a breakthrough in the large amount of substantive information being presented on a wide range of expected accomplishments, and which was a culmination of the significant efforts that had been made within UNEP to switch to results-based reporting. Regarding the achievement of indicators, he said that some subprogrammes had not been planned in a totally realistic way, resulting in underambitious or overambitious target setting, and that needed to be borne in mind when assessing performance and when setting future targets. He also noted that unpredictable external events, such as political upheavals, could have an influence on planned activities and on the ability of UNEP to report on results. He agreed with the observation that funding challenges had been a significant factor in the ability of the organization to deliver its programme of work, but said that they were not necessarily the main factor. Demand and supply were also important factors, for example in the case of climate change, which was a funding priority for a number of countries and donors. Policy decisions were also influential – in the case of chemicals and waste, for example, the decision to develop the Minamata Convention on Mercury had entailed a herculean effort in terms of human, management and financial resources. Despite those variables, the vast majority of what was undertaken by UNEP was now enabled and authorized through the programme of work within a transparent and rigorous framework.
10. In terms of financing, he continued, the overall picture was positive, and UNEP had responded well to challenges related to the financial crisis and the changing donor landscape. Managing the different streams of financing had presented difficulties, but it had not been as disruptive to the Environment Fund as the figures might suggest, and a degree of managerial stability had been achieved. However, achieving a balance between earmarked and non-earmarked contributions remained a fundamental Achilles’ heel for UNEP, and it was vital to find ways to increase country contributions to the Environment Fund. With regard to Umoja, he acknowledged the problems that had arisen from putting in place a complex new system, but UNEP was working with UN-Habitat and the United Nations Office at Nairobi to deal with the issues. On the matter of the Pacific region, he said that UNEP continued to look at how best to work with small island developing States and others in the region. Regarding disasters and conflicts, he recognized that this was by nature a volatile area, but UNEP was working with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction in the context of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 to achieve its targets in that area. On climate change, he said that the secretariat was striving to ensure that the work of UNEP was fully aligned and synchronized with that of the Framework Convention on Climate Change in all relevant areas. In conclusion, he stressed that the programme performance report was a monitoring picture, not an impact evaluation, and further thought needed on how to make impact tracking part of the focus of the United Nations Environment Assembly, given that the most dramatic impacts could occur years or even decades after the initial intervention.
11. One representative of the secretariat said that opportunities for resource mobilization existed at the regional level, and a proposed executive director post in the United Nations Office for Project Services had been changed to a post for resource mobilization chief in order to strengthen leverage of financing. With regard to Umoja, she acknowledged the difficulties that arose from the complexity of the implementation, but stressed the benefits that would arise when the system was fully functioning. Another representative of the secretariat said that the finalization of the report on the full period of the biennium was planned for early January 2016, though the secretariat was yet to decide how to deal with performance results that only became available late in the reporting period. With regard to apparent underperformance, she said that that could arise from the rigour applied to the validation process in some instances – for example, in the area of ecosystem management, the target would probably be reached on the official launch of two more country accounts from Gabon and Morocco. Other representatives of the secretariat gave further details on collaborative work being undertaken within the disasters and conflicts, chemicals and waste, climate change, and resource efficiency subprogrammes, and on helping countries prepare their intended nationally determined contributions as part of the preparation of the annual emissions gap report.
12. The Executive Director added that, in reporting back on performance, there were some aspects that did not necessarily register highly on indicators but were of fundamental importance. For example, on the matter of gender, a United Nations system-wide report on gender performance by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) had rated UNEP very highly compared to other United Nations entities and the United Nations system as a whole. That had been achieved by making gender a cross-cutting issue that was the responsibility of every manager within the Programme.
13. During ensuing discussion on matters related to the programme of work and budget, one representative said that during further budget negotiations at the current meeting it would help to have more information on the non-earmarked core contributions, including their amounts and where they were allocated; and on the expectations placed on deputies in the regions with regard to resource mobilization. Another representative said that it would help country representatives to convince their treasuries of the benefits of funding UNEP if information was presented in summary form, in either the programme performance report or the medium-term strategy, on the initiatives and partnerships in which UNEP had been engaged. Another representative raised the issue of how UNEP could best deliver at country level within the “One United Nations” approach.
14. The Executive Director said that convincing treasuries to finance UNEP remained a communications challenge. Summarizing the major global initiatives in the environmental sphere that had emanated from UNEP, he said that the Programme was at the forefront of international actions pertaining to the 2030 Agenda and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and UNEP needed to convince ministers of finance that investing in the Programme was a significant value proposition. On the matter of country presence, he said that the problem was not lack of demand but lack of ability to respond – UNEP had unique expertise but had focused on regional presence, and thus needed to establish how best to ensure that its regional offices engaged with United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and United Nations country teams to achieve national environmental targets. Finally, on the matter of funding, he said that further discussion needed to take place on the conduits through which environment-related funding were channelled to ensure the most effective application of those funds.
15. **Review of the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its first session, held in June 2014**
16. The subcommittee took up the subitem at its 2nd session, in the afternoon of Monday, 26 October 2015. The Deputy Executive Director of UNEP introduced a progress report on the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its first session, entitled “Update on the implementation of the UNEA-1 resolutions”. He said that the 17 resolutions had been fully embedded into the UNEP programme of work and the secretariat’s operations and their implementation was on track, albeit to varying degrees. The resolutions had opened the door to new partnerships and greater collaboration on a range of issues between UNEP and a wide range of partners, including United Nations system entities, scientific bodies and civil society organizations, and UNEP would continue to enhance such collaboration and mobilize additional resources to ensure that all the resolutions were fully implemented.
17. He highlighted some of the implementation activities described in the report. Regarding resolution 1/3, on illegal trade in wildlife, new partnerships had been created and activities conducted that had contributed to raising awareness on the illegal trade and had built considerable momentum around the issue at the global, regional and national levels; the African Elephant Fund had been ramped up, with 30 projects totalling almost $2 million under implementation. Additional work was needed, however, to deal with the illegal trade in wildlife, including low-profile species.
18. Concerning resolution 1/4, on the science-policy interface, country use of the UNEP Live platform had grown, six regional assessments that would feed into the sixth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6) report had been produced, and six regional environmental information network conferences and expert consultations had identified issues requiring further study, including on the illegal trade in low-profile wildlife, the biodegradability of marine plastics, and the induction of plant toxicity due to drought.
19. Regarding resolution 1/5, on chemicals and waste, progress had been made in the creation of the trust fund of the Special Programme to support institutional strengthening at the national level for implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the Minamata Convention and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management; the interim Secretariat of the Minamata Convention had been established and continued to work in close collaboration with the secretariats of the Basel Convention on the Control of the Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and of the Strategic Approach; and UNEP continued to work with the World Health Organization (WHO) under the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint.
20. With regard to resolution 1/6, on marine plastic debris and microplastics, a special report on plastics in cosmetics had been launched on 8 June 2015; UNEP was collaborating with a Swiss expedition to assess and raise awareness about plastic pollution; and reports on “Gender, plastics and chemicals” and on marine litter legislation were being developed. Additional partnerships were needed to tackle the problem of marine debris. As for resolution 1/7, on strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme in promoting air quality, regional air quality assessments were being undertaken and a low-cost air quality-monitoring unit had been developed and was being piloted in Nairobi, where a number of such units had been installed, and would be extended to other countries. Regarding resolution 1/8, on ecosystem-based adaptation, 38 projects to implement ecosystem-based adaptation approaches in various countries were being implemented across the world.
21. As for resolution 1/11, on coordination across the United Nations system in the field of the environment, including the Environment Management Group, limited progress had been achieved in the development of system-wide strategies on the environment, due to the fact that engaging in consultations with a wide range of United Nations entities, each with its own governing body and decision-making procedures, was a time‑consuming process, and that many of those entities had felt that it was necessary to hold off discussions on the strategies pending the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. Consultations would continue and UNEP would aim to ensure ownership of the strategies by all United Nations system entities. The mandate of a task team for maximizing the effectiveness of the Environment Management Group in the context of the 2030 Agenda had been extended, with a report to be submitted to the Environment Assembly at its second session.
22. Under resolution 1/12, on the relationship between the United Nations Environment Programme and multilateral environmental agreements, a task team established in 2014 to examine the effectiveness of administrative arrangements and programmatic cooperation between UNEP and the multilateral environmental agreements for which it provided secretariat services had completed its work and would present a report to the Environment Assembly at its second session. Lastly, regarding resolution 1/14 on implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, following consultations with member States and stakeholders, a revised version of the draft UNEP access-to-information policy would be submitted to the Executive Director the following week for his consideration.
23. In closing, Mr. Thiaw said that it would be desirable if, in future sessions of the Environment Assembly, negotiations on all resolutions were synchronized with the negotiations on the draft programme of work and budget. Such synchronization would enable member States to incorporate all resolutions into the programme of work and budget without delay, and the secretariat to provide detailed information on the implementation of all resolutions through its regular reporting cycle, while enabling more frequent, policy-level updates on such implementation to the Committee and annual subcommittee.
24. In the ensuing discussion, all the representatives who spoke expressed appreciation to the secretariat and the Deputy Executive Director for the information provided.
25. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, requested additional information on the UNEP global public awareness-raising efforts to tackle the illegal trade in wildlife, including timelines for deliverables under resolution 1/3. Another expressed support for UNEP efforts to tackle the illegal trade in low-profile species, saying that such efforts would promote greater involvement on the issue by other regions in addition to Asia and Africa.
26. Regarding resolution 1/4, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, asked about progress achieved in the production of a gap analysis report on environmental data, information and assessments and policy recommendations for a strengthened science-policy interface, and in developing a long-term plan for the development and use of UNEP Live. Another enquired about the specific relationship between the information provided in the UNEP Live country pages and that provided in an online reporting obligations database of internationally agreed reporting obligations. Another representative said that it was important that future work on the science-policy interface bear in mind the 2030 Agenda.
27. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, requested information on challenges concerning the staffing of the secretariat of the Strategic Approach with a representative of WHO, efforts to assist countries in joining the Minamata Convention, and the interlinkages between chemicals and waste policies in the global outlook on waste prevention, minimization and management under development (resolution 1/5); and progress in producing a draft revised Global Environmental Monitoring System/Water (GEMS/Water) programme (resolution 1/9). He also suggested that a more detailed briefing on the report entitled “Uncovering pathways towards an inclusive green economy”, prepared in response to resolution 1/10, on different visions, approaches, models and tools to achieve environmental sustainability in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, be provided to the Committee of Permanent Representatives prior to the second session of the Environment Assembly.
28. One representative asked for additional information on the implementation of resolution 1/7, and another asked whether limited progress in implementation of the resolution was due to a lack of resources. One representative asked about the status of implementation of a paragraph that encouraged Governments to share with the secretariat the results and experiences of their efforts to take action across sectors to improve air quality, formulate action plans and establish and implement ambient air quality standards, and make air quality data more accessible and understandable to the public. Another requested information on the technical support that UNEP could provide to countries, as well as the contact details of focal points responsible for developing air quality assessments in each region.
29. With respect to resolution 1/11, one representative asked if the Secretariat would share with member States draft system-wide strategies on the environment prior to the second session of the Environment Assembly. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, queried whether a single report or three different reports would be produced in response to the resolution. He also asked whether additional consultations with member States and stakeholders would be conducted before the draft UNEP access-to-information policy was submitted for consideration by the Environment Assembly.
30. Regarding resolution 1/6, one representative enquired whether a programme to deal with marine plastic debris in South Asia had been established. Two representatives asked whether the implementation of Umoja would delay the delivery of the study on marine plastic debris and microplastics to be prepared in accordance with resolution 1/6, or indeed any other deliverables to be produced in response to resolutions of the Environment Assembly.
31. Stating that a number of resolutions adopted by the Environment Assembly at its first session would be implemented over the course of many years, one representative called on the secretariat to provide information regarding its plans to implement such resolutions in the future and, supported by another, said that the Environment Assembly should not lose sight of past resolutions even as it adopted new ones.
32. A number of representatives expressed support for the idea of ensuring that in the future the Environment Assembly negotiations on all resolutions be synchronized with those on the programme of work and budget and/or the medium-term strategy. One said that, until such synchronization was achieved, the secretariat should continue to provide detailed regular updates to the Committee and its subcommittees on the implementation of each of the resolutions by the Environment Assembly.
33. The Deputy Executive Director welcomed the positive reaction to the proposal that draft resolutions for the consideration of the Environment Assembly should in future be submitted in accordance with deadlines set specifically to allow for their full alignment with the programme of work and budget, and likewise to the proposal that regular updates on the implementation of the resolutions of the Environment Assembly at its first session should continue to be provided until the fulfilment of the actions requested therein. In that context, he agreed that it was important not to lose sight of those resolutions after the second session of the Environment Assembly had taken place, particularly given the long-term nature of some of the requested actions. He affirmed that UNEP would continue to mobilize the necessary partnerships for the completion of all such actions.
34. Responding to issues raised, he said that the potential impact of the roll-out of Umoja on the implementation of the resolutions adopted at the first session had not yet been fully assessed, but that the report for the second session mentioned in connection with resolution 1/6 would be delivered on schedule, although finalization of the requisite financial data might be somewhat delayed. Concerning the forthcoming report of the Executive Director on coordination across the United Nations system in the field of the environment, including the Environment Management Group, he said that the related work of the interagency task team had progressed more slowly than anticipated insofar as efforts to ensure ownership and buy-in by all involved actors had taken priority over everything else. Accelerated coordination of the process was now under way, but uncertainty remained as to whether all essential tasks would be completed in time to enable delivery of the report in advance of the second session of the Environment Assembly. He confirmed that all the reports mentioned in resolution 1/11 were indeed in preparation. Concerning the activities for raising awareness of the illegal trade in wildlife, the intention was to complete them by early 2016. The analysis of the environmental impact of such trade was set for completion by the end of 2015.
35. Continuing the response to issues raised, a representative of the secretariat said that Governments and stakeholders would have the opportunity during the planned informal dialogue to comment further on the revised draft of the draft UNEP access-to-information policy prior to its finalization by the Executive Director. Concerning action on marine litter in the South Asia region, another representative of the secretariat said that UNEP, in response to a recent request, would seek to initiate support for the development of a marine litter action plan for that region. She additionally drew attention to the newly-launched massive open online course on marine litter and also said that the Swiss Government was indeed welcome to complete a written version of the ecosystem-based adaptation survey now that the online option was no longer available.
36. Answering questions raised relating to air quality, a representative of the secretariat said that a database would be established on the basis of information shared by various member States concerning the results of their efforts to improve air quality and that a policy report on the subject of air quality was being prepared for submission to the Environment Assembly at its second session, as was a report on capabilities with respect to air quality actions. Regional directors served as the focal points for activities relating to air quality, which were coordinated through the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics. Further details of those activities would be provided during the interactive debate to be held on promoting air quality on 30 October 2015. On the matter of pathways to an inclusive green economy, she highlighted the work and activities described in the written update on the implementation of resolution 1/10, adding that the efforts to acquire a broader understanding of the green economy were focused beyond allocation and production towards consumption and inclusive outcomes. If so requested, the secretariat would be pleased to give a presentation on the subject to the Committee of Permanent Representatives.
37. With regard to the questions on chemicals and waste issues, a representative of the secretariat said that budgetary constraints had for the past three years precluded the secondment by WHO of a staff member to the Strategic Approach secretariat. UNEP nonetheless continued to collaborate closely with WHO in the Strategic Approach context, bearing in mind the importance of WHO support to the maintenance of the environment and health link in that sphere. As to collaboration between the secretariats of the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, ways of continuing to enhance synergies were being constantly explored, including through regional workshops on the implementation of the four conventions. UNEP was also collaborating with the secretariat of the Basel Convention on matters relating to mercury waste and the Special Programme to support institutional strengthening at the national level for implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the Minamata Convention and the Strategic Approach. Synergies were further enhanced by the practice of embedding staff members from one secretariat into another during important meetings with a view to providing relevant support. Concerning the interlinkages between chemicals and waste policies in the global outlook on waste prevention, minimization and management, he drew attention to the recently-launched Global Waste Management Outlook, which focused on the “cradle-to-cradle” approach to waste management. He added that those interlinkages were likewise supported by the merging of the chemicals and waste portfolios of the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics.
38. In providing the requested information relating to the science-policy interface, another representative of the secretariat said that the gap analysis report on environmental data, information and assessments had been reviewed by a global intergovernmental multi-stakeholder consultation and was on track for completion before the second session of the Environment Assembly. Gaps had also been analysed at the recent Regional Environment Information Network conferences, and during the process involved in developing the sustainable development indicators. A long-term plan was being formulated for UNEP Live, which now had its own Sustainable Development Goals portal. The concern expressed to ensure that science was utilized in support of the environmental dimension of the sustainable development agenda was therefore answered by those developments. With respect to the database of internationally agreed reporting obligations linked to the UNEP Live country pages, she said that the database provided only an overview of those obligations. The United Nations information portal on multilateral environmental agreements, InforMEA, with which UNEP Live worked in close collaboration, was instead the source of additional information on such matters as the outcomes of important meetings relating to multilateral environmental agreements.
39. Concerning other questions posed, she said that GEMS/Water had played a key role in the Global Environmental Management Initiative for assisting the integrated monitoring of water-related and sanitation-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goal and that the Initiative had also provided input to the process of developing the relevant indicators. She confirmed that the work relating to the GEO-6 regional assessments was continuing on track.
40. Responding to a request for information concerning the recent meeting of senior government officials expert in environmental law on the mid-term review of the fourth Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law, held in Montevideo, a representative of the secretariat said that the report of the meeting would be issued shortly. He added that, in addition to conducting the mid-term review, participants at the meeting had discussed emerging issues and produced recommendations relating to future priorities for consideration at the second session of the Environment Assembly.

IV. Draft medium-term strategy 2018‒2021 and programme of work and budget 2018‒2019

1. The subcommittee, chaired by Ms. Pataki, took up the item at its 3rd session, on the morning of Tuesday, 27 October 2015. The representatives of the secretariat gave a presentation on the draft medium-term strategy 2018–2021 and the programme of work and budget 2018–2019.
2. A representative of the secretariat commenced the presentation with a timeline illustrating the development of the medium-term strategy 2018–2021 and the programme of work and budget 2018–2019. He said that the Sustainable Development Goals had not been fully included in the dialogue with the Committee of Permanent Representatives while they were in the process of development, but now that they had been endorsed by the General Assembly there was a need to discuss further how they would be integrated with the medium-term strategy and the programme of work. Significant progress had been made through an iterative process on a number of issues, including the development and endorsement of the 2030 vision of UNEP, agreement on the subprogrammes through which the programme of work would be delivered, and definition of the indicators by which progress would be measured. During the process, the secretariat had attempted to respond to the wishes of the Committee by making the medium-term strategy more concise, including more information on the strategic elements of the subprogrammes, establishing clearer linkages with the 2030 Agenda, and indicating priority issues.
3. Regarding the Sustainable Development Goals, the secretariat had undertaken a mapping exercise to analyse the linkages between the goals and the subprogrammes of the medium-term strategy. The primary Sustainable Development Goal addressed by each subprogramme had been identified, as well as the other goals of relevance to the subprogramme. While the mapping exercise was more aspirational than prescriptive, it did indicate that UNEP was well poised to support the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. In a more complex second mapping exercise, the secretariat had considered the indicators of achievement from the 2018–2019 programme of work against all 169 targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, UNEP needed to improve its business model to deliver the products requested by member States.
4. Another representative of the secretariat, continuing the presentation, gave more detailed information on each of the subprogrammes. It was too early, he said, to embed the Sustainable Development Goals in the current version of the medium-term strategy and programme of work, but initial analysis showed that UNEP was well positioned to support country efforts to attain the goals through implementation of its subprogrammes.
5. Another representative of the secretariat laid out three options for the proposed budget envelope for 2018–2019: a nominal growth budget with an overall budget envelope of $700 million; a conservative option with an overall budget envelope of $720 million; and an option based on the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), “The Future We Want”, with an overall budget envelope of $795 million. All three options assumed an Environment Fund budget of $271 million. Additional income was expected in coming years from the Green Climate Fund, but it was not yet known what that income would amount to. The secretariat, she said, was disappointed in the failure of the Environment Fund to achieve its target levels, but took it as a signal to work harder to increase funding levels rather than to scale back. The United Nations regular budget projected contribution to the UNEP secretariat for 2018–2019 currently stood at $45.9 million, though that amount was provisional and awaited the decision of the General Assembly in December 2015 on the regular budget contribution to UNEP in 2016–2017.
6. With regard to the sources of funding, 18 per cent was projected to come from the core budget, and 82 per cent from extrabudgetary and non-core sources. While there was considerable uncertainty on funding sources and amounts, the increase in extrabudgetary funding was indicative of the confidence of donors in what UNEP could deliver. In addition, a trend analysis showed an overall rise in funding from all sources, though the Environment Fund remained an area where a greater rate of increase would be welcomed. The move towards results-based budgeting was on track, and by December 2015 the budget would be broken down by subprogramme, staff and non-staff categories, and sources of funding. A number of challenges remained, including the unpredictability of core funding, the high percentage of extrabudgetary funding, the timing of funding inflows, and the fact that projections needed to be made for 2018–2019 without the benefit of experience gained from 2016–2017 implementation, though the situation should become clearer as 2016 progressed.
7. In the ensuing discussion, general appreciation was expressed for the presentations and for the latest, more succinct, version of the proposed draft medium-term strategy for 2018–2021, especially the emphasis on results-based management, private sector involvement, monitoring and evaluation, resilience to disasters and conflicts and, last but not least, alignment with the 2030 Agenda. In regard to the latter, several representatives welcomed the inclusion of the “vision 2030” section with one, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, also welcoming the addition of the “2030 impact” indicators to the subprogramme outcome maps, and another suggesting that links should be forged between them and those associated with the Sustainable Development Goals. A number of representatives said that it was unclear as to how some of the 2030 impact indicators would be measured, with one adding that there was no indication of whether baseline data would be available. One representative highlighted inconsistencies in the way the indicators were presented in the different subprogrammes, as well as in the language used in the introductory boxes and the outcome maps, which seemed to indicate a lack of a common approach, and he called for a more careful use of terminology. Another requested further clarification of the terminology used for the outcomes, impacts and goals in the light of the fact that they pertained to differently defined and measured activities, adding that greater clarity in that regard might help to clarify the indicators; meanwhile, the “service lines” in the business model, she said, should be associated with the various subprogrammes for different regions.
8. One representative said that the structure of the subprogrammes should be revisited after the current meeting, taking into account the previous day’s discussions with the Executive Director and the thematic debate at the end of the week. Echoing the comments of another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, he said that it was urgent also to take into account the outcome of the upcoming twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and that a detailed list should be provided of the partnerships and non-binding collaborative mechanisms in which UNEP played an active part so as to make clear the respective roles and mandates of all involved. Another representative suggested including a list of selected academic institutions capable of carrying out programmes through environmental sustainability-related curricula. Other issues cited by representatives as in need of further attention included air quality, marine debris, illegal wildlife trade, gender mainstreaming, technology transfer, capacity-building and financial assistance, as well as the delivery of the strategy through a regional programme framework, the role of UNEP in the 2030 Agenda, civil society participation in environmental policymaking and rule of law and, more broadly, the interrelationship between the environmental and the economic and social dimensions of sustainable development.
9. On the proposed draft budget and programme of work for 2018–2019, several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, endorsed the emphasis on, inter alia, results-based budgeting and expanding the donor base, although one representative said that it remained to be seen whether donors and partners could be encouraged to provide funding at the programme level, adding that donor-driven programmes did not tally with the spirit of multilateralism. More information was requested on the three options for preparing the budget, including the results expected from each option, as well as on how the relationship between UNEP and the Green Climate Fund would influence the budget process; on how results-based budgeting differed from the previous approach and its potential impact on regional allocations; and on the projections for earmarked contributions. One representative observed that the projected contribution from the United Nations regular budget to the UNEP secretariat for 2018–2019 stood at $45.9 million, even though the General Assembly had yet to decide on the matter and the current allocation remained at $35 million. On the Environment Fund, two representatives said that the proposed budget of approximately $271 million appeared unrealistic, and another said that the scale of work to be done called for more resources and an emphasis on ensuring balanced geographical distribution. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that, among other things, it was not clear whether the subprogrammes would receive the same share of the budget as for 2016–2017 and that the programme of work, which did not adequately reflect UNEP priorities and its normative role at the global level, should be shaped by policy decisions rather than results-based budgeting.
10. In response to the various comments and suggestions on the proposed draft medium-term strategy, the Deputy Executive Director recognized that more work was needed in areas such as gender mainstreaming and integrating the environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development. However, time was running out to finalize the document and he requested the subcommittee’s guidance on how to refine the definitions and indicators, as well as how all the additional information requested could be incorporated into the document without undermining the concise nature of the latest version. Further to the discussion on the proposed draft programme of work and budget, he said that it was important to bear in mind the context in which UNEP was now operating and the need to ensure stable funding, especially in view of the increased burden of expectation on the Programme following the call for its strengthening in the outcome document of Rio+20 and the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals. Expressing appreciation for the additional resources made available to the Environment Fund, he urged those member States using the services of UNEP but not yet contributing to the Fund to consider doing so.
11. One representative of the secretariat, responding to the call from one representative to further prioritize the promotion of air quality in the proposed draft medium-term strategy, said that UNEP attached great importance to the issue of air quality, as reflected in the work being done by the Division of Technology, Industry and Economics in coordination with the Division of Environmental Law and Conventions in the areas of regional and country-level assessments, institutional-strengthening and policy frameworks, in partnership with the World Health Organization. Regarding the proposed draft medium-term strategy, she said that the inclusion of a specific subprogramme on air quality was one of three options that UNEP had developed for tackling the issue, and that in the event of other options being adopted, expected accomplishments could be included not only in the environmental governance subprogramme but also in the subprogramme on environment under review.
12. Another representative of the secretariat, responding to comments, said that importance was attached to strengthening collaboration with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs within the framework of resilience to disasters and conflicts; that marine debris was a major cross-cutting work within UNEP, covering areas that ranged from legal aspects through awareness-raising to the promotion of technologies and best practices; and that the issue would be tackled within the proposed healthy and productive ecosystem subprogramme, which had strong links to the chemicals and waste subprogramme that could be made clearer in the document. Regarding education and the use of environmental sustainability-related curricula, she said that it was the responsibility of Governments to select the academic institutions best qualified to play a role in implementing specific programmes, although UNEP could create networks of universities dealing with environmental issues, such as the Global Universities Partnership on Environment and Sustainability.
13. Another representative of the secretariat, responding to comments on the proposed draft budget, said that it consisted largely of targets and conservative expectations developed by experienced staff on the ground; that the only stable part of the budget would not be determined until the General Assembly adopted its decision on the United Nations regular budget allocation in December 2015, although the assumption had been that it would be maintained at the current level; and that it was difficult to estimate allocations from the Green Climate Fund, as the first projects submitted would not be approved until late 2016. As to whether the projections regarding the Environment Fund were realistic, she said that it would depend on whether universal membership could truly be achieved, which was a matter for member States to decide.
14. Another representative of the secretariat said that the comments on the terminology used in the proposed draft medium-term strategy would be addressed in due course and he expressed appreciation for the comment on enhancing civil society participation, urging the major groups and stakeholders to press the secretariat to do more in that regard.

V. Update on the stakeholder engagement policy

1. The subcommittee, chaired by Mr. John Moreti, Vice-Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Botswana, took up the item at its fifth session, on the morning of Wednesday, 28 October 2015. The item was introduced by Mr. Damdin Dagvadorj (Mongolia) on behalf of Ms. Oyun Sanjaasuren, President of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP. Mr. Dagvadorj provided an update on the status of the President’s consultations with member States on the outstanding elements of the UNEP draft stakeholder engagement policy. He recalled that by decision 27/2 the Governing Council had decided that the United Nations Environment Assembly should ensure the active participation of all relevant stakeholders, and should develop by 2014 a process for stakeholder accreditation and participation. Accordingly, a draft stakeholder engagement policy had been developed and had been discussed at various forums, including at the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly in June 2014, but consensus had not yet been reached on various aspects of the policy. The President of the Environment Assembly had therefore conducted informal discussions with interested parties in a bid to resolve the outstanding issues and with the intention of presenting a revised text for consideration by the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives at its second meeting in February 2016.
2. In the ensuing discussion, many representatives stressed the importance of reaching consensus on the matter, given the value added to the work of UNEP by wide-ranging stakeholder engagement. Several representatives stressed the importance of engagement of all stakeholders in national environmental policy development and governance processes, given the benefits that could arise from that engagement, with a number giving examples from their own countries of policies and legislation designed to encourage the contribution of non-governmental organizations and civil society. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, requested an update on the status of the UNEP draft access-to-information policy, which was of relevance to the present deliberations. Some representatives said that negotiations on the draft stakeholder engagement policy should take as their basis the principles outlined in paragraph 88 of the Rio+20 outcome document and Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.
3. A number of representatives said that while broad stakeholder engagement was desirable, it should be recalled that the Environment Assembly was first and foremost an intergovernmental body, and the member States had the ultimate responsibility for decision-making and for the planning and implementation of policies. One representative said that in funding attendance at meetings, priority should be given to member States, particularly those with developing economies, over other attendees. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that stakeholders should not participate in the Bureau of the Environment Assembly or the Committee of Permanent Representatives; should only be able to access documents in line with the access-to-information policy; should have some legal status in the countries in which they operated; and should have wide geographical representation. In addition, the list of accredited stakeholders should be submitted to members of the Committee at least two months before a meeting of the Open-ended Committee. One representative said that civil society organizations working at the national level should be considered for accreditation, as many such organizations in developing countries did not have the capacity to operate at the international level.
4. One representative, speaking on behalf of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee, outlined the benefits to UNEP and the environmental agenda of taking advantage of the range of skills and expertise that various stakeholders could offer, particularly in view of the opportunities arising from the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. She emphasized that the major groups understood and respected the intergovernmental nature of the Environment Assembly and other UNEP decision-making bodies, and said that finalization of the stakeholder engagement policy would help to establish a firm footing for cooperation between major groups and UNEP, to their mutual advantage.
5. Regarding the way forward, most representatives who spoke supported the continuation of informal bilateral discussions in Nairobi with interested parties under the aegis of the President of the Environment Assembly. Those discussions should be open, transparent and inclusive in order to ensure that consensus was reached on the elements of the draft stakeholder engagement policy.
6. Mr. Dagvadorj thanked the representatives for their inputs, noting the broad consensus on the value of stakeholder engagement and the willingness to continue to discuss the matter informally in order to find agreement on the stakeholder engagement policy. The Deputy Executive Director, responding to the query on the status of the access-to-information policy, said that comments had been received on the draft that had been circulated and the text was being revised accordingly. The policy was expected to be finalized in early December 2015 for consideration and approval by the Executive Director.

VI. Initial discussion on the preparation of resolutions to be considered by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its second session, to be held in May 2016

1. The subcommittee, chaired by Ms. Pataki, took up the item at its 6th session, on the afternoon of Wednesday, 28 October 2015. Concerning possible resolutions to be considered by the Environment Assembly at its second session, the representative of Japan said that his Government, together with those of Bhutan and Mongolia, had proposed a draft resolution on environmentally sound technologies in relation to waste management, bearing in mind the need to strengthen national capacities on that issue, including through coordinated and institutionalized activities for reducing waste generation, as recognized in the Sustainable Development Goals. He suggested that the issue could alternatively be covered under a draft omnibus resolution on the environmentally sound management of chemicals and waste. Additional sponsors would be welcome, he said, to which one representative responded with an expression of support and willingness to work on the issue.
2. The representative of the secretariat informed members of a proposal submitted by the Islamic Republic of Iran for a draft resolution on the role, functions and follow-up to the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific, in addition to a proposal submitted by Samoa for a draft resolution on the role, functions and modalities for UNEP implementation of the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway) and the Sustainable Development Goals, which was endorsed by one representative. Full details of both proposals were available in the compilation of possible resolutions that may be tabled by member States during the second session, which had been circulated to members.
3. The representative of Mongolia introduced his Government’s proposal for a draft resolution on investing in human capacity for sustainable development through environmental education in training. The objective was to promote greater awareness and capacity among policymakers, future leaders and the public in addressing priority environment and sustainability issues, which was relevant to the global development agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Environment Assembly and the UNEP programme of work. One representative voiced support for the proposal. The representative of Sri Lanka informed members that his Government had withdrawn its proposal for a draft resolution on strengthening the compensation regime for the environment sector, which he said it might instead submit at a later stage.
4. The representative of Ukraine presented his Government’s proposal for a draft resolution on the protection of the environment in conflict-affected areas, the aim of which was to raise awareness of the risks and challenges posed to the environment by armed conflicts; strengthen national implementation of the few existing international instruments on the subject; and promote close international cooperation for preventing and reducing the consequences of military action. He looked forward to receiving inputs to, and achieving consensus on, the eventual draft, which would be environmentally oriented rather than politically motivated, and said that additional sponsors would be welcome.
5. The representative of Botswana put forward a proposal for a draft resolution on sustainable optimal management of natural capital, based on the crucial need for investment in that capital in the many countries dependent on natural resources for growth, sustainable development and poverty eradication. Such investment was also vital for preserving ecosystems, stemming migration and creating jobs in those countries. The issue was furthermore especially relevant to several of the UNEP subprogrammes, to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and to the Environment Assembly itself. Additional sponsors would be welcome.
6. The representative of Norway informed members of her Government’s intention to submit a draft resolution on marine plastics as a follow-up to Environment Assembly resolution 1/6 on marine plastic debris and microplastics. Two representatives expressed support for that proposal, with one saying that his Government would wish to sponsor such a draft resolution. The representative of Switzerland said that his Government was intending to propose two draft resolutions: one relating to strategic elements in biodiversity and synergies; and the other relating to commodities and the International Resource Panel. The representative of Mexico added that his Government was evaluating the possibility of submitting a proposal for a draft resolution, which he said would largely depend on developments occurring at the important thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.
7. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, suggested four vital topics that merited attention in a draft resolution, the first of which was the role of UNEP in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The scope of such a draft resolution would be best determined on the basis of the forthcoming report on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda, which should therefore be made available well in advance of the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives. The second topic was oceans, on which a draft resolution should address closer coordination and synergies among regional and international organizations dealing with marine issues in order to support an integrated approach to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development). It should also seek to further strengthen the science-policy interface and call for additional UNEP work on marine protected areas and emerging issues, as well as devote a section to the subject of marine litter, which could otherwise perhaps be incorporated into the draft resolution on marine plastics to be developed by Norway. The third topic was sustainable consumption and production, with respect to which a draft resolution should address such issues as resource efficiency, the importance of the circular economy and the life cycle approach to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, sustainable supply chains and strengthening of the science-policy interface, including with reference to the work of the International Resource Panel. The fourth topic was cities and urbanization, taking into account UNEP engagement in the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), which required further discussion on the key messages to be conveyed.
8. Those suggestions were endorsed by another representative, who drew attention to a paper elaborated by a UNEP-led multi-stakeholder expert meeting on options for enhanced cooperation and synergies among biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements, which she briefly outlined. One representative expressed the hope that the recommendations set out in that paper would be taken into account during the preparations for the second session of the Environment Assembly and that the latter would mandate UNEP to translate the suggested options into outcomes, as well as provide the necessary guidance.
9. The Deputy Executive Director additionally highlighted the 11 issues listed in the document entitled“Initial discussion on the preparation of resolutions to be adopted at the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly” (UNEP/CPR/SC2015/6) that had been identified for possible consideration by member States in their deliberations on resolutions to be adopted at the second session of the Environment Assembly.
10. Responding to a request from the Chair for views concerning the organization of work on the subject in advance the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives in February 2016, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, underscored the need to ensure a balance of policy and governance issues in the draft resolutions, the number of which should also be manageable. To that end, she suggested that the secretariat could act as a facilitator in determining which of the proposed issues, including those identified by UNEP, could be grouped together or dealt with in an omnibus resolution. Other representatives joined her in seeking clarification on how UNEP had selected the issues it had identified, how they related to the medium-term strategy and the 2030 Agenda, and whether any follow-up was required to resolutions adopted by the Governing Council at its twenty-seventh session and by the Environment Assembly at its first session. One representative advocated against covering issues already addressed in the medium-term strategy. Another stressed that the draft resolutions must demonstrate strong leadership on the part of the Environment Assembly in the interest of ensuring the success of the second session, while another said that they must reflect priorities in the multiple regions.
11. Many representatives stated a preference for grouping together proposals covering similar issues in order to minimize their number. One representative emphasized the importance of aiming for consensus and another sought clarification regarding the difference between resolutions and decisions, adding that the possibility of synchronizing draft resolutions with relevant programming documents should be explored. One representative stressed the need to prioritize in the light of resource constraints, to avoid duplicating resolutions adopted in other forums, and to give careful consideration to the scope of the activities covered.
12. The Deputy Executive Director, responding to matters raised, said that the list of issues for possible consideration had been compiled through a rigorous process for identifying significant emerging issues and issues to be endorsed by the Environment Assembly. The list had subsequently been streamlined in order to avoid overburdening the Assembly. As to the difference between resolutions and decisions, the former dealt with more substantive and policy-oriented issues, whereas the latter tended to deal with internal administrative issues. Unlike the Governing Council, the Environment Assembly was now a universal body providing political leadership, meaning that its resolutions were not necessarily addressed to the Executive Director for action insofar as they could also serve as guidance for stakeholders, member States and even the private sector. In conclusion, he said that a shorter consolidated list of proposals for draft decisions and resolutions, including omnibus and follow-up resolutions, would now be prepared for further consideration on the basis of the views and priorities articulated during the discussion.

VII. Organization and outcome of the high-level segment of the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

1. The subcommittee, chaired by Ms. Pataki, took up the item at its 6th session, in the afternoon of Wednesday, 28 October 2015. The Chair introduced a document entitled “Organization and outcome of the high-level segment of the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly” (UNEP/CPR/SC2015/7) and another entitled “Note of the Executive Director for initial consideration on UNEA-2 organizational modalities” (UNEP/CPR/SC2015/7/Add.1), which set out a possible structure and outcome formats of the high-level segment of the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.
2. The representative of the secretariat presented a proposal for the organizational structure of the high-level segment of the second session of the Environment Assembly, which he said had been prepared by the secretariat on the basis of inputs provided by member States and substantive discussions held during a subcommittee meeting on 30 June 2015.
3. Taking into account that member States had identified “Delivering on the environmental dimension of the post-2015 development agenda” as the overarching theme of the second session, the high-level segment would be organized around the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals. It was proposed that the segment include an opening ceremony, during which statements from the President of the Environment Assembly, the Executive Director of UNEP, a representative of the host country and a representative of major groups and stakeholders, as well as speakers representing regional and political groups, could reflect on the overarching theme and share their expectations for the session; a high-level ministerial luncheon at which ministers and high-level representatives could address a specific topic linked to the overarching theme; an interactive ministerial policy review session to discuss pathways for delivering on the environmental dimension of sustainable development, in particular how to realize healthy environments for healthy people, that would include an introductory segment and three thematic roundtables to be chaired by ministers; a multi-stakeholder dialogue that would enable participants to mobilize support for, and build productive partnerships to achieve, the Sustainable Development Goals, recognizing that multi-stakeholder participation was essential to deliver on the environmental dimension of sustainable development; and a closing plenary meeting in which the outcomes of the second session would be considered and adopted and closing remarks delivered. Prior to the opening session, an informal symposium would be organized around the theme of mobilizing resources for sustainable investments.
4. In connection with the interactive ministerial policy review session, UNEP was preparing a global thematic report on “Healthy environment - healthy people” that would provide key messages on and policy options for an improved health environment for human well-being and would help facilitate discussions by ministers. The secretariat was also engaged in efforts to promote the widest possible stakeholder and public engagement in the work of the Environment Assembly and had set up an innovative online platform, “myunea.org”, to enable anyone to provide input into the global thematic report and to access information relevant to the Environment Assembly and the environmental dimension of sustainable development. The online platform was also expected to mobilize the media to cover the second session of the Environment Assembly.
5. In the ensuing discussion, most of the representatives who spoke thanked the secretariat for its report and presentation. The discussion was divided into two parts. The first focused on the proposed organizational structure of the high-level segment, while the second addressed the possible format of the outcome of the segment.
6. Regarding the proposed organizational structure of the high-level segment, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that it was important that relevant communications clearly convey what the overarching theme of the second session was and that ministers be given leeway to discuss that theme; that ministers and high-level representatives be able to engage in interactive dialogues; and that background documents be produced well in advance of the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives in order to guide ministers toward messages that could be included in the outcome of the high-level segment. She asked whether the secretariat was proposing to hold a single informal symposium or several symposiums, and requested additional information on the multi-stakeholder dialogue, including its timing and potential invitees, and the multi-stakeholder process through which the global thematic report for the interactive policy review session was being developed.
7. The Deputy Executive Director responded that the secretariat would provide a list of the side events, symposiums and other informal events that would be held in parallel to the second session of the Environment Assembly, stating that the objective of holding such events was to attract to the Environment Assembly as many stakeholders interested in the environment and sustainable development as possible. The representative of the secretariat said that the secretariat had taken note of the request that all background documentation for the second session of the Environment Assembly be provided to member States well in advance of the second open-ended meeting of the Committee.
8. Another representative, also speaking on behalf of a group of countries, put forward a proposed timetable for the high-level segment under which the ministerial luncheon would be held immediately after the opening plenary, in the afternoon of the first day; the interactive policy review session would be held in the morning of the second day; and the multi-stakeholder dialogue would be held in the afternoon of the second day, followed by the closing plenary meeting. In view of the important role of stakeholders in environmental matters, it was desirable, he said, that the multi-stakeholder dialogue be held in such a way as to enable stakeholders to engage in a dialogue with ministers.
9. One representative said that UNEP Governing Council decision 27/2, on implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, did not specify that the multi-stakeholder dialogue should be between stakeholders and ministers and was therefore subject to different interpretations. Member States should agree on a stakeholder engagement policy and on stakeholder accreditation criteria before a dialogue between stakeholders and ministers could be agreed upon.
10. The Chair noted that UNEP already had a stakeholder engagement policy and accreditation procedures in place and member States were simply in the process of upgrading them. The Deputy Executive Director said that only accredited organizations would be able to attend the second session of the Environment Assembly and engage with ministers. He emphasized the importance of affording stakeholder organizations the opportunity to interact with ministers, since many of those organizations possessed unique knowledge in the field of the environment that could be of benefit and interest to ministers.
11. One representative expressed support for continued deliberations on the structure of the high-level segment, which she said should provide an intergovernmental platform for ministers to share best practices and experiences. Two representatives said that the secretariat proposals formed a good basis for further discussion. One of them said that simultaneous sessions should be avoided to enable small delegations to participate in the discussions and that sufficient time should be allocated in the high-level segment to the discussion of the overarching theme. The other said that the interactive policy review session should result in substantive outcomes, expressing the hope that one of the thematic roundtables on healthy environments for healthy people would focus on air quality.
12. Two representatives expressed the view that the heads of delegations of individual countries should be given the opportunity to deliver statements during the opening session of the high-level segment, with one saying that references in the note by the Executive Director to the delivery of opening speeches by member States through their regional and political groups could be interpreted as precluding that opportunity.
13. The Deputy Executive Director replied that, given the limited time available, the desire to give all ministers a chance to deliver opening statements to express their views must be balanced with the desire to give them sufficient time to engage in substantive dialogues through which concrete outcomes could be developed to provide leadership in the field of the environment.
14. Also with regard to the opening session, one representative asked whether representatives of major groups and stakeholders had been given the opportunity to deliver opening statements during high-level segments in past meetings of the governing body of UNEP, saying that giving them this opportunity at the second session of the Environment Assembly, which was an intergovernmental process, put them on the same level as ministers and other high-level government officials and was unnecessary given that they would be able to deliver their views during the multi-stakeholder dialogue.
15. The Deputy Executive Director said that the secretariat would examine the documents of the first session of the Environment Assembly in order to respond to the question. Expressing appreciation for the comments provided, he indicated that the secretariat would revise its proposals in the light of comments received.
16. A representative of major groups and stakeholders said that major groups were supportive of UNEP playing a leading role in addressing the environmental aspects of the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals, stating that the Environment Assembly at its second session should strive for greater involvement of stakeholders with environmental focus and expertise in its work.
17. Regarding the possible formats of the outcome of the high-level segment, many representatives, including two speaking on behalf of groups of countries, expressed support for a concise negotiated outcome that would send a strong political message on the environmental dimension of sustainable development, while many others said that they supported a President’s summary as the outcome of the segment. A number of representatives who expressed a preference for a President’s summary said that they were open to further discussing the possibility of a negotiated outcome.
18. Those who favoured a negotiated outcome said that such an outcome would enable the Environment Assembly to fulfil its role as the voice of the environment in the United Nations system and to exert influence over other important processes and forums, such as the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Other reasons provided in support of a negotiated outcome included greater ownership by member States, greater inclusiveness, openness and transparency, greater authority and political weight, and a strengthened role for UNEP in the context of the 2030 Agenda.
19. Reasons provided by those who expressed support for a President’s summary included concerns that small delegations might not able to be involved in negotiations on the outcome during the second session; that the time required to negotiate the outcome might take time away from important substantive matters, such as the resolutions to be adopted by the Environment Assembly; and that a negotiated outcome might involve last-minute negotiations.
20. One representative who favoured a negotiated outcome said that a draft outcome should be developed as soon as possible for consideration by the Committee of Permanent Representatives in order to enable member States to engage in transparent and inclusive negotiations to finalize the outcome prior to the second session. Such a process would serve to address the concerns of small delegations and would also help prevent a repetition of the process followed at the first session, at which a lengthy outcome had been developed through a process that had been neither transparent nor inclusive.
21. Noting that there were benefits and disadvantages to both outcome formats, one representative said that, should the outcome be negotiated, there was a need to establish a mechanism through which members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives who were not resident in Nairobi could provide inputs to the process in order to reflect the universal character of the Environment Assembly.
22. Another representative welcomed the proposal made during an informal meeting of the Committee, held on 22 October 2015, to establish a working group to reach agreement on the format and encouraged representatives to work through their respective regions in order to consolidate their positions and move forward on the issue. The working group, chaired by Ms. Julia Pataki, would try to first put together elements that member States wished to see reflected in the document, with the optimal format to be decided based on content.

VIII. Review of the cycle of sessions of the United Nations Environment Assembly

1. The subcommittee, chaired by Ms. Pataki, took up the item at its 4th session, on the afternoon of Tuesday, 27 October 2015. Introducing the item, a representative of the secretariat outlined the practical merits of changing the session cycle of the United Nations Environment Assembly to odd years, saying that it would streamline and synchronize the Environment Assembly process with the approval and review processes of the United Nations General Assembly and also enable UNEP, in reviewing the programme of work and budget before their submission to the Environment Assembly for approval, to benefit from the advice, guidance and recommendations of relevant subsidiary advisory bodies and committees of the General Assembly. Such a change would additionally allow for more flexibility in scheduling the Environment Assembly within a given calendar year, meaning that it could be held after May, and for a more timely approval of the programme of work and budget.
2. Three possible options for possibly changing the session cycle would be to convene, on an exceptional basis in 2017, a shortened regular session of the Environment Assembly and a meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives; to convene in 2017 a shorter regular session of the Environment Assembly and no meeting of the Open-ended Committee; or to convene, on an exceptional basis in 2019, a regular session of the Environment Assembly going beyond the biennial cycle determined by the United Nations General Assembly. In the last case, the decision on the matter would have to be addressed by the General Assembly in December 2016, bearing in mind that a mandate was required from the General Assembly in order to hold an Environment Assembly session outside the biennial cycle set pursuant to General Assembly resolution 42/185. To hold the Environment Assembly session in 2019 might, however, be detrimental to the follow-up of the 2030 Agenda and would also involve a three-year hiatus following both the appointment of the new UNEP leadership and the convening of the next Environment Assembly session in 2016.
3. Were the Environment Assembly session to be held in 2017, suggested transitional arrangements for the election of its next bureau might include either an extension of the term of the current elected officers or the election of new officers. A session held in 2017 would maintain the current momentum and pace, promote timely interaction with the new UNEP leadership and allow the benefit of additional strategic guidance from the Environment Assembly. It would also, however, have cost implications, which could potentially be mitigated either by limiting the duration of the Environment Assembly session and the meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives to three or four days or by dispensing with the latter, as well as with the session of the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum and the meeting of the annual subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives. She said that the intention was to calculate the precise cost implications of the various timing scenarios on the basis of the preferences expressed by members.
4. In the ensuing discussion, one representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries, supported by another, said that to hold the Environment Assembly in an odd year would facilitate budget approval and increase the reliability of assumptions concerning available resources. She added that policymaking benefits would also accrue if the Environment Assembly session were held before the month of May in the same year as the United Nations high-level political forum on sustainable development, which operated on a four-year cycle. Reassurance from UNEP concerning a guarantee of that timing would therefore be welcome, as would an analysis of the cycles of other policymaking bodies with implications for the Environment Assembly in order to identify any related advantages or disadvantages to changing the cycle to an odd year. Potential implications for the GEO-6 report should also be taken into account, in which connection one representative suggested that its submission could perhaps be postponed from 2018 to 2019.
5. Excluding the option that would create a three-year gap between sessions, she continued by saying that she favoured a solution that would offer effectiveness at the lowest cost, such as substitution of the annual subcommittee meeting with the Environment Assembly session, which would create a logical flow. In any event, the third session of the Environment Assembly should include a high-level segment and the modalities for holding a Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum must also be considered. She asked whether the substantial cost of holding a session in 2017 could be offset by savings from the regular budget allocation for conferences and also whether funding was envisaged from the regular budget, extrabudgetary resources, the Environment Fund, or a combination of the three. In the absence of relevant financial data, an accurate appraisal of the different options and a decision thereon were impossible. Many representatives agreed with her that those data must therefore be provided as soon as possible.
6. Another representative requested further information concerning the need for a decision of the United Nations General Assembly in order to hold the next session of the Environment Assembly in 2019. He said that he could not support the holding of a session in 2017 if it required the mobilization of additional funding from the regular budget and suggested a virtual session of the Environment Assembly as a possible cost mitigation measure. Others, including one who saw any change as unwarranted, agreed that all budget implications must be mitigated. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, supported by two others, favoured the alignment of the Environment Assembly calendar with other United Nations system activities and budget cycles, as well as with the calendars of critical United Nations entities, in order to ensure the best possible inputs, oversight of UNEP programmes and management of resources and staff. He similarly supported the proposal to change the timing of the Environment Assembly to odd years, with a special session held in 2017, including a segment for senior officials and a high-level segment. Another expressed the view that the discussion would be better informed if conducted following the conclusion of a full cycle in that it would preclude working on the basis of supposition.
7. One representative underscored the need to avoid scheduling conflicts with other important United Nations meetings, while another was keen to learn about the proposed term of the presidency of the Environment Assembly in the event of a change in the session cycle. One representative said that the final decision concerning such a change must rest with the Environment Assembly, adding that the mandate of officers of the Bureau of the Environment Assembly must not be curtailed as the result of any change. Another stressed the principle that each regional group must preside over the Environment Assembly for an equal term. A representative of a non-governmental organization appealed for a reconsideration of the proposal to dispense with the meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives and more particularly the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum, fearing that it signalled an attempt to limit the important traditional involvement of civil society in UNEP activities.
8. Commenting on the discussion, the Deputy Executive Director noted that the option of holding a special session of the Environment Assembly at some point in 2017 appeared to be emerging as a preference. He confirmed that the secretariat would produce preliminary financial data relating to the proposed scenarios, including with respect to cost mitigation, in order to assist members in their deliberations on the subject. It would likewise explore options for their consideration concerning the election and term of officers of the Environment Assembly Bureau. With regard to the GEO-6 report due for submission in 2018, he undertook to ascertain whether it could be delivered in 2017.
9. Subsequently, at its 7th session, on the morning of Thursday, 29 October 2015, a representative of the secretariat drew attention to an options paper, presented as an addendum to the document entitled “Review of the UNEA session cycle”, which contained preliminary financial data for an additional session of the Environment Assembly in 2017 based on actual expenditures incurred during the first session of the Environment Assmebly in 2014, including on travel assistance for the participation of representatives from 80 developing countries. The data, she stressed, were merely indicative and took into account the fact that UNEP would need to cover the $850,000 “subsidy” provided by the United Nations Office at Nairobi for a single governing body session per biennium.
10. The Deputy Executive Director, introducing the legal analysis and options for the election and term of office of the Bureau of the Environment Assembly presented in the second part of the paper, drew attention to option 2 in particular and suggested that member States might consider moving the election to the end of a session so that subsequent sessions were served by officers with experience gained through their intersessional work, which might make it necessary to revisit the rules of procedure.
11. Further discussion ensued in which one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, and supported by another, strongly endorsed the underlying principle of the Deputy Executive Director’s suggestion, saying that the paper should include a third option of splitting the period 2016–2019 between two bureaus and that it would be useful if the secretariat could extend the regional rotation schedule to cover another two cycles.
12. General appreciation was expressed for the financial data provided, although all who spoke called for further clarification and consideration. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, requested information on the funding sources for the Environment Assembly and for the biennial contribution from the United Nations Office at Nairobi, as well as on where UNEP would find the resources needed to cover that amount for a session in 2017. She also asked whether the secretariat could prepare options for shorter meetings of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives; whether the annual subcommittee was legally bound to hold an annual meeting in the same year as the additional session, with another representative raising the possibility of cancelling or merging other scheduled events with that session; and whether the relevant resolution should formally state that it was being held on an exceptional basis to avoid having to amend the rules of procedure. Highlighting a number of apparent discrepancies in the figures presented in tables 2 and 3, she asked why some were the same in both tables and what costs would be covered by the “other” category.
13. One representative, expressing support for the proposal to hold a session in 2017, said that costs must be kept to a minimum without preventing the full participation of developing countries; that the arrangements for meetings of the Open-ended Committee should be revisited; and that it might be worth looking into the possibility of holding them back-to-back with sessions of the Environment Assembly. Another representative asked whether the proposal would incur any new programme budget implications and requested a breakdown of conference services costs such as those related to documentation. A third, speaking on behalf a group of countries, said that translation costs in particular were extraordinarily high and could be cut by producing fewer documents.
14. In response, the Deputy Executive Director apologized for any errors in the options paper, which had been prepared in haste to provide a rough idea of the current situation, adding that it would be revised and fine-tuned, taking into account the various comments and requests, in order to assist in subsequent decision-making on the issue.

IX. Strengthening the strategic regional presence of UNEP

1. The subcommittee, chaired by Ms. Pataki, took up the item at its 4th session, in the afternoon of Tuesday, 27 October 2015. Ms. Pataki introduced the relevant document (UNEP/CPR/SC2015/9), which contained a report on progress achieved in strengthening the strategic regional presence of UNEP. Providing a presentation on the issue, a representative of the secretariat said that strengthening the strategic regional presence of UNEP had been part of the Programme’s mandate since its creation and that UNEP as a whole, not only its regional offices, was responsible for realizing this mandate.
2. The strategic regional presence of UNEP went beyond, but did not necessarily require, the physical presence of UNEP across regions, and involved working through partnerships at the regional, subregional and national levels to help countries achieve environment-related goals, for instance in the context of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and “Delivering as One” initiative.
3. In order to better respond to the needs of member States, UNEP had adopted a strategic regional presence policy in 2009 and, since then, had increasingly engaged with its regional offices at all stages of programme planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In line with a new policy issued by the Executive Director in June 2015, regional offices now played a key role in coordinating and delivering the UNEP programme of work in the regions and, more and more, the programme of work and projects were drafted taking into account regional, subregional and national priorities. The regional offices also played a growing role in facilitating the input from regional forums, such as regional ministerial environmental forums, into the work of UNEP.
4. The six UNEP regional offices had grown in terms of staffing and budget, thanks to member State contributions. Engagement by UNEP with partners at the regional, subregional and national levels had led to significant achievements in, among other areas, climate change, sustainable consumption and production, implementation of the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the mainstreaming of environmental sustainability into national planning.
5. Despite the progress achieved, UNEP faced diverse challenges in strengthening its regional presence and delivery, including an enormous growth in demand for enhanced UNEP engagement and increased presence in different regions and countries, insufficient financial resources to meet such demands, the need to ensure that a greater number of countries made contributions to the Environment Fund, and the need to further strengthen cooperation between the UNEP regional offices and the UNEP divisions and offices at headquarters. It was important to address these challenges to enable UNEP to support the implementation by countries of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.
6. In the ensuing discussion, all the representatives who spoke thanked the secretariat for the information provided and several of them welcomed the efforts undertaken by UNEP to strengthen its regional presence.
7. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that additional efforts were needed to further strengthen the Programme’s regional presence, including by establishing new subregional offices and by upgrading existing regional offices. Another representative, also speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the emphasis of the June 2015 policy on the strengthening and consolidation of the existing six UNEP regional offices, five subregional offices and liaison offices. Two other representatives welcomed the establishment of a new subregional office in Samoa, which they said would benefit the Pacific subregion, with one requesting information about how the office was helping to enhance coordination and avoid duplication of work among the various environmental governance structures in the subregion.
8. The representative of the secretariat said that the while the regional office in Samoa was new, significant progress had already been achieved, including through its interaction with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), which hosted the regional office, and at the twenty-sixth SPREP meeting of officials, held in Apia from 21 to 24 September 2015. UNEP had worked with member States to ensure that the outcomes of the [first Forum of Ministers and Environmental Authorities of Asia and the Pacific](http://www.unep.org/roap/InformationMaterials/Events/ForumofMinistersEnvironmentAuthorities/tabid/1059916/Default.aspx), held in Bangkok in May 2015, were taken into account in policymaking. The secretariat had asked all the subregional offices to share their experiences and the challenges they were facing; an internal paper was being developed on how UNEP and the regional offices could support the subregional offices.
9. Responding to a request by one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, for an update on the status of the consolidation of UNEP headquarter functions in Nairobi, the Deputy Executive Director said that all the global subprogramme coordinators were now based in Nairobi. Another element of the consolidation process pertained to the location of the Director of the Division of Technology, Industry and Economics, in Nairobi which had been deferred to the 2016–2017 biennium.
10. Noting that it was important that UNEP continue to promote and facilitate cooperation and collaboration in the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements at the regional level, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed disappointment that UNEP was not proposing to use an allocation in the 2016–2017 budget to fund full-time dedicated regional multilateral environmental agreement focal points, but was instead proposing that 40 per cent of the time of regional coordinators be used to support countries in implementing such agreements in a more synergistic manner. He also suggested that there was a need to better define the terms of reference of the regional multilateral environmental agreement focal points, as there appeared to be overlaps between the work donors were asked to fund through UNEP and the regional activities conducted by the secretariats of those agreements.
11. The Deputy Executive Director replied that, given limited resources, UNEP had decided to merge the functions of providing support to multilateral environmental agreements and supporting the delivery of the UNEP subprogrammes at the regional level into the work of the regional subprogramme coordinators, who, with additional support from regional offices, would be able to successfully fulfil both functions. To that end, the proposed budget for 2016–2017 provided for additional positions in the regional offices.
12. Emphasizing that partnerships were crucial to the regional work of UNEP, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, suggested that UNEP should produce a comprehensive overview of the partnerships in which it was engaged, including those that were regional in scope, and how they related to the medium-term strategy, the programme of work and the implementation of Environment Assembly resolutions. He expressed strong support for the involvement of UNEP in the “Delivering as One” initiative, United Nations country teams and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, in which it had an important role to play in advancing the environmental dimension of sustainable development, in particular in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. He also welcomed the increased engagement of regional offices with regional ministerial and other forums, but asked that additional information on such forums be provided to the Committee of Permanent Representatives, including on challenges associated with ensuring that the outcomes of such forums were applied within UNEP. He further said that strengthening the regional presence of UNEP would require that a greater number of countries contribute to the Environment Fund and asked whether the efforts of regional offices to encourage countries in their regions to make adequate and timely payments to the Fund had contributed to UNEP resource mobilization efforts.
13. The Deputy Executive Director said that it was one of the ambitions of UNEP to mobilize resources at the regional level. UNEP had noticed that many donors and partners had decentralized their operations and resources, which meant that regional offices might be able to transact directly with those donors, and that the strategic regional presence of UNEP was opening the door to potential contributions by middle-income countries to its country-level or regional work. UNEP was therefore exploring new ways of mobilizing resources and was developing a new resource mobilization strategy.
14. One representative asked how UNEP was managing communications with other United Nations entities, such as the United Nations Development Programme, which might be skeptical about UNEP’s increased presence in the regions. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the deployment of communication technologies should increasingly be used to reach member States and new audiences and mobilize private funding; he also suggested that countries nominate national focal points, which could be listed on the UNEP website, to channel communications with UNEP.
15. The Deputy Executive Director said that UNEP did not intend to establish country offices, which might be seen as competing with other bodies. While many United Nations entities had a strong country presence, they might not have the capacity to respond to all member State requests, so UNEP continued to receive and respond to country requests for specialized assistance on environmental issues, which did not require that UNEP be physically represented in those countries.
16. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed concern that some regional offices lacked the human resources and expertise required to meet the needs of member States, particularly in the African region. Another representative, also speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that in order to meet the growing demand for UNEP engagement at the regional level, it was necessary to build synergies between subprogrammes and to reflect on how technical expertise might be shared between the regional and headquarters offices. He also requested that the staffing and structure of regional offices be explained in more detail, including through a clear breakdown of planned staffing and the categorization of posts into three groups, namely, management and administration, programme support, and operations.
17. One representative suggested that the discussion of the regional presence of UNEP should focus on possible country-level actions and promotion of synergies by UNEP, especially with regard to the identification of needs and opportunities, including those related to the creation of early warning systems and capacity-building for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. He requested that a platform be developed to enable member States to monitor the development and status of projects undertaken at the regional and subregional levels, and that efficiency in communications between the UNEP regional and headquarters offices be enhanced in order to ensure coherence between programme planning and implementation. Another representative suggested that increased engagement by UNEP with national organizations, including academic, research, scientific and technology institutes, could improve efficiency in the regional delivery of the UNEP programme of work and resource mobilization efforts.
18. Responding to remarks, the representative of the secretariat said that strengthening the regional presence of UNEP was a mandate for the entire Programme; there was constant engagement between the regional offices and the different UNEP divisions, including the sharing of expertise, to ensure that UNEP met the needs of member States. With regard to communications, the UNEP regional directors engaged with their counterparts in other United Nations entities, including the United Nations Development Group and the United Nations regional commissions, to identify and respond to the needs of member States. As for internal communications, videoconferences were held between the Deputy Executive Director and regional offices to address implementation, strategy and administrative issues to help the regional offices in addressing any challenges they might face.

X. Briefing on the final options report of the inquiry into the design of a sustainable financial system

1. The subcommittee, chaired by Mr. Moreti, took up the item at its 7th session on the morning of Thursday, 29 October 2015. The Executive-Director, introducing the item, said that the inquiry into the design of a sustainable financial system had been established to explore how to align the financial system with sustainable development, with a focus on environmental aspects. It was important, he said, to empower environment ministers with a degree of economic literacy that allowed an environmental fact to become actionable in a national context. A huge demand had emerged, in the wake of the financial crisis and other recent developments, including the endorsement of the 2030 Agenda, for a new model of economic growth centred around sustainable development, with a parallel interest in exploring how changes in the design of financial systems could bring sustainable development considerations more effectively into financial decision-making and the mobilization of capital. The launch of the global report on the UNEP inquiry in Lima on 8 October 2015, had attracted great interest in the world of finance, and it was apparent that the environmental dimension was becoming a central rather than a marginal factor in financial decision-making, and that financial and capital markets were increasingly responding to national development priorities and agendas.
2. The co-directors of the inquiry – Mr. Simon Zadek and Mr. Nick Robins – and the UNEP Advisor, Ms. Mahenau Agha, gave a presentation on the inquiry. Looking at the background to the inquiry, Mr. Zadek said that the concept of aligning the financial system with sustainable development had been received very positively by the financial community. The engagement and motivation of the financial and capital markets was essential to transition away from the old economy, and the inquiry therefore sought to identify what was the experience on the ground of central banks, financial regulators, finance ministries, other government departments, standards institutions and others with regard to investing in innovative, sustainable developmental trajectories. The inquiry had found that there was rich experience arising from UNEP financial initiatives and other stimuli of voluntary actions to adopt green financing practices, supported by a growing number of policy innovations – the challenge now was to raise such practice to a more systemic level and embed it as common practice in financial markets at the national and international levels. The inquiry had also identified an appetite for international cooperation among financial sector actors and a willingness to exchange experiences and learn from one another.
3. Continuing the presentation, Ms. Agha said that the fundamental approach under the inquiry had been to explore, at the country level, the practical experience of incorporating sustainable development principles into the financial system. This had involved building partnerships with a range of entities within and relevant to the financial sector. In many cases, the act of partnership had itself been a fulfilling experience that had led to burgeoning interest in green financial systems. The Sustainable Development Goals had been a key framework of reference for the inquiry, which had identified goals 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13 and 14 as being of particular relevance, and work was continuing to clarify opportunities for the engagement of financial and capital markets in the achievement of the other goals. Regarding the outputs of the inquiry, many reports had been co-researched, co-written and co-published in a spirit of partnership, and a web portal had been set up as a knowledge base.
4. Mr. Robins, continuing the presentation, said that the inquiry had found that a “quiet revolution” was taking place as policymakers and financial regulators addressed the need to create robust and sustainable financial systems geared to future developmental requirements. Many activities were already taking place at the national level, emanating from diverse starting points, such as the stimulus to green industry or to combat air pollution, or the need to rebuild the economy following the financial crisis. The measures arising from such stimuli included new banking regulations, new investor reporting requirements and incentives for clean energy bonds, with levers for action including enhanced market practices, fiscal incentives for long-term sustainable development, improving standards of conduct and directing finance through policy-setting. The inquiry had found a wide range of models for national action, some more pertinent to developing countries and others more to developed countries, as well as a range of opportunities for international cooperation, including sharing experience, building new tools, developing common principles, drawing up common guidelines for insurance regulators and others, and strengthening the policy architecture.
5. In the ensuing discussion, many representatives praised the initiative and the manner in which it had been conducted, and stressed the global importance of its outcomes and findings. Some representatives drew attention to relevant measures that were already being undertaken in their countries to support green financing. Several representatives sought clarification regarding the next steps to maintain momentum in the design and implementation of sustainable financial systems, including the dissemination of knowledge and information on the matter to member States. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the report was very timely in the context of the recent endorsement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the upcoming twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, and also in the context of the action plan on building a capital markets union, published by the European Commission in September 2015. He added that it was important to discuss the role of UNEP and the United Nations Environment Assembly in carrying the process forward, and with what partners. One representative asked if other institutions had been engaged in similar initiatives, and how UNEP was engaging with them. Another representative noted that the policy summary document of the inquiry included among possible next steps the establishment of an international research consortium to take forward underexplored topics and themes, and asked for more information on the possible areas for further exploration. A representative of the business and industry major group stressed the need for a whole-of-economy approach that embraced living standards, employment and other aspects along with the financial element, with UNEP working alongside other entities in the United Nations system in a holistic effort to achieve sustainable development. He also said that it was important to involve private as well as public sector financial institutions.
6. The co-directors responded to the issues raised. Mr. Zadek said that there were indeed other initiatives dealing with similar issues, and ad hoc measures and voluntary coalitions had been evolving over a number of years, often instigated by the financial institutions themselves. In the second generation of work, more consolidated networks were emerging, involving for example financial institutions and banking regulators to consider such matters as the greening of credit. In addition, as the store of available data had expanded, so had more systematic research, for example under the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Much of the work was currently happening at the national rather than the international level, though more needed to be done to build processes that enabled actors on the ground, in both the public and private sectors, to understand what measures could be undertaken. The establishment of task forces could assist in that regard, and UNEP could support the process by drawing in actors and making further efforts to embed green financing in its programme of work. Internationally, a framework for action was evolving, including actors such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other international finance organizations.
7. On the way forward, Mr. Robins said that a number of steps were being taken, including studies to assess whether the financial system was indeed directing capital towards the green economy, the engagement of insurance regulators to see where sustainable development fitted into their core mandates, and the active incorporation of the sustainability dimension into capital markets. With regard to research, the first stage of an agenda was starting to appear, with consideration being given to performance measures, such as flow of finance, and the effectiveness, costs and possible side-effects of policy instruments.
8. In his concluding remarks, the Executive Director said that the availability of financing was crucial to the issue of whether a transition to sustainable development was achievable. The financial sector was by nature conservative and risk averse; the role of UNEP was to alert decision makers on the need for change and to act as a catalyst to generate that change by shedding light on what was happening in the world, and by presenting examples of ways to do things better. The report of the inquiry had been launched, but the real work was going to come with the dissemination of the knowledge gained as a basis for involving partners in international action. A huge challenge lay in directing resources where they were needed – much of Africa’s capital, for example, was invested outside the continent, due to the lack of a mature domestic financial market. There was therefore a need to increase the ability of national decision makers to identify the potential of domestic markets and build opportunities to leverage the enormous potential for private investment in low-carbon technologies, ecosystem restoration and other activities that would be part of the future economy.
9. The subcommittee welcomed the information provided and encouraged UNEP to continue to play a role in bringing to the attention of international institutions and others the critical elements that needed to be factored into an international economy based on sustainable development. The subcommittee also recognized that the issue could be the subject of a draft resolution for consideration by the United Nations Environment Assembly.

XI. Interactive thematic debate on promoting air quality in the context of healthy environment, healthy people

1. The subcommittee took up the item at its 8th session, on the morning of Friday, 30 October 2015, chaired by Ms Pataki. Four panellists, one participating by videoconference from Manila, gave presentations during the interactive thematic debate on promoting air quality in the context of “Healthy environment - healthy people”. The session began with a presentation by the panellists, followed by a discussion with representatives and a summary by the secretariat. Some 100 participants who followed the debate online were invited to send in their questions and feedback.
2. The Chair noted that, prior to the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, WHO had issued a global report on air quality in which it was estimated that around 7 million people died prematurely every year as a result of household and ambient air pollution exposure, equivalent to one in eight total global deaths. Moreover, 90 per cent of the global population was exposed to air pollution levels above the recommended limits and in particular to small particulate air pollution, making it a global epidemic challenge requiring urgent steps. Consequently, at its first session, the United Nations Environment Assembly had adopted resolution 1/7 on strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme in promoting air quality, in which it encouraged Governments to take action across sectors to improve air quality to protect human health and the environment, reduce negative impacts, including on the economy, and promote sustainable development. In the same resolution, the Environment Assembly requested the Executive Director of UNEP to undertake strengthened capacity-building activities on air quality to support Governments in their efforts, to submit and present a report on the information provided by Governments on the results and experiences of their efforts and to provide an update on progress made in implementing the resolution to the Environment Assembly at its second session. Moreover, target 3.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals called for the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination to be substantially reduced by 2030, while the World Health Assembly had adopted resolution 68.8 on health and the environment, addressing the health impact of air pollution, in which it requested WHO to strengthen its capacities in the field of air pollution and health.
3. The Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, introducing the panellists, welcomed the theme of the interactive debate. He agreed that pollution was one of the main challenges currently affecting human health and well-being and noted that UNEP had considerable experience in working on air quality issues, alongside related issues such as climate change, sustainable production and consumption, sustainable transportation, energy efficiency, green economy and environmental law. He said that, in its resolution 1/7, the Environment Assembly had also encouraged Governments and intergovernmental, national and regional organizations to make air quality data more easily accessible and understandable to the public, and requested the Executive Director to explore opportunities for strengthened cooperation on air pollution within the United Nations system.
4. Ms. Custodia Mandlate, WHO country representative in Kenya, said that, despite the progress represented by the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, efforts were still needed to address the many challenges related to health and the environment. In the light of preparations for the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, she reviewed various facts linking air quality and health. She said that air pollution was an avoidable cause of disease, with 3.7 million deaths per year being attributed to outdoor pollution and 4.3 million to indoor pollution, in particular in developing countries and among poor and disadvantaged communities. There was also a correlation between chronic and acute air pollution exposure and the development of many non-communicable diseases. She welcomed the promotion of partnerships and multisectoral collaboration and the adoption of resolutions that were aimed at addressing the challenges of air pollution through the monitoring and evaluation of issues concerning air quality. UNEP had an important role to play in capacity-building, assisting Governments in developing policies and strategies, and encouraging the development of road maps for future action.
5. WHO was strengthening its guidance and technical support, advocating multisectoral engagement and participating in diplomacy efforts through the Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short-lived Climate Pollutants, the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves and the United Nations Sustainable Energy for All initiative. She reiterated the commitment of WHO to promoting air quality and contributing to reducing the number of deaths and illnesses caused by hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution by 2030, as set out in Sustainable Development Goal 3 (ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages).
6. Mr. Stephen Simukanga, Coordinator at the Air Pollution Information Network in Africa, gave a presentation on policy recommendations for addressing air quality needs in Eastern and Southern Africa. He explained the main causes of air pollution, which he described as urbanization, motorization, industrialization, and the use of wood and charcoal for energy and open burning, including vegetation fires and waste burning. He emphasized the need in addressing air pollution to review legislation and standards pertaining to air pollution management; to enhance air quality monitoring and modelling by establishing air quality monitoring sites and regional training centres for the management of air quality; to reduce emissions by promoting efficient mass and non-motorized transport and introducing cleaner fuels; to develop clean energy sources and energy-saving technologies at the domestic and household levels; to develop air quality management training; to raise public awareness and participation; to encourage research on the impact of air pollution on human health, economic performance and the environment; and to promote regional and subregional cooperation.
7. Mr. Rob de Jong, Head of the Transport Unit at UNEP, began his presentation on strengthening the role of UNEP in promoting air quality by describing the response of UNEP to Environment Assembly resolution 1/7. He said that an implementation plan had been developed and that work on air quality had been intensified throughout the Programme through capacity-building, preparing assessment reports, raising awareness and strengthening cooperation. He outlined the work that had been undertaken by UNEP to create the prototype for an affordable air quality monitoring unit, which had been launched in Kenya in September 2015, as well as to establish the Asia-Pacific Clean Air Partnership aimed at bringing together existing regional initiatives to support action on air pollution and at strengthening coordination and collaboration between Governments and air quality programmes in the region. He described the initiatives that were being implemented by the Climate and Clean Air Coalition and the work that was under way to promote cleaner transport. UNEP was developing a report in response to resolution 1/7 that would include an overview of the policies, standards, programmes and projects being implemented by each member State with the aim of improving air quality.
8. Ms. Kaye Patdu, Head of Programmes at Clean Air Asia, described the actions being taken by her organization to improve air quality in Asia. She noted that most of the countries in the region had implemented air quality standards and that there had been an increase in access to air quality data in recent years, despite a number of challenges related to monitoring and the risk of miscommunication. Work was under way to create harmonized global air quality indexes, to implement clean air plans and to maximize the use of social media and mobile technology to raise awareness of the impact of air quality on health. She drew attention to initiatives being undertaken in cooperation with the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific through the Guidance Framework for Better Air Quality and the Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles, among others. Measures were also being taken to support cities in collaboration with the United States Environmental Protection Agency through the creation of eco-labels with a view to providing incentives for air quality actions. Lastly, she noted that the ninth Better Air Quality Conference, organized by Clean Air Asia for policymakers and scientists in the region to discuss air quality issues, would be held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 29 August to 2 September 2016.
9. In the ensuing discussion, general appreciation was expressed to the panellists for their presentations and to the Chair and the secretariat for putting air quality on the agenda of the third meeting of the annual subcommittee. Several representatives shared their experiences with regard to issues of air quality, concurring that the cold season posed a major challenge in their countries due to the widespread use of coal stoves for heating. In addition, a number of representatives expressed interest in the new air quality monitoring unit that was being developed by UNEP and welcomed the forthcoming report by UNEP on air quality actions and policies that would be submitted to the Environment Assembly at its second session.
10. One representative said that air quality was a global priority issue. She noted that during the First Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia-Pacific, held in Bangkok on 19 and 20 May 2015, air pollution had been identified as one of the main environmental challenges in the region. In that regard, she commended the efforts of UNEP to follow up on and implement resolution 1/7 and she expressed the hope that air pollution would continue to be a priority issue during the discussion on “Healthy environment - healthy people” at the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.
11. One representative, offering to share information on the package of air quality legislation that was being developed in her region, called for the strengthening of global legal frameworks such as the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Minamata Convention on Mercury, as well as of regional legal frameworks such as the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution. She also welcomed the work being done in the framework of the Pollution Management and Environmental Health programme of the World Bank, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution and the Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia, and emphasized the importance of complementing legal frameworks with air monitoring systems, public awareness and measures to ensure that companies respected standards.
12. Turning to the Sustainable Development Goals, several representatives agreed that they presented an opportunity for the environment and health sectors to work together at the managerial and operational levels to address issues of air quality and requested other sectors to take action. One representative noted that targets 3.9 and 11.6 of the Goals focused on air pollution but called for the indicator of target 3.9, which was concerned with outdoor air pollution, to be broadened to include indoor air pollution and the effect of both types of pollution on health.
13. One representative underscored the importance of reliable and openly shared information through air quality assessments and emissions inventories to find effective solutions and gain public support for the issue of air pollution and he commended the work of UNEP in that regard. Effective air quality control programmes that were built on sound science and engineering knowledge could build on decades of technological and scientific advances to accelerate the pace of air quality improvements. Continuous public and stakeholder involvement was key to the development and implementation of successful air quality programmes. He noted that resolution 1/7 touched on many lessons learned; UNEP was well placed to facilitate technical and policy exchanges. In addition, the resolution provided UNEP with a clear mandate to continue to provide international leadership on air quality and environmental issues for years to come. He commended the work of UNEP towards institutionalizing such leadership through its medium-term strategy and its programme of work and budget.
14. Several representatives said that UNEP should work towards integrating the issue of air pollution into its existing seven subprogrammes. They stressed that improving air quality would have a positive effect on climate, ecosystems, biodiversity, food security and the economy, and agreed that UNEP was in a position to provide added value in terms of awareness-raising and capacity-building on the issue of reducing pollutants that had a direct impact on public health and that were not directly dealt with under the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. They also expressed satisfaction at the close collaboration between UNEP and WHO, the World Bank and the World Meteorological Organization in addressing issues of air quality.
15. One representative noted the lack of reference to the effect of conflicts, post-conflict situations, natural disasters and man-made disasters on air quality and human health in the current discussions. He expressed the hope that UNEP would take on a more important role in identifying the direct and indirect effects of air quality on water and soil, and avoid treating air quality in isolation.
16. Another representative underlined the clear correlation between underdevelopment and indoor pollution. With regard to air quality in Africa, it was essential to ensure sustainable urbanization in order to avoid an even higher level of outdoor pollution in what was currently the fastest urbanizing region in the world. The cost of indoor and outdoor pollution to social and economic development in Africa was incalculable; urgent action was required to address those issues through capacity-building, technical assistance, technology transfer and the installation of affordable and sustainable energy generation.
17. One representative underlined the urgent need to tackle transboundary haze and welcomed the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution in that regard. He provided an overview of efforts being made to reduce haze caused by fires in his region.
18. In her intervention, a representative of the major groups and stakeholders, speaking on behalf of business and industry non-governmental organizations, emphasized the important role of public-private and multi-stakeholder partnerships in supplementing the work of Governments, and intergovernmental, regional and local bodies. She called for UNEP to provide an umbrella for partnerships and initiatives on air quality, similar to one already in place in the Asia-Pacific region, in which stakeholders could share innovative approaches, good practices and synergies.
19. Mr. de Jong thanked the participants who had followed the debate online for their active engagement in the discussions. In response to comments, he agreed that initiatives such as the UNEP “Share the Road” programme were needed to increase investment in walking and cycling facilities and to raise awareness of the economic and health benefits of non-motorized and mass transport systems. With regard to the issue of access to information on air pollution, he said that producing data, making it available and getting civil society involved both in identifying problems and developing solutions were issues that were set out in Environment Assembly resolution 1/7 and were fully supported by UNEP.
20. He said that UNEP was looking at the link between air, water and soil pollution, as well as pollution caused by chemicals and waste. Cost-effective solutions to issues of air quality were available and UNEP was working with member States to share those solutions and best practices, to build capacities and to provide technological support on a wide scale. UNEP would report back to member States at the second session of the Environment Assembly on ways in which it was working in those areas with WHO, the World Bank and other United Nations entities.
21. Responding to issues raised, Mr. Simukanga agreed that additional data on air pollution was needed and that monitoring the effects of air pollution on health, including at the local level, would compel policymakers to take appropriate decisions.
22. Ms. Jacqueline McGlade, Chief Scientist and ad interim Director of the UNEP Division of Early Warning and Assessment, provided a briefing on the work on air quality undertaken by UNEP. She agreed on the need to broaden target 3.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals to include indoor air pollution and the effect of indoor and outdoor pollution on health. She also noted that the issue of sand and dust storms would be discussed at the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, with a focus on the science and the environmental, social and economic causes and impact.
23. Thanking the panellists for their presentations and members States for sharing their experiences, the Deputy Executive Director said that all sources of pollution needed to be tackled, including natural disasters and dust storms caused by land degradation. The issue of air quality brought together the three dimensions of sustainable development in that it was an environmental and social issue with a huge economic impact. National and transboundary pollution was a potential source of tension that required proper management.
24. While air quality legislation was in place in the form of global and regional conventions, enforcement and implementation of such legislation was lacking. He welcomed strengthened partnerships and collaboration between UNEP and other United Nations entities, and took note of the request to include air quality in the subprogrammes of the medium-term strategy and programme of work.

XII. Other matters

1. One representative expressed gratitude for the Chair’s summary of the third meeting of the annual subcommittee and called for discussions on various items to be organized in preparation for the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives and the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

XIII. Closure of the meeting

1. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the meeting was declared closed at 11.50 a.m. on Thursday, 30 October 2015.

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Minutes of the 132nd meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme, held on 30 October 2015

Agenda item 1

Opening of the meeting

1. The meeting was opened at 2.10 p.m. on Friday, 30 October 2015, by Ms. Julia Pataki, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Romania to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP.
2. The meeting was attended by 91 participants representing 57 members. Four members also participated in the meeting by video link from Addis Ababa and Geneva.
3. The Chair welcomed the following new members of the Committee: Ms. Brenda Mariana Pangrazi, Deputy Permanent Representative of Argentina; Mr. Vincent Willekens, Deputy Permanent Representative of Belgium; Mr. Pedro Escosteguy Cardoso, Deputy Permanent Representative of Brazil; Ms. Maria Clara Cerqueira, Alternate Deputy Permanent Representative of Brazil;   
   Ms. Beatrice Kankindi, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Burundi; Ms. Mette Knudsen, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Denmark; Mr. Hussein O. Roshdy, Deputy Permanent Representative of Egypt; Mr. Stefano-Antonio Dejak, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the European Union; Ms. Tarja Fernandez, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Finland;   
   Mr. Toni Sandell, Deputy Permanent Representative of Finland; Ms. Jutta Gisela Frasch, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Germany; Mr. Konstantinos Moatsos, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Greece; Ms. Suchitra Durai, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of India; Mr. Ramachandran Chandramouli, Deputy Permanent Representative of India; Mr. Mohammed Husham Malik AI-Fityan, Deputy Permanent Representative of Iraq; Mr. Juan Jose Campuzano Lupezdor, Deputy Head of Mission and Deputy Permanent Representative of Mexico; Mr. Franciscus Aibretch Makken, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Netherlands; Ms. Stijn Janssen, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Netherlands; Mr. Friday O.Okai, Chargé d’affaires a.i., Acting High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of Nigeria; Mr. Raza Bashir Tarar, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Pakistan; Mr. Park Ryun Min, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea; Mr. Kim Kamasa Atukuzwe, First Secretary in charge of UNEP of Rwanda; Mr. Elias Gufa Lope, Counsellor and Alternate Permanent Representative of Spain; Mr. John Michael Haule, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania; and Mr. Nathan Ndoboli, Deputy High Commissioner and Deputy Permanent Representative of Uganda.
4. She bade farewell to the following departing members, thanking them for their contribution to the work of the Committee: Ms. Mariana Plaza, Deputy Permanent Representative of Argentina;   
   Mr. Pieter Leenknegt, Deputy Permanent Representative of Belgium; Mr. Antonio Otávio Sá Ricarte, Deputy Permanent Representative of Brazil; Mr. Godefroid Niyombare, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Burundi; Mr. Geert Aagaard Andersen, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Denmark; Ms. Heba El Tahan, Deputy Permanent Representative of Egypt; Ms. Sofie   
   From-Emmesberger, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Finland; Ms. Helena Voukko, Deputy Permanent Representative of Finland; Mr. Andreas Peschke, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Germany; Mr. Yogeshwar Varma, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of India; Mr. Mohammed Saeed AI-Shakarchi, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Iraq; Mr. Humam Luai S. AI-Shaikhli, Deputy Permanent Representative of Iraq; Ms. Mireya Marlene Dominguez Guilbot, Deputy Head of Mission and Deputy Permanent Representative of Mexico; Mr. Joost Reintjes, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Netherlands; Mr. Michel Van Winden, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Netherlands;   
   Mr. Solomon Akintola Oyateru, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of Nigeria;   
   Mr. Eleftherios Kouvaritakis, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Greece; Mr. Rafiuzzaman Siddiqui, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Pakistan; Ms. Donna Celeste D.   
   Feliciano-Gatmaytan, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Philippines; Mr. Sechang Ahn, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea; Ms. Elena Dumitru, Deputy Permanent Representative of Romania; Mr. Ephraim Murenzi, Deputy Permanent Representative of Rwanda;   
   Mr. Antonio Fernandez de Tejada Gonzalez, Counsellor and Alternate Permanent Representative of Spain; Mr. Jacques Pitteloud, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Switzerland; and   
   Mr. Fernando Lugris, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Uruguay (based in Montevideo).

Agenda item 2

Adoption of the agenda

1. The agenda was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/CPR/132/1).

Agenda item 3

Adoption of the minutes of the 131st meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, held on 16 June 2015

1. The Committee adopted the minutes of its 131st meeting on the basis of the draft minutes of the meeting (UNEP/CPR/132/2).

Agenda item 4

Report of the subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

1. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to the report of the subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (UNEP/CPR/132/4), which described the main outcomes of the subcommittee meetings held since the 131st meeting of the Committee on 16 June 2015.
2. The Committee took note of the report.
3. The Chair further drew attention to her written summary of the third meeting of the annual subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, held in Nairobi from 26 to 30 October 2015, which focused on the main points identified for action in advance of the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives in February 2016 and the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly in May 2016.
4. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, paid tribute to UNEP for its active contribution to such recent global milestones as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the third International Conference on Financing for Development, and the work of the fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management towards the attainment of the 2020 goal for the sound management of chemicals. It must now seize the opportunity provided by the forthcoming second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly to demonstrate its role as the leading global environmental authority in working for the delivery of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda and for the effective implementation of the   
   medium-term strategy proposed for the period 2018‒2021. In that context, the lack of progress by UNEP in developing coordination across the United Nations system in the field of the environment, as requested by the United Nations Environment Assembly in its resolution 1/11, gave rise to concern. A frank discussion on the obstacles to that progress would therefore be welcome, as would a progress report on the implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, “The future we want”, which related to strengthening the role of UNEP as that leading authority.
5. He commended the constructive spirit evidenced at the recent third meeting of the annual subcommittee for working towards practical solutions to important issues on which consensus had yet to be reached and likewise commended the work of the secretariat in the preparation, organization and conduct of that meeting, notwithstanding the difficulties and adverse impacts caused by the introduction of Umoja. He looked forward to the prompt provision of outstanding information relating to the development of the draft access-to-information policy, the UNEP relationship with multilateral environmental agreements, and the report of the meeting of senior government officials expert in environmental law on the mid-term review of the fourth Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law, held in Montevideo in September 2015. He also looked forward to the symposium to be organized during the second session of the Environment Assembly on the inquiry into the design of a sustainable financial system, a ground-breaking initiative for which UNEP merited congratulation.
6. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, underscored his commitment to working constructively with the subcommittee and the secretariat in support of UNEP activities in the intersessional period preceding the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives and the second session of the Environment Assembly.
7. The Committee took note of the Chair’s summary of the third meeting of the annual subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

Agenda item 5

Report of the Executive Director to the Committee of Permanent Representatives

1. Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP, drew attention to his written update on key activities undertaken by UNEP since the 131st meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, in June 2015, and highlighted the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the third International Conference on Financing for Development as a main reference point in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. The financing discussion was integral to those developments and would surely continue to evolve, including in relation to the forthcoming twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. UNEP had been deeply involved in the substantive, advisory and analytical work leading up to the momentous adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals and in the ongoing work of the United Nations Statistical Commission to develop a related indicator framework and a nationally owned monitoring system. With their adoption signaling a rare and meaningful moment of international unity in the face of multiple challenges, the Sustainable Development Goals represented a universal integrated approach to sustainable development applicable to developing and developed countries alike. For its part, UNEP had issued a publication describing the role it would play in building on the new sustainable development framework.
2. With reference to the second Eye on Earth Summit held in Abu Dhabi in October 2015 with the aim of promoting stakeholder access to environmental science data, he emphasized that the ongoing symbiotic partnership of UNEP with the host authorities and the Abu Dhabi Global Environmental Data Initiative had positively enhanced the collection of such data for the relevant information purposes. It had furthermore promoted the rapid development of UNEP Live during the three years since its inception as a data-sharing platform, to which most countries were now committed. In the light of that wide-scale engagement in its processes, UNEP Live was now set to emerge as an important platform for the management of big data flows relating to the Sustainable Development Goals.
3. He thanked the Government of Uruguay for hosting in Montevideo the recent meeting of senior government officials expert in environmental law, who had conducted the important mid-term review of the fourth Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law and identified the areas of priority on which UNEP, member States and major group partners should concentrate. Concerning the impending Twenty-Seventh Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol, to be held in Dubai in November 2015, he noted that decisions adopted under the Protocol had critical implications for the broader efforts to address global warming and greenhouse gas emissions. Any agreement reached at that meeting on a proposed amendment of the Protocol aimed at phasing down the production and consumption of hydrofluorocarbons would significantly enhance the existing success of the instrument as a remarkable catalyst for international cooperation.
4. With respect to the forthcoming twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, which was now a universal instrument, he accentuated the historic significance of the submission of intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs) by over 150 of the parties to the Convention insofar as he understood it to imply an unprecedented act of confidence, notably on the part of developing countries, in a process that would be subjected to intense additional scrutiny during that session. In the context of mitigation, adaptation and technical support, and notwithstanding the inevitable financial stumbling blocks, the INDCs would additionally help to assess the feasibility of the two-degree Celsius threshold set for a rise in global temperatures. The industrialized countries had demonstrated leadership by submitting their respective INDCs, which would be included in the analysis of the implications of all INDCs to be presented in the next version of the yearly *Emissions Gap Report*. The final outcome document from the Conference would, however, remain dependent on how the negotiating dynamic squared with actual action on climate change. UNEP would continue to play a role through its many inputs, although the course of future developments would be determined primarily by the secretariat of the Framework Convention and the presidencies of the Conference, with the United Nations Secretary-General also playing a part through his own multiple forms of engagement.
5. On the subject of disaster response, he said that the UNEP Kabul-based team was working to assist in the relief efforts following the recent earthquake that had affected Afghanistan and Pakistan. UNEP was also engaged in supporting the post-disaster efforts under way as a result of the massive earthquake suffered by Nepal in April 2015. Statistics for 2014, he said, had revealed the surprising fact that the Asia-Pacific region was the world’s most disaster-prone and contained the highest number of persons displaced by natural catastrophes. He added that, at the request of the Lebanese Government and with welcome support from Belgium, Japan, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the European Commission, UNEP was deploying an emergency team to assist in addressing the current waste management crisis in Lebanon.
6. Turning to difficulties associated with the roll-out of the enterprise resource planning system, Umoja, he expressed the hope that the disruption of the timely reporting on which UNEP prided itself would be short-lived. In the interim, UNEP would do its utmost to respond outside the Umoja system to urgent matters and emergencies in particular. He was pleased to report that UNEP had received a positive evaluation score for its performance in meeting gender-related norms and standards, in accordance with the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. He invited members to refer to his written update for full details of recent UNEP activities.
7. In the ensuing discussion, representatives thanked the Executive Director for his interesting and informative progress report; commended him for his able stewardship of UNEP and UNEP engagement with disaster-affected countries; welcomed the Programme’s valuable contribution to the 2030 Agenda; affirmed their continuing commitment to working with UNEP and member States for the achievement of its objectives; and welcomed the successful conclusion of the third meeting of the annual subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, with one representative stating that it boded well for a productive outcome from the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives and from the second session of the Environment Assembly itself. A number of representatives cited the financial contributions made by their Governments to the Environment Fund as evidence of the strength of support for UNEP as the leading global environmental authority, with one additionally highlighting her Government’s funding of projects relating to the green economy and environmental diplomacy, as well as its input to UNEP work on enhancing synergies in the area of multilateral environment agreements and promoting activities relating to sustainable consumption and production, and another expressing gratitude for the constructive guidance on environmental issues provided by UNEP to her Government during its presidency of the Group of Seven.
8. The same representative also underlined the significance of the second session of the Environment Assembly as the first international meeting on environment to take place after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, asserting the view also endorsed by another representative that the Environment Assembly must work to strengthen its leadership in setting and further developing the global environment agenda and in providing guidance relating to UNEP activities, implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda, and the role of UNEP in the implementation, monitoring and review of the Sustainable Development Goals. It should also address such important topics as cities and urbanization, notably in the light of UNEP engagement in the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), and sustainable chemistry.
9. One representative said that, as part of its commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, his Government was ready to share its recognized knowledge on building a sound material society through the application of the 3R policy of reduce, reuse and recycle. Also known for its resource efficiency capabilities, it would similarly work to contribute to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 12 (Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns) through its International Environmental Technology Centre (IETC), now a global centre of excellence in the area of waste management. In that connection, the forthcoming meeting of the IETC International Advisory Board promised to yield further useful direction concerning the Centre’s activities. He highlighted the opportunity for transformation offered by the sixth session of the Tokyo International Conference for African Development, to be held in Nairobi in 2016.
10. Another representative outlined the ongoing successes of his Government’s poverty reduction efforts, saying that the enormity of that challenge had in no way diminished its commitment to supporting South-South cooperation, including in the UNEP context. Indeed, it had announced the establishment of a fund to assist developing countries in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with additional investments targeted at the least developed among them. It was also prepared to work with member States towards the establishment of a global ecological civilization, which it regarded as a priority issue that would contribute to the success of the forthcoming Environment Assembly session. One representative urged regular reviews and candid assessments of progress achieved in the implementation of commitments in order to ensure the best possible outcomes acceptable to all, while another called on UNEP to direct priority attention to reporting on the adverse impact that certain terrorist activities could have on the environment, including as a result of related implications for climate change. Yet another underscored the importance of regular reviews and candid assessments to optimizing the likelihood of universally acceptable actions and outcomes.
11. A representative speaking on behalf of major groups and stakeholders encouraged UNEP to use to its advantage the effective outreach capacities of civil society in order to enhance public awareness of its work, which was not widely known. She sought clarification on ways of strengthening the link between the outcome of the second session of the Environment Assembly and the subregional major groups and stakeholders meeting for the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia region due to take place shortly thereafter in Batumi, Georgia, and on how much importance UNEP attached to that meeting. With reference to UNEP activities in Ogoniland, and noting the lack of optimism among her colleagues on the ground concerning the current difficulties, she suggested that the relationship between UNEP and civil society in the Niger Delta be maintained in the interest of working towards a resolution of the problems.
12. The Executive Director thanked members for their positive feedback concerning UNEP activities and expressed his appreciation to the Chair and members of the bureau of the Committee for their sterling work. The discussion, he said, had revealed the extent of the shared perspectives and converging interests with respect to all environment-related matters. He confirmed that UNEP certainly attached importance to the Batumi meeting and acknowledged that, with the exception of a very small constituency, much of the work of UNEP went unrecognized. Communication was indeed a perennial challenge of strategic importance; significant changes were taking place in the Division of Communications and Public Information, which was increasingly using social network platforms to convey information about UNEP and its role as the leading global environmental authority in the United Nations system.

Agenda item 6

Update on the stakeholder engagement policy

1. Introducing the item, Ms. Oyun Sanjaasuren, President of the United Nations Environment Assembly, recalled the content of her report to the third meeting of the annual subcommittee of the Committee concerning the status of her informal consultations with member States on the outstanding elements of the UNEP draft stakeholder engagement policy, which had been developed pursuant to Governing Council decision 27/2, paragraph 7, on institutional arrangements for UNEP governance, and discussed most recently by the Environment Assembly at its first session in June 2014. She outlined the key issues relating to those outstanding elements and provided information on the informal meetings held thus far with the aim of resolving the difficulties and presenting a revised version of the draft policy for consideration by the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives at its second meeting in February 2016. In the light of the discussions of the annual subcommittee at its recent third meeting, it was her understanding that the informal process should be prolonged until the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives in February 2016.
2. Thanking members for their continuing trust in her leadership of that process, she expressed confidence that the desired outcome would be achieved through her intended approach of pursuing until that time her informal consultations with interested parties in an enhanced and more open, transparent and inclusive manner, supported by the secretariat. Her role, she stressed, was not to negotiate any new text but to explore through dialogue, in the interest of consensus, opportunities for reconciling divergent views relating to the outstanding elements of the draft text in order to ensure that it reflected the given mandate and the rightful concerns expressed by some parties.
3. In the ensuing discussion, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries and supported by several other representatives, including two who likewise spoke on behalf of a group of countries, commended the efforts of the President of the Environment Assembly in discharging her task and welcomed her proposed approach to the way forward, in particular with respect to the openness, transparency and inclusiveness of the consultations and the need to give expression to the political will and concerns of all member States. He expressed his commitment to engaging positively during the forthcoming period with the President’s advisor on the matter, Mr. Damdin Davgadorj, as well as to the effective and inclusive participation of all parties in the next Environment Assembly, including relevant stakeholders, especially those from developing and least developed countries, bearing in mind not least their important role in the implementation of its outcomes. He additionally expressed the hope that the views articulated by member States on all matters discussed during the recent annual subcommittee meeting would be taken into consideration by the secretariat in its work throughout the intersessional period leading up to the second session of the Environment Assembly.
4. Another representative, speaking also on behalf of a group of countries, requested more detailed information than provided about the activities undertaken in the context of the consultation process. Various representatives underlined the intergovernmental nature of the Environment Assembly and its decision-making process, with one stressing the need to work in a time-bound manner in order to achieve results. A representative of major groups and stakeholders expressed the hope that the new procedures for stakeholder engagement would be finalized at or before the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives in order to facilitate the necessary preparations for the Environment Assembly session. She noted that several United Nations bodies already had well-organized systems in place for such engagement and that stakeholders in general were experienced in organizing themselves and in implementing transparent election procedures. She added that civil society organizations engaged in UNEP activities must have environment or environmental sustainability as their main focus. She expressed appreciation for the support extended to civil society organizations and confidence that the efforts of the President of the Environment Assembly would bring about consensus on a draft text, a sentiment that was equally shared by other representatives.
5. The President of the Environment Assembly welcomed the views articulated, noting in particular the emphasis placed on openness, inclusiveness, transparency and information-sharing, and said that they would be taken into account in her follow-up activities. Concerning the intergovernmental process, she recalled the fact that decision-making was clearly recognized in the draft stakeholder engagement policy as the prerogative of member States. She confirmed her intention of working to produce a revised draft policy in advance of second meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives with the aim of attaining consensus and invited further comments and suggestions to that end in the interest of achieving the desired adoption of the draft at the second session of the Environment Assembly.

Agenda item 7

Preparations for the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives

1. At the suggestion of the Chair, the Committee agreed to consider the item in conjunction with agenda item 8 and also to endorse formally the provisional agenda and the compromise proposal relating to the structure of the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives, as set out in the document entitled “Preparations for the second meeting of the   
   Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives” (UNEP/CPR/132/7/Rev.1).

Agenda item 8

Preparations for the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

1. Introducing the item, which was to be considered, as agreed, in conjunction with agenda item 7, the Chair drew attention to the document entitled “Preparations for the second session of the Environment Assembly” (UNEP/CPR/132/8) and recalled that the discussion of the subject to date had primarily focused on the preparation of draft resolutions, including proposals for possible topics, the structure of the high-level segment, and the format of the outcome document, with respect to which a working group was to be established with a view to reconciling divergent opinions.
2. In the ensuing discussion, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the proposals put forward during the third meeting of the annual subcommittee concerning draft resolutions for transmission to the Environment Assembly at its second session. The resulting list to be compiled by the secretariat would, he said, undoubtedly assist the efforts to turn those proposals into clear, ambitious and implementable draft resolutions relating to the work of UNEP. He called on all member States to provide an early indication of draft resolutions that they wished to sponsor so as to allow sufficient time for the necessary discussions. One representative declared her delegation’s intention to present a draft resolution on marine litter and microplastics for consideration by the   
   Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives at its second meeting in the belief that the subject matter was among the issues on which the Environment Assembly must demonstrate strong political leadership and provide direction for delivering on the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals. She added that the timely circulation of documents in advance of that meeting was essential to its success. Another representative called for additional sponsors of a draft resolution on environmentally sound technologies for waste management, prepared by his delegation together with two others, which was aimed at promoting the use of those technologies and strengthening the role of the International Environmental Technology Centre. One representative suggested that the submission of a draft omnibus resolution and draft resolutions dealing with   
   non-contentious issues would reduce the intensity of the work of the Environment Assembly and furthermore lessen expectations concerning its outcome.
3. Concerning the organization of the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives, a number of representatives, including two speaking on behalf of different groups of countries, shared the view that no more than two parallel sessions should be held at any one time in consideration of the capacities of smaller delegations and that sufficient funding should be allocated for guaranteeing the broad participation of members from developing and least developed countries. Speaking on behalf of a group of countries, another representative suggested that item 4 of the provisional agenda for the meeting, relating to the identification of themes for substantive discussion, should be linked to the preparations for the second session of the Environment Assembly with the aim of promoting a lively discussion during the high-level segment. One representative stressed that the completion of all technical discussions by the close of the meeting was fundamental to the success of the Environment Assembly session. Another asserted that UNEP regional offices must work to ensure that members without representation in Nairobi had access to the information needed for them to form opinions on the issues at stake and participate fully in the meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives and indeed in the Environment Assembly session.
4. With regard to the second session of the Environment Assembly, a representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries commended the preparations in progress and pledged cooperation for success, with another adding that understanding and agreement on outstanding issues must be constructed through careful analysis rather than on the basis of hasty decisions. He said that the choice of a single overarching theme, *Delivering on the environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, for the high-level segment would promote ministerial focus and a constructive input that would undoubtedly be influenced by the proceedings of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change. A representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries agreed that sufficient time must be allocated to ensure the fullest high-level discussion of the theme, with another emphasizing the importance of an open exchange of views. Another representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries equally welcomed the choice of theme for the ministerial policy review session, “Healthy environment - healthy people”, urging the earliest possible finalization of the global thematic report on that topic, again in order to ensure adequate time for member States to prepare for their high-level participation in the session. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, added that the latter theme should be linked to the overarching theme. She requested clarification concerning the criteria applied in determining the policy issues listed under item 6 of the provisional agenda for the Environment Assembly, adding that the planned symposium on the inquiry into the design of a sustainable financial system should feature in the documentation, even if it was to take place before the opening of the high-level segment, during which the opportunity for meaningful stakeholder dialogue should also be provided. Further information on the envisaged structure and duration of such a dialogue would be welcome. Two other representatives agreed that the engagement of major groups and stakeholders in the work of the Environment Assembly was vital, bearing in mind their instrumental role in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. One of them also placed emphasis on the timely circulation of reports relevant to the session, stating that well-prepared and targeted materials were crucial to facilitating a productive ministerial dialogue.
5. Two representatives, each speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed views concerning the outcome document for the Environment Assembly, namely that the format of the document must be promptly decided and the draft of any negotiated ministerial declaration must be provided well in advance of the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives. It was further stated that the outcome document should be concise, focused and reflective of all viewpoints and interests, outlining the political guidance provided by ministers concerning the overarching theme, and underlining balanced integration of the social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development, as well as the Rio Principles, in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Three representatives, each speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed their willingness to contribute to the activities of the working group to be tasked with exploring means to reach consensus on the format of the outcome document.
6. One representative expressed a strong preference for following the important precedent set by the adoption of a ministerial declaration as the outcome document of the first session of the Environment Assembly; to do otherwise, he said, would diminish the standing of the Environment Assembly and send the wrong political message in the wake of the landmark adoption of the   
   2030 Agenda. Another representative remarked that no outcome document could reasonably be drafted until after the high-level segment had taken place, with yet another maintaining that such a document must express the political will of all member States and that any discussion of a ministerial declaration at the present stage was consequently premature. One representative, noting that time constraints would preclude the development of an outcome document during the Environment Assembly session, suggested that the established procedure of referring such documents to capitals for advance clearance should be followed.
7. On another note, one representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries said that the question of a change in the cycle of sessions of the Environment Assembly should be further pursued and that any decision taken in that regard should have no budgetary implications nor should it affect the term of members of the Bureau of the Environment Assembly. Another, also speaking on behalf of a group of countries, emphasized the need to elaborate adequate means for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and called for a new phase of international cooperation through a strengthened and scaled-up global partnership for development. He expressed his commitment to continue working with UNEP, the most important international forum addressing environmental matters, and with member States, in order to achieve global partnership on those matters in the context of the global development agenda. One representative affirmed that resolve and urged the substantive engagement of all delegations in the efforts to ensure a fruitful outcome from the second session of the Environment Assembly.
8. The Chair confirmed that note had been taken of the comments made and that discussions relating to the preparations for both events would be pursued through various methods on the basis of a schedule to be drawn up by the secretariat.

Agenda item 9

Other matters

1. The Chair informed the Committee that her summary of the third meeting of the annual subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP would be made available in the six official languages of the United Nations and communicated to all member States, together with a letter from the Executive Director, in accordance with the policy of keeping them fully informed of the work and activities taking place at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi.
2. The Executive Director also invited members to watch a short video produced by the “Global Goals” campaign for raising public awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Agenda item 10

Closure of the meeting

1. The meeting was declared closed at 4.35 p.m. on Friday, 30 October 2015.

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Minutes of the 133rd meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme, held on 19 January 2016

Agenda item 1

Opening of the meeting

1. The meeting was opened at 9:40 a.m. on Tuesday, 19 January 2016, by Ms. Julia Pataki, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Romania to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP.
2. The meeting was attended by 74 participants representing 55 members, and 11 participants representing 3 observers and 8 non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations.
3. The Chair welcomed the following new members of the Committee: Mr. Hadi Farajvand, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Iran (Islamic Republic of); Ms. Ann W. Wanjohi, Chargé d’affaires, a.i., and Permanent Representative of Kenya; Ms. Yvonne Khamati, Minister Counsellor of Kenya; Mr. Kwon Young-dae, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea; Mr. Fafre Camara, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Mali; Mr. Damdin Davgadorj, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Mongolia to the United Nations; Ms. Irina Zarin, Deputy Permanent Representative of Serbia; Mr. Ralf Heckner, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Switzerland; Mr. Stephen Burns, Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; and Mr. Joel B. Hansen, Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States of America. She also welcomed Mr. Nasei Abujaish, new Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine.
4. She bade farewell to the following departing members, thanking them for their contribution to the work of the Committee and wishing them well in their future endeavours: Mr. Malek Hossein Givzad, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Iran (Islamic Republic of); Mr. Martin Mbugua Kimani, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Kenya; Mr. George Orina, Deputy Permanent Representative of Kenya; Mr. Boubacar Gouro Diall, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Mali; Mr. Ivan Kandijas, Deputy Permanent Representative of Serbia; Mr. Michal Mlynar, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Slovakia; Mr. Christian Turner, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom; and Ms. Vanessa Redmond, Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom. She also bade farewell to Mr. Zuhair Saleh M. Al-Shun, Ambassador and Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Agenda item 2

Adoption of the agenda

1. The agenda was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/CPR/133/2).

Agenda item 3

Adoption of the minutes of the 132nd meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, held on 30 October 2015

1. The Committee adopted the minutes of its 132nd meeting on the basis of the draft minutes of the meeting (UNEP/CPR/133/4).

Agenda item 4

Report of the Executive Director to the Committee of Permanent Representatives

1. Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP, drew attention to his written report entitled “Executive Director’s update to the Committee of Permanent Representatives” on key activities undertaken by UNEP since the 132nd meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, held on 30 October 2015, highlighting a number of UNEP activities and events of relevance to UNEP that had taken place since that meeting.
2. Among such events was the adoption of a decision on hydrofluorocarbons, which were potent greenhouse gases, by the Twenty-Seventh Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in November 2015. The decision set a path for addressing practical challenges associated with tackling hydrofluorocarbons within the Montreal Protocol and envisaged the adoption of an amendment to the Protocol to deal with those chemicals at an extraordinary Meeting of the Parties to be held later in 2016. If adopted in 2016, the amendment would help to avoid massive emissions of hydrofluorocarbons into the atmosphere; it was hoped that the members of the Committee would convey to their capitals the importance of the preparatory work to be undertaken to ensure the adoption of such an amendment at the 2016 extraordinary meeting.
3. Other highlights of relevance to UNEP included the adoption of five new international single species action plans, a new international multi-species action plan and guidelines on marine fisheries, sustainable deployment of renewable energy and national legislation for the protection of waterbirds and their habitats by the Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds, which UNEP administered, at its sixth ordinary session held in Bonn, Germany, in November 2015; the selection by the General Assembly of the United Nations of a new set of board members to oversee the implementation of the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns; and the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 70/195 on combating sand and dust storms. UNEP had been asked to provide the secretariat function for the follow-up on the resolution and was in the process of preparing a global assessment on sand and dust storms that would help Member States to better understand the drivers and root causes of, and possible responses to, the issue.
4. With regard to major areas of UNEP work, highlights included the near completion of the regional assessments that would form the basis of the sixth iteration of the *Global Environment Outlook* report, to be released in 2018; the holding of a high-level event to assess the implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities; the impending signing of a new memorandum of understanding with the Islamic Development Bank; and the strengthening of the long-standing partnership between UNEP and the Economic Commission for Europe to increase cooperation in a number of areas, in particular green economy.
5. In the area of green economy, UNEP had decided to retain for two additional years the team that had developed the report on the inquiry into the design of a sustainable financial system launched in October 2015, entitled *The Financial System We Need: Aligning the Financial System with Sustainable Development*, in order to help international financial institutions and stock exchanges around the world to identify green finance opportunities. Continued engagement with financial institutions was essential because without their resources it would not be possible to implement, among others, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement, adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at its twenty-first session.
6. The inquiry report team was working to create new partnerships and had recently presented the findings of the inquiry in France, India, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. The United Kingdom had declared 2016 the year of green finance and the city of London had recently launched a green finance initiative. UNEP also saw 2016 as the year of green finance, as all countries had an interest in exploring options to attract green investments, including for the implementation of their national climate change strategies, and was consolidating its work in this area, including through its Finance Initiative and the Sustainable Stock Exchanges Initiative. In addition, UNEP had been asked to provide the secretariat for the green finance study group, a group created by the Government of China as part of its 2016 presidency of the Group of Twenty.
7. With regard to the preparations for the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, UNEP had focused on the preparations for the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives, which would precede the session and, it was to be hoped, would serve as its preparatory meeting. In that regard, UNEP had been engaged in the preparation of pre-session documents, including a report on “Healthy environment - healthy people” that would help Member States to prepare for the session, and in working with Committee members to help them reach consensus on the draft decisions and draft resolutions for, and potential outcome of, the session. Over the following months, UNEP would focus on how the medium-term strategy and programme of work could more fully reflect the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, in particular with regard to the setting of priorities and the allocation of extrabudgetary resources to better respond to the requests of member States and other United Nations system bodies.
8. Turning to administrative matters, he said that UNEP continued to face major challenges associated with the implementation of the enterprise resource planning system, Umoja, and was working with the Umoja team in New York and with relevant United Nations entities in Nairobi to deal with those challenges. He apologized to the members of the Committee for the related delays and difficulties that they may have experienced.
9. With respect to the budget, in its resolution 70/249, the General Assembly had approved a United Nations budget that provided, among other things, for 21 UNEP positions to be funded from the regular budget of the United Nations. He expressed disappointment that the approved budget did not fully endorse the allocations for UNEP proposed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, including 35 positions to be funded from the regular budget, which he said had sought to strengthen UNEP in line with the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).
10. While the overall financial situation of UNEP seemed healthy, there was a disturbing trend among Member States to reduce their contributions to the Environment Fund, driven in part by a recent decision by some Scandinavian and other European countries to make severe cuts to their international development cooperation funds. This trend was a reflection of budgetary constraints facing many countries rather than a lack of confidence in UNEP. It was to be hoped that this represented merely a temporary setback, as a healthy balance between regular and extrabudgetary resources was necessary for UNEP to deliver on its programme of work and to continue to thrive as envisioned by member States at Rio+20, in particular in view of the recent adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement.
11. Turning to the Paris Agreement, he outlined the main elements of the Agreement and its companion decision 1/CP.21, saying that together they represented a turning point for climate change, placing the issue firmly at the centre of building the economy of the future. The twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change had demonstrated that sometimes it took decades for science to be sufficiently understood in the economic and political arenas to have an impact on progress. In this case, the science had paved the way for the transformational economic development agenda adopted at the session, which aimed to limit global temperature rise by combining Government-developed intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs) with a review mechanism premised on the idea that national goals would need to be strengthened as countries became more confident in their ability to decarbonize their economies.
12. The outcome of the Paris session represented the culmination and widespread recognition of the climate-related work of UNEP, including its *Emissions Gap Report* series and other publications; the hosting of the Climate Technology Centre and Network, which had been strengthened through the outcome; its efforts to reduce short-lived climate pollutants through the Climate and Clean Air Coalition; its work to reduce the climate impact of institutional investor portfolios through the Portfolio Decarbonization Coalition; and the support it provided to countries in areas such as renewable energy. UNEP had, for instance, provided technical and financial support to African countries in their efforts to develop the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative ‒ launched at the Paris session ‒ and had set the bold goal of doubling Africa’s renewable energy by 2020 through the development of 10 gigawatts (GW) of new capacity and also aimed to produce 300 GW of electricity from renewable energy sources by 2030. It had been estimated that $20 billion would be required to meet the initiative’s 2020 goal and, with $10 billion already pledged by countries members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Africa was on track to achieve that goal.
13. In the ensuing discussion, most of the representatives who spoke thanked the Executive Director for his oral presentation and written report, with one requesting that in the future such written reports be submitted earlier.
14. With regard to the second session of the Environment Assembly, one representative thanked the secretariat and member States for the early preparation of the documents and draft resolutions to be considered at the session. Another commended UNEP for preparing a draft medium-term strategy and programme of work and budget that reflected the aspirations of member States and were clearly linked to internationally agreed environmental goals, the Sustainable Development Goals and the outcome of the Paris climate talks. He said that his Government was very pleased to see a strong focus on air quality in the draft programme of work. Several representatives said that the session offered the opportunity for member States to deliver key messages needed for the implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda and other key instruments adopted in 2015, and to help shape the new urban agenda that was likely to be adopted in October 2016 during the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III).
15. One representative said that poverty eradication was the top priority of the 2030 Agenda and that, while his country appreciated the financial and technological support that developed countries provided to the world’s poor regions, it firmly rejected the imposition of concepts on developing countries that were not in conformity with their national priorities or social systems or that disregarded the right of member States to equal participation in the affairs of the United Nations.
16. One representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries said that it was important that representatives from developing and least developed countries receive financial support to enable their participate in both the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives and the second session of the Environment Assembly.
17. Turning to the possible outcome of the high-level segment of the second session of the Environment Assembly, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the outcome, as well as the resolutions to be adopted by the Environment Assembly, should be concise and respectful of the UNEP mandate, reflect the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced manner, highlight the significance of the principles contained in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, in particular principle 7 on common but differentiated responsibilities, and contribute to the successful implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda. Another representative urged the Committee to accept a chair’s summary as the outcome of the high-level segment, saying that while his country appreciated the continued desire by some Member States for a negotiated outcome, reaching consensus on such an outcome would be very difficult and would require protracted negotiations that would take away resources from more meaningful and substantive efforts, both prior to and during the session.
18. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the countries looked forward to the Environment Assembly reaching agreement at its second session on amended rules of procedure and a stakeholder engagement policy for UNEP that reflected the intergovernmental nature of UNEP and the interests of all Member States. Another representative said that the time was not yet ripe for the participation of other stakeholders in the high-level dialogue of the second session of the Environment Assembly.
19. With regard to the UNEP budget, one representative said that despite his country’s support for a zero nominal growth policy for the United Nations regular budget, UNEP had been one of the few entities in the United Nations Secretariat to receive a regular budget increase in 2015 from the General Assembly to regularize 21 regional posts. He therefore called on UNEP, as well as member States in their oversight role, to ensure that the budget increase for UNEP approved in 2015 would translate into improved effectiveness and meaningful results.
20. One representative drew attention toa meeting of the international advisory board of the International Environmental Technology Centre (IETC) held in Osaka, Japan, in December 2015, at which the board had expressed general support for a draft resolution on environmentally sound technologies in relation to waste management to be considered at the second session of the Environment Assembly and provided recommendations for strengthening UNEP activities in that area. Another representative drew attention to a meeting held in December 2015 of an advisory group whose recommendations would inform a UNEP study on marine plastic debris and microplastics to be considered by the Environment Assembly at its second session; to two UNEP reports released in 2015, one on microbeads in cosmetics and another on biodegradable plastics; and to progress achieved in the regional assessments for the sixth iteration of the *Global Environment Outlook* report. He noted that that such reports highlighted the key role played by UNEP as a provider of knowledge for evidence-based policymaking and should be better publicized.
21. All the representatives who spoke welcomed the outcome of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, in particular the Paris Agreement.
22. One, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, commended UNEP for its climate-related work and said that its efforts should continue to focus on those areas where it had delivered tangible results, saying that progress achieved under the Climate and Clean Air Coalition and the 10-year framework on sustainable consumption and production patterns and in efforts to deal with hydrofluorocarbons via the Montreal Protocol would help deliver on the Paris Agreement in the period leading up to 2020 and that UNEP was well positioned to maximize synergies at the national and international levels between the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda. Together with two other representatives, he outlined ways in which UNEP could contribute to the implementation of the Paris Agreement, including by helping countries to implement their INDCs and to develop long-term low‑carbon emission strategies; capacity-building, in particular in the area of adaptation; the promotion of an accelerated transfer of environmentally sound technologies for low-carbon and climate-resilient development; the development of emissions gap reports, which could greatly contribute to the stock-taking activities foreseen in the Agreement and the review of INDCs; and the continued hosting of the Climate Technology Centre and Network.
23. The representative of France expressed appreciation to UNEP for its contribution to making the Paris climate talks a success, including the assistance given to countries in preparing their INDCs. He said that his Government counted on UNEP to be a powerful mobilizer of States and non-State actors, including on Earth day in April 2016 and during the second session of the Environment Assembly, to ensure the implementation of the Paris Agreement and its rapid entry into force. Another representative said that his Government would do its best to contribute to the implementation of the Paris Agreement, including by strengthening innovative climate technologies and by supporting developing countries by engaging with both the public and private sectors
24. The Executive Director thanked members for their comments. With regard to the IETC board meeting held in Osaka, he said that the board had provided very helpful and strategic advice to UNEP on how to tackle the waste challenge worldwide, including through waste-to-energy and other advanced technologies. With regard to adaptation to climate change, UNEP had played and would continue to play a key role in this area, including through its work on ecosystem-based adaptation, the production of the *Adaptation Gap Report* series, and the provision of technical support to countries, such as support to help them to develop projects under and to access resources from the Green Climate Fund.
25. Drawing attention to the role of UNEP as a knowledge provider, he said that this included not only keeping the global environment under review but also being at the forefront of technology to identify possible solutions to environmental challenges, including through the Climate Technology Centre and Network, the Climate and Clean Air Coalition and the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns, in which UNEP acted as an advisor, service provider and convener of technology. UNEP was also a mobilizer of financial resources and while it was extremely careful to maintain its independence and not let private sector interests affect its work, it had received or helped mobilize hundreds of billions of dollars, including from the private sector, for the green economy and initiatives such as the African Renewable Energy Initiative and en.lighten, through which it was helping over 60 countries to phase out incandescent lightning and introduce efficient lighting.

Agenda item 5

Report on subcommittee activities

1. The Committee took note of the report of the subcommittee (UNEP/CPR/133/5).

Agenda item 6

Preparations for the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives

Agenda item 7

Preparations for the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

1. At the suggestion of the Chair, the Committee agreed to consider agenda item 6 in conjunction with item 7. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to the provisional agenda for the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (UNEP/OECPR.2/1/Rev.1) and the proposed organization of the meeting (UNEP/CPR/133/8), noting that the documents did not contain any substantive amendments compared to those approved by the Committee at its 132nd meeting. A new agenda item had, however, been added to the provisional agenda to allow for discussion of modalities for changing the cycle of sessions of the Environment Assembly.
2. Outlining the proposed organization of the meeting, the Executive Director said that it would enable participants to fully discuss their expectations for the second session of the Environment Assembly, including by reviewing the key reports and draft resolutions to be considered at the session, and provided that no more than two working groups would meet at the same time. With regard to participation, UNEP was helping developing countries that were eligible for and had requested financial support to enable their representatives to attend the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee and the second session of the Environment Assembly to obtain such support. UNEP expected approximately 80 participants from major groups and stakeholders to the Open-ended meeting, 38 of which had already registered.
3. In the ensuing discussion, one representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries said that the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee could be deemed successful if agreement was reached on the agenda and format of the second session of the Environment Assembly, including its high-level segment; the format of and, ideally, the key elements to be included in, the outcome of the segment; the key issues to be addressed in the draft resolutions to be considered for adoption by the Environment Assembly at its second session; and the organization of work to be undertaken in the period leading up to the session. He expressed support for the proposed organization of the meeting, noting that ample time should be allocated for the discussion of the proposed outcome of the Environment Assembly session, that time should be also allocated to discussion of the organization of work for the period leading up to the second session, and that the submission of any draft resolution that was not currently backed by one or more Member States should be reviewed by Member States.
4. Another representative, also speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed appreciation for the confirmation by the Executive Director that no more than two sessions during the meeting would be held in parallel and that financial resources would be made available to ensure the participation of representatives of developing and least developed countries.
5. With regard to the second session of the Environment Assembly, one representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries expressed appreciation to the Chair of the Committee for her dedication and efforts towards ensuring a successful session, including through her chairing of a working group to discuss the possible outcome of the high-level segment, and to the Bureau of the Environment Assembly for its efforts to promote dialogue on the UNEP rules concerning stakeholder participation. In that regard, it was to be hoped that informal consultations would continue with a view to reaching consensus on stakeholder participation prior to the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee. She also said that further exchanges were needed to define the structure and method of work of the high-level segment of the second session of the Environment Assembly.
6. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed full support for holding a multi-stakeholder dialogue as part of the high-level segment of the second and future sessions of the Environment Assembly, noting his commitment to ensuring the active participation of all relevant stakeholders in the work of the Assembly drawing on best practices and models from relevant multilateral institutions and by exploring new mechanisms to promote transparency and effective engagement of civil society in that work, in line with the outcome of Rio+20, the work of relevant international instruments and past decisions of the governing body of UNEP.
7. With regard to the proposed changes to the cycle of Environment Assembly sessions, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, called on UNEP to ensure that cycle changes would not affect the term of office of Bureau members or the budget of the Bureau and that, if it was decided that sessions of the Environment Assembly should be held in 2017 and 2019, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean countries, which was to preside over the second session, should also preside over those two sessions and have sufficient resources to fulfil its functions. Another representative said that his country supported changing the cycle of sessions to odd years and holding the third session of the Assembly in 2019, given that a new mid-term strategy, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and the outcomes of the Paris climate talks and the third International Conference on Financing for Development, would be adopted in 2016. He said that he remained open to holding a short session in 2017 provided that its cost was reduced and that substantive outcomes for the session were identified.
8. Following the discussion, the Chair of the Committee provided an update on the status of draft resolutions to be considered by the Environment Assembly, noting that 21 proposals for draft resolutions had been received to date. She asked member States to submit their proposals for draft resolutions as soon as possible to enable early discussion of all the draft resolutions prior to the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee. With regard to the outcome of the high-level segment, a working group that she had chaired had met the previous week to discuss a number of member State proposals for key messages to be included in the outcome; the group had requested member States to submit to the secretariat, by 22 January 2016, comments on those proposals or new proposals so that the secretariat could compile the proposals and comments for consideration by member States.
9. The Executive Director said that he had taken note of all the comments and suggestions made, welcoming in particular the call for early discussion of the work to be undertaken in the period between the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee in February 2016 and the second session of the Environment Assembly in May 2016, and encouraged the Committee to attempt to reach agreement on outstanding issues regarding the high-level segment of the session, in particular the organization of a multi-stakeholder dialogue. The Chair indicated that the secretariat would distribute a note on the organization of the ministerial dialogue and another on the stakeholder dialogue with the ministers. She expressed the hope that the documents would help member States to reach agreement on the multi-stakeholder dialogue in line with international commitments already made regarding stakeholder participation in the work of the Environment Assembly.

Agenda item 8

Other matters

1. The Chair requested the Asia-Pacific Group to nominate a vice-chair to the Bureau of the Committee, stressing that the preparations for the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee and the second session of the Environment Assembly were very complex and the Bureau needed all its vice-chairs to carry out its work.
2. The Executive Director shared with the Committee the news of the death of the first Executive Director of UNEP, Mr. Maurice Strong, who he described as a visionary and one of principal architects of the sustainable development agenda.

Agenda item 9

Closure of the meeting

1. The meeting was declared closed at 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday, 19 January 2016.

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Draft report of the second meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme held from 15 to 19 February 2016

I. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

1. The meeting was opened at 9.35 a.m. on Monday, 15 February 2016, by Ms. Julia Pataki, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Romania and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
2. The meeting was attended by 395 participants from 116 members and 1 observer mission, 176 representatives of countries without representation in Nairobi, and 42 participants from major groups and stakeholders.
3. Welcoming the participants, in particular those who did not reside in Nairobi, Ms. Pataki said that the objective of the current meeting was to pave the way for a successful second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly by preparing and reaching consensus on quality draft resolutions and decisions for consideration by the Assembly that addressed challenges, opportunities and emerging environmental issues and positioned the Assembly to play a key role in the implementation of important international commitments, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change; and by setting the stage for the adoption during the session’s high-level segment of a strong outcome that conveyed a clear message from the Assembly as the leading global environmental authority.
4. With regard to organizational matters, she asked regional groups to engage in consultations at the current meeting with a view to providing by the end of the meeting their nominees to the new Bureau of the Environment Assembly, which would be elected at the start of the second session of the Assembly.
5. Following a proposal by the Chair, the Committee elected Mr. Raza Bashir Tarar, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of Pakistan, as the new Vice Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives representing the Asia-Pacific region.
6. The agenda was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda set out in document UNEP/OECPR.2/1/Rev.1.
7. Following the adoption of the agenda, the Committee heard opening remarks from Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the General Assembly of the United Nations at its seventieth session, via a recorded message; and Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP.
8. In his recorded message, Mr. Lykketoft said that he had accepted the invitation to address the current meeting and to attend the second session of the Environment Assembly because both meetings were strongly linked to one of the key priorities of his presidency, namely kick-starting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Goals had been in effect for over a month, and it was crucial that Governments send clear signals of their determination to implement them, for instance by revising their national development plans or by developing new plans that embraced the Goals; by creating dedicated institutions to advise on, and multi-stakeholder forums to help monitor, the implementation of the Goals; by raising public awareness about the Goals; and by adopting policies and using other tools to mobilize resources and enable the transformation that was needed. Clear signals were also needed from United Nations system bodies, the private sector, the international financial industry and civil society, which had been a driving force in designing ambitious Goals and whose interest should be harnessed through activities such as the global dialogues hosted by myUNEA.org.
9. By creating a space where ministers and other actors could discuss the implementation of the environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda, the second session of the Environment Assembly offered participants the opportunity to create instruments, strategies and collaboration that could be translated into local actions. In that context, it was important that while focusing on the environment the Assembly bear in mind that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda required that economies and societies be governed and managed in ways that balanced the three dimensions of sustainable development. In closing, he said that it was crucial that the Assembly provide the world with the boost that was needed to give the Sustainable Development Goals the best possible start, expressing the hope that the Assembly’s discussions would also help to ensure that, rather than being seen as a separate issue, climate action was integrated into the larger framework for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.
10. In his remarks, the Executive Director welcomed the wide participation by Member States and stakeholders at the current meeting – an indication, he said, that the meeting was seen as a preparatory session for the second session of the Environment Assembly and that the Assembly itself was seen not merely as the governing body of UNEP, but as an intergovernmental platform that constituted a central part of the architecture of sustainable development. UNEP had come a long way since its creation in 1972, when it had broken new ground by establishing its headquarters in a developing country which was now a centre of multilateralism, and when inextricable linkages between development and the environment had been emphasized at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the third International Conference on Financing for Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the Paris Agreement, all adopted in 2015, provided a clear perspective on how development should be understood in the years to come, with environment at its centre, and reflected the contributions made by UNEP to each of those processes and its decades-long work.
11. For over four decades, UNEP had helped Member States to identify issues and opportunities by revealing challenges that few considered either relevant or important, by breaking down barriers to addressing those challenges, by helping countries to understand what it meant to live on a planet of seven billion inhabitants, and by not only describing problems but also finding intelligent solutions to those problems. Many of the draft decisions and resolutions for possible adoption by the Environment Assembly showed the confidence that Member States placed in UNEP and revealed that the environmental community had matured and now saw environmental challenges as sustainable development challenges.
12. The foundations of an environmentalism that was firmly rooted in sustainable development were laid out in the documents that the Committee would discuss at the current meeting in preparation for the second session of the Environment Assembly, including the medium-term strategy 2018–2021 and the programme of work and budget for 2018–2019, which showed that UNEP was ready to contribute to the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development. The Committee of Permanent Representatives had worked very hard to lay the groundwork for a successful meeting that would enable the Committee to fulfil its objective of preparing a focused, strategic Assembly session that would foster interactions between Member States and the scientific, business and civil society communities and result in outcomes that went beyond UNEP and spoke to the international community and to other forums, such as the General Assembly and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, in particular on the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development and the clear links between a healthy environment and human well-being, which showed the very practical nature of the Sustainable Development Goals.
13. Noting that the current meeting of the Open-ended Committee would be his last, he expressed satisfaction that the Committee would take the next step towards fulfilling the vision of UNEP as a Programme whose goal was to help countries and peoples achieve sustainable development. Given that almost all solutions and responses to environmental threats were in the hands of decision makers in the field of the economy and various industrial sectors, the success of UNEP lay in its ability to stimulate the adoption of the decisions, mandates and implementation agendas through which Governments and United Nations sister agencies would tackle such threats. Over the previous ten years, UNEP had reformed its business model and had doubled its resources without a corresponding increase in the size of the secretariat, and its influence had increased by relying on partnerships to bring science, technology and policy solutions to the global arena. In the light of those improvements in efficiency, it was to be hoped that few, if any, representatives at the current meeting would call for cuts to the UNEP budget, as resources were needed to respond to the growing requests from Member States for UNEP support.
14. Following the remarks of the Executive Director, the representatives of the regional groups made statements in which they commented on the preparations for the second session of the Environment Assembly, expressed appreciation to the Executive Director and his team for their work in preparing the relevant documentation and pledged the full support of the Member States in their various groupings to ensuring a successful meeting.
15. The representative of Argentina, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, expressed commitment to addressing global environmental challenges and achieving sustainable development, and placed particular emphasis on redressing the environmental damage caused by armed conflicts and on eradicating poverty, which was intimately tied to the promotion of sustainable development and called for an integrated approach involving the balanced application of its three dimensions. That view, she said, was reflected in the historic agreements adopted in 2015 and the current meeting needed to continue that trend and pave the way for a positive outcome to the second session of the Environment Assembly. To that end, the fact that participation in the meeting had been extended to the representatives of countries without permanent representation in Nairobi, among others, should serve to enhance the preparations. Accordingly, it was essential to finalize the proposed stakeholder engagement policy before the second session of the Environment Assembly, with due regard for the intergovernmental nature of UNEP, the non-objection rule and the interests of all Member States, and she expressed appreciation to the President of the Assembly and the secretariat for their efforts in that regard.
16. Turning to the draft resolutions for consideration at the current meeting, she said that they must be inclusive and transparent, taking into account the views of all Member States, and that emphasis should be placed on ensuring that UNEP concentrated its efforts and did not duplicate the work of other United Nations entities and the multilateral environmental agreements. The role of UNEP in championing the environmental dimension of sustainable development was of increasing importance, she said, and it was crucial to work together to ensure that UNEP continued to gain relevance by becoming ever more responsive and accountable to Member States. She expressed commitment to continuing to work with UNEP and with other Member States to foster a global partnership on environmental issues within the 2030 Agenda.
17. Mr. Stefano Dejak, Head of the E.U. delegation and Permanent Representative of Netherlands to UNEP, speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the major breakthroughs made by the international community in 2015 in adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda had created optimal conditions for work at the current meeting. Nevertheless, it was important to bear in mind that longer term success relied on the implementation of those agreements and the timely attainment of their goals.
18. With regard to the 2030 Agenda, he said that the European Union was fully committed to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and that the second session of the Environment Assembly would give environment ministers an opportunity to speak with one voice and provide the political guidance required for an integrated, coordinated and effective approach that involved all stakeholders. UNEP should work closely with other United Nations entities to mainstream the environmental dimension throughout the United Nations system and prevent its fragmentation by continuing to promote system-wide environmental strategies and promoting synergies between the multilateral environmental agreements. Meanwhile, UNEP, as the leading global environmental authority, should strive to further develop and refine the *Global Environment Outlook* assessment process in order to increase its relevance to policymakers at all levels. Stressing that the active participation of the relevant stakeholders was crucial to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, he called on UNEP to continue promoting the effective engagement of civil society in its work, including through strengthened multi-stakeholder partnerships, adding that the representatives at the current meeting should build on the progress of the informal consultations initiated by the President of the Environment Assembly and finalize an effective stakeholder engagement policy.
19. The member States of the European Union stood ready to work with others to finalize a series of resolutions that set the global environmental agenda for the years ahead and sent strong messages to the international community, national Governments, the Executive Director of UNEP and relevant stakeholders, thereby marking 2016 as an important year in the history of UNEP and the Environment Assembly.
20. The representative of Morocco, speaking on behalf of the African States, welcomed the current meeting as an opportunity for participants to engage with each other, to take stock of progress and to reach agreement on issues that would further the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement. Also welcoming the reports of the Executive Director on a broad range of activities across the seven subprogrammes, he said that the outcomes of the meeting could help the Environment Assembly, at its second session, to set the tone for advancing the environmental pillar within the framework of those agreements. The outcomes would also serve to inform the deliberations at the sixth special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, to be held in Cairo in April 2016, including on the preparations for the Environment Assembly session.
21. Regarding the Sustainable Development Goals, which captured most of the priorities highlighted in the common African position guiding the region’s engagement in the process of formulating the Goals, he said that African States looked forward to discussing how UNEP and the Environment Assembly intended to pave the way for the implementation of the environmental dimension of the Goals and ensure that Africa received the necessary support. In view of its vulnerability to the negative impacts of climate change, the region also looked forward to the speedy ratification of the Paris Agreement, bearing in mind that its special needs could not be met unless the international community recognized that vulnerability and offered appropriate support within the framework of Goal 13 (take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts). Meanwhile, African States welcomed the ecosystem-based adaptation approach as a critical means of implementing the 2030 Agenda and expressed appreciation to UNEP and other partners for having set the stage for that approach and for the Ecosystem-based Adaptation for Food Security Assembly. Another issue of particular importance to the region was that of the illegal trade in wildlife and he called for the support of UNEP in implementing the recently adopted African Common Strategy on Combating Illegal Trade in Wildlife at the regional, subregional and national levels.
22. Expressing the view that UNEP could not fulfil its mandate without ensuring the implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), “The future we want”, he stressed the need to prioritize the strengthening of the regional presence of UNEP and the consolidation of headquarters functions in Nairobi, and he urged Member States to strive for consensus on the key role of stakeholders in the field of the environment at the second session of the Environment Assembly.
23. The representative of Argentina, speaking on behalf of Latin American and Caribbean States, expressed appreciation to UNEP for the financial support that had enabled many representatives of developing countries to participate in the current meeting and to contribute to a fruitful outcome to the discussions on, among other things, strengthening the mechanisms for international and interregional dialogue to strike a balance between environmental protection and economic, social and cultural development at the national level. Latin American and Caribbean States considered it crucial to implement the 2030 Agenda in keeping with national priorities, with particular emphasis on the eradication of all forms of poverty and respect for the full sovereignty of each country over its own natural resources. To that end, the draft resolutions submitted to the Environment Assembly at its second session must reflect the mandate of UNEP in delivering on the environmental dimension of sustainable development in a coherent manner, adopting a balanced approach to all three dimensions, and taking into account national perspectives, models and instruments. She also expressed appreciation for the efforts of the President of the Environment Assembly to achieve consensus on the proposed stakeholder engagement policy and stressed that the draft policy had to be finalized at the current meeting.
24. Regarding the working documents for the meeting, she expressed concern about the large number of draft resolutions before the Committee, adding that they must be examined in the light of the budgetary implications of their implementation. She emphasized that all the documents submitted to the Environment Assembly must be made available in the six official languages of the United Nations, and suggested that UNEP should consider providing interpretation and translation for the working groups during the second session of the Assembly**.**
25. Expressing appreciation for the information provided by the secretariat on the proposed change to an odd-year cycle for the Environment Assembly sessions, she said that Member States needed that information to understand the advantages of the change and to make sure that it did not affect the budgeting or presidency of the Assembly, bearing in mind that a representative from the Latin American and Caribbean region would be presiding over the third session and that it raised the question of whether the region would be expected to nominate the President of the fourth session as well. She also expressed appreciation for the document prepared by the Chair of the Committee on the high-level segment of the second session, as well as for the proposed format of the dialogue between ministers and representatives of civil society during that segment.
26. Following the statements on behalf of the regional groups, statements were delivered on behalf of individual countries, one intergovernmental organization and the major groups and stakeholders.
27. General appreciation was expressed for the work of the secretariat in preparing for the current meeting, for the report of the Executive Director and for the intersessional work on the proposed draft resolutions; one representative also expressed appreciation to the Bureau for articulating and shaping the topics to be discussed at the second session of the Environment Assembly. Many representatives urged colleagues to make a concerted effort to reach agreement on as many issues as possible at the current meeting, taking into account the priorities and concerns of Member States and stakeholders, so as to facilitate actions that enabled UNEP to strengthen its regional presence and play its key role in delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda. In particular, the President of the Environment Assembly was commended on her efforts to generate consensus on the proposed stakeholder engagement policy, as a result of which an overwhelming majority of Member States were now in favour of approving the draft policy which would, in turn, allow the Assembly to set the stage for the implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of Rio+20. Several representatives stressed that the finalized policy must be open and inclusive, with one adding that it must make it possible for all countries, including those without permanent representation in Nairobi, to receive all the documentation needed to participate effectively in decision-making. One representative thanked UNEP for the support provided to countries without permanent representation in Nairobi to attend the present meeting. Another representative called on UNEP to ensure the availability of working documents and interpretation services in the six official languages of the United Nations.
28. Several representatives said that they looked forward to the finalization of the draft   
    medium-term strategy for 2018–2021 and the programme of work and budget for 2016–2017, with one calling for those documents to address the gaps identified in the review of the programme of work for   
    2014–2015; another adding that the next medium-term strategy should also articulate how political guidance emanating from the Environment Assembly at its second session would be put into practice; and a third welcoming the introduction into the programme of work of results-based budgeting and outcome mapping approaches.
29. Several representatives expressed support for the proposed change from an even to an   
    odd-year Environment Assembly session cycle in view of the advantages highlighted in the document prepared by the secretariat, although some stressed that attention must be paid to the budgetary implications and how it would affect the presidency of the Assembly, as highlighted in the earlier statement on behalf of Latin American and Caribbean States.
30. Satisfaction was expressed with the intersessional work carried out on issues such as marine debris, air quality, environmental rule of law, the illegal trade in wildlife, the health impacts of the unsound management of chemicals and waste, and efforts to promote ratification of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, with one representative announcing that his country had deposited its instrument of acceptance on 2 February 2016. According to some representatives, however, including one speaking on behalf of an intergovernmental organization, there were a number of issues that required additional attention, such as the environmental impacts of armed conflicts and terrorism.
31. On the expected outcomes of the second session of the Environment Assembly, it was generally agreed that the discussions at the session should serve to clarify the role of UNEP in fostering system-wide synergies that placed the environment at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. One representative said that UNEP should collaborate more closely with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in order to align its strategic planning with the Paris Agreement; another called for a focus on enhanced intersectoral partnership with the World Health Organization in the high-level discussion on “healthy environment, healthy people”, a theme that was endorsed by several representatives; while a third stressed that it was important to ensure that UNEP complemented but did not encroach on the mandates of other agencies. Several representatives said that such synergies and enhanced partnerships with Governments, civil society and the private sector were crucial in view of the cross-cutting nature of the Sustainable Development Goals and in order to ensure adequate financing, technology transfer and capacity-building for developing countries to be able to implement the Goals. In that regard, some representatives highlighted how their Governments had already begun integrating measures aimed at the implementation of the Goals on oceans and seas (Goal 14) and climate change (Goal 13), among others, into national policies and programmes.
32. As to the outcome document, a number of representatives called for a negotiated political outcome document. One representative, however, stressed that the document must be more concise and that it should focus on political guidance on the main theme of delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda.
33. Regarding the work to be done following the second session of the Environment Assembly, one representative said that the approved resolutions would have to be aligned fully with the next medium-term strategy; that the administrative and financial implications of each resolution would have to be reflected in the budget document; and that a report should be prepared presenting recommendations on the relationship of UNEP with the multilateral environmental agreements.

II. Adoption of the minutes of the 133rd meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives held on 19 January 2016

1. Ms. Pataki proposed, and the Committee agreed, to defer consideration of the item to the 134th meeting of the Committee, as the minutes of the 133rd meeting had not yet been finalized.

III. Organization of work

1. In accordance with the organization of work proposed in the document entitled “Proposed organization of the second meeting of the open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR-2)” (UNEP/CPR/133/8), the Committee agreed to establish five working groups, two of which would convene in parallel, to discuss the five clusters of resolutions as set out in the compilation of the clusters of resolutions as of 4 February 2016 (UNEP/OECPR.2/6). The Committee decided that each working group would be chaired by the coordinator of the relevant cluster and that no more than two of the working groups would meet simulteanously. Owing to financial constraints, only one of the two working group meeting in parallel would have interpretation and no interpretation would be available during evening sessions. With regard to stakeholder engagement, the President of the Environment Assembly would conduct informal consultations with participants during the week, the results of which would be transmitted to the Committee on the afternoon of Friday, 19 February 2016.

IV. Concept note on delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the global thematic report on healthy environment, healthy people

1. The Committee took up the item at its third session, on the morning of Wednesday, 17 February 2016, plenary session chaired by Ms. Julia Pataki, Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.
2. Introducing the item, the Chair said that two important documents – the concept note on “Delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, and the draft report on “Healthy environment, healthy people” – would underpin the ministerial discussions at the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. She invited the Executive Director to present the documents.
3. The Executive Director first addressed the concept note, which, he said, was intended to capture present thinking on the 2030 Agenda. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals gave shape to the new trajectory for global development that had gathered pace in recent decades, with the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development as a major milestone. The growth in the consumption of natural resources – estimated to triple by 2050 – was an indication of the magnitude of the challenge facing the international community in its efforts to meet the basic needs of humanity and to extend to all human beings the opportunity of fulfilling their aspirations and living in dignity. Meeting those basic needs was inextricably linked to access to natural resources, and that theme ran through many of the Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 6 (ensure access to water and sanitation for all), for example, embraced environmental, social and economic aspects, and such linkages between the three dimensions of sustainable development were present in all the Sustainable Development Goals. As a consequence, transformative change could only be achieved by delivering on the 17 goals in an integrated manner. The environmental component was of particular importance, with over 86 of the 169 targets of the Goals directly concerning the environment. In that regard, the concept note gave context to the significant roles that UNEP and the Environment Assembly could play in achieving the Goals and their targets.
4. By Vision 2030, he continued, UNEP aimed to reduce environmental risks and increase the resilience of societies and the environment while responding to the challenges highlighted in the medium-term strategy for 2018–2021, thereby fostering the environmental dimension of sustainable development and bringing about socioeconomic benefits. Four core principles underpinned the approach of UNEP to delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda: universality, integration, human rights and equity, and innovation. The organization’s ambitious programme could only be implemented by means of cooperation and synergies between a wide range of partners, both within and outside the United Nations, and success in delivering on the Agenda would depend on the linkages that the Environment Assembly was able to articulate and the role played by the High-level Political Forum in ensuring a coherent, coordinated approach. In conclusion, he said the concept note aimed to position UNEP within the broader 2030 Agenda, and to identify how the Programme could give stronger voice to its unique, value-added role within an orchestra of institutions.
5. Turning to the report entitled “Healthy environment, healthy people”, he said that it represented an attempt to move beyond the architectural, procedural and conceptual in order to demonstrate the relevance of the 2030 Agenda for today’s challenges, and the work that was already being undertaken in that regard. Sustainable Development Goal 3 (ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) was specific to health but, as with the environment, the issue permeated all of the goals, especially goal 8 (promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all) and goal 11 (make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable). In the name of modern development, human well-being had paid a dramatic price, for example as a consequence of pollution and emissions from vehicles. Around 25 per cent of the global burden of disease was environment related, and it followed that proper environmental management bestowed considerable advantages for human health and well-being. Improper use and disposal of chemicals, natural disasters, climate change and pollution of water bodies were all examples of environmental challenges – both natural and anthropogenic – that had negative consequences for human health. The report analysed such environmental changes and trends and their effects on the healthy environment–healthy people nexus, framed within the context of the 2030 Agenda. A framework of four integrated actions and strategies was suggested: detoxification, decarbonization, decoupling resource use and changing lifestyles, and enhancing ecosystem resilience and protection of the planet’s natural systems. In order to ensure that further problems were not created in attempting to solve a problem, it was necessary to adopt a multisectoral, integrated approach. It was a reality of the twenty-first century that the global challenges being faced were extremely complex, and it was essential to prioritize and to scale up effective approaches.
6. Following the presentation by the Executive Director, the Chair introduced a session in which a ministerial panel discussed related issues, including how to implement the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda; the opportunities, risks and challenges inherent in the new global development agenda; the achievements that had already taken place; and how global forums such as the Environment Assembly could help address challenges at the regional level. The panel comprised Ms. Judi Wakhungu, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Water and Natural Resources, Kenya; Mr. Samuel Manetoali, Minister for Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology, Solomon Islands; Mr. Kare Chawicha Debessa, State Minister for Environment and Forest, Ethiopia; and Mr. Herman Sips, Senior Policy Coordinator, Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment, the Netherlands.
7. In her statement, Ms. Wakhungu said that the disease burden was growing in Kenya, with impacts on the demographic transition. The Government of Kenya was working to address the problem and had taken cognizance of the commitments made by ministers in the Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa, 29 August 2008, as a result of which the Government had made institutional changes that enabled the ministries of health and environment to work together more closely. Of particular concern was the growth in non-communicable diseases, including cancer, in waterborne diseases, such as cholera, and in respiratory diseases. The devolution of governance to the county level under the new Constitution entailed the need for capacity-building to enable subnational authorities to address environment-related health issues.
8. Mr. Manetoali drew attention to the interconnectedness of human and environmental systems, which was especially complex in island communities, where the interplay of land and coast presented particular challenges. Factors such as unsustainable logging could affect local food production, leading to increased dependence on imported foods and greater incidence of non‑communicable diseases. Urbanization, lifestyle changes and environmental degradation were other factors contributing to the increased incidence of non‑communicable diseases. The Government of Solomon Islands was introducing policies and legislation to improve sustainability in various sectors, including for natural resources, forestry, mining, use of the oceans and waste management, with a particular focus on intersectoral cooperation.
9. Mr. Debessa said that discussion of the healthy environment–healthy people interface by the Committee of Permanent Representatives was very timely, given the need to integrate the issue in the draft resolutions to be discussed at the upcoming second session of the Environment Assembly. Ethiopia, like other East African countries, was subject to increased population pressure and resulting land degradation, and to increased incidence of natural disasters, including floods and drought. Sanitation, hygiene and food security were other issues of national importance, given their impacts on maternal and child mortality. Air pollution was another challenge, including indoor air pollution through the use of biomass for cooking and heating, and outdoor air pollution due to vehicle emissions. Lastly, as with many African countries, chemicals and waste management was of particular concern, and required assistance via capacity-building and technology transfer.
10. Mr. Sips said that there was a need to achieve tangible results by strengthening both UNEP and the Environment Assembly. The integration of efforts underpinned environment‑related activities, and he welcomed the initiative of UNEP to bring on board the financial system and support efforts to align it with the objectives of the environment agenda. Integrated, intersectoral action was a primary objective for the Netherlands, including through public–private partnerships and the engagement of all stakeholders, and the circular economy was a concept of particular importance for the country. The four integrated strategies of the “Healthy environment, healthy people” report had given a sense of direction to national policy, and the Netherlands had been active in empowering local authorities to engage in decarbonization, for example through the implementation of renewable energy alternatives. In closing, he noted that some Caribbean States fell within the jurisdiction of the Netherlands, and the Government of the Netherlands was working with UNEP to develop waste management measures for those island territories, for example through phasing out landfilling. In all activities, partnership was of paramount importance.
11. Following the statements by the panellists, many representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, offered comments and suggestions both on the concept note on delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda and the draft global thematic report on “Healthy environment, healthy people”, including thoughts on how to enhance the effectiveness of the high-level segment of the second session of the Environment Assembly. All those who spoke praised the two documents, describing them as clear and concise, and as providing a very good basis for discussion at the upcoming Environment Assembly session.
12. Those who commented on the concept note, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, characterized it as a comprehensive picture of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda and a good basis for discussions on the roles of UNEP and the Environment Assembly in delivering that dimension.
13. With respect to the role of UNEP, a number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, cited the fostering of multi-stakeholder approaches, particularly across the United Nations system, as key. Two representatives highlighted as crucial the preparation of   
    high-quality environmental assessments, as they provided the data needed to track progress, drew global attention to emerging issues and showcased experience in working in an international, holistic manner, thereby further bridging the science-policy interface and, through the Environment Assembly, feeding into the outcomes of the Economic and Social Council and the High‑level Political Forum.
14. Addressing the role of the Environment Assembly in the delivery of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda, a number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, characterized it as crucial, particularly as a contributor to the High-level Political Forum. Two representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, felt that the role of the Environment Assembly and the ways in which it could contribute to the High-level Political Forum needed to be better articulated; one proposed doing that through the discussions at the second session of the Environment Assembly, while the other, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, suggested setting it out in the concept note.
15. One representative cautioned that some points in the concept note needed close study, including the relationship between the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, but applauded the use of outcome maps to monitor the progress made in implementing the environmental dimension in the seven subprogrammes. Another representative noted that in order to deliver on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda, sufficient resources were required to ensure effective implementation.
16. One representative proposed the inclusion of the issue of internal conflict in the concept note, given the negative impact of conflict on the environment, wildlife and the distribution of resources.
17. Turning to the “Healthy environment, healthy people” draft report, a number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed it as a good evidence-based guide for ministerial policy discussions and a good basis for discussions during the second session of the Environment Assembly. The representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries proposed that those discussions highlight concrete action that could be considered by ministers, and that the debate on the thematic report be linked to the work on resolutions, if possible.
18. One representative noted that the draft report contained advice that was not within the purview of environment ministers and hence might never be implemented; he also suggested adding information on the field activities and partnerships of the principal actors. Another representative suggested that any discussion on the urban environment should refer to the positive effects of good environments; he also proposed that the report cover security as it related to health and environment. One representative requested that the report reflect capacity-building needs.
19. A number of representatives provided specific suggestions for the high-level segment of the second session of the Environment Assembly. One representative proposed that the   
    environment-health nexus be addressed in the draft resolutions and outcome document currently under discussion for consideration, and possible adoption, by the Environment Assembly at its second session. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, suggested that preparing a common note with messages from ministers based on the draft report and a clear cover note with questions for ministers to address would help make the most of the high-level segment, and urged UNEP to do that.
20. Noting the interconnected nature of the challenges to be addressed, one representative underscored the importance of the United Nations system in helping most countries design adequate responses to health and environmental challenges, and repeated a call for a new generation of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks relevant to national development priorities.
21. A number of representatives described ways in which their countries were incorporating the environmental aspect of the 2030 Agenda into their economic growth and development, including one who reported that his country’s parliament had just become the first in the world to run entirely on solar power.
22. A representative from the major groups then made a statement on behalf of women, the scientific and technological community, non-governmental organizations, indigenous peoples, workers and trade unions, local authorities, and regional representatives. While expressing appreciation for the draft report, she suggested that it should provide more information on the root causes of environmental and health degradation and the harmful role played by economic and financial systems, as well as on intergenerational traditional knowledge, current models of food production and recent disease outbreaks and their link to the environment, including unsustainable consumption and production patterns. She expressed the hope that local and subnational governments, which developed and implemented policies on the vast majority of the issues discussed in the report, would be consulted in the preparation of the final report, together with civil society organizations.
23. Responding to the comments, Mr. Debessa described Ethiopia’s response to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, including the country’s intense focus on renewable energy solutions. Ms. Wakhungu echoed calls for the inclusion in the concept note of an outcome map for monitoring of progress, security considerations, additional scientific data and the root causes of health problems. Mr. Sips offered two thoughts on the discussion: first, while States faced tangible challenges in tackling the 2030 Agenda and the health-environment nexus, once they moved ahead, figures would change quickly and people would notice; second, it was important to communicate the need to align with the actions of the rest of the United Nations family, and one way to strengthen that message to the outside world was through partnerships.
24. In closing, the Executive Director highlighted the main thrust of the discussion, namely that in relating the Sustainable Development Goals to a healthy environment and healthy people, it was necessary to stop focusing on problems and instead think in terms of solutions and opportunities, and to shift the focus from managing legacy to realizing the major opportunities that were being overlooked because of institutional inertia and a lack of opportunities in the marketplace. Business had a central role to play, but the regulatory environment had to create the incentives that would allow the enormous potential for innovation to be leveraged. Although almost all change would occur through the means, mandates and opportunities of others, the Environment Assembly could set the context and influence the global regulatory environment and the way in which national Governments provided for those opportunities to be realized. He cautioned, however, that if the deliberations at the second session of the Environment Assembly were to reflect a sense that things were decided in New York and hence did not merit robust discussion in other forums, then the world’s leading authority on environment would essentially be muffled. The Environment Assembly had the required authority through decisions adopted by the General Assembly and by the Heads of State and Government and   
    high-level representatives at Rio+20, but it still needed to define how that authority should be deployed. Echoing a comment regarding the incorporation of the environment and health issue into the existing resolutions and outcome document, the Executive Director pointed out that the draft decisions on the medium-term strategy and programme of work could be enhanced to take note of some particularly important directional signals. Furthermore, he said, it was crucial that the outcome document of the second session, which was critical to an articulation of the key messages, capture the true voice of the Environment Assembly.

V. Consideration of policy matters (introduction of mandatory reports by the Executive Director)

1. The Committee took up the item at its first session, on the morning of Monday, 15 February 2016, chaired by Ms. Julia Pataki.
2. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to 12 reports by the Executive Director, pertaining to the implementation by UNEP of Environment Assembly resolutions 1/3: illegal trade in wildlife (UNEP/EA.2/6/Add.1); 1/4: science-policy interface (UNEP/EA.2/6/Add.2); 1/5: chemicals and waste (UNEP/EA.2/6/Add.3); 1/6: marine plastic debris and microplastics (UNEP/EA.2/6/Add.4); 1/7: strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme in promoting air quality (UNEP/EA.2/6/Add.5); 1/8: ecosystem-based adaptation (UNEP/EA.2/6/Add.6); 1/9: Global Environment Monitoring System/Water Programme (GEMS/Water) (UNEP/EA.2/6/Add.7); 1/10: different approaches, visions, models and tools to achieve environmental sustainability in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication (UNEP/EA.2/6/Add.8); 1/11: coordination across the United Nations system in the field of the environment, including the Environment Management Group (UNEP/EA.2/7/Add.1); and 1/12: relationship between the United Nations Environment Programme and the multilateral environmental agreements (UNEP/EA.2/7/Add.3); and pertaining to Governing Council decisions on the midterm review of the Fourth Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law (Montevideo Programme IV) (UNEP/EA.2/7/Add.2) and enhancing synergies among the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements (UNEP/EA.2/7/Add.4).
3. The Executive Director drew attention to a number of highlights of each of the reports.
4. Following the Executive Director’s remarks, a number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, took the floor to provide feedback on the reports. All the representatives who spoke welcomed the reports and the progress made by UNEP in implementing the resolutions adopted by the Environment Assembly at its first session, and a number provided specific comments on the reports.
5. Two representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, called attention to the report on marine plastic debris and microplastics, an important emerging issue requiring urgent global action. One noted that her country had used the recommendations in the report in preparing a draft decision for the second session of the Environment Assembly. The other representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that while important work had started, the full picture would only become clear once the study was complete, and that UNEP should take ongoing work in other forums into account when finalizing the study.
6. The same two representatives also spoke about the science-policy interface and the importance of the *Global Environment Outlook* flagship report for policymakers. The representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries expressed doubt that the sixth assessment report would be ready no later than 2018 given that the regional assessment for her region would require substantial further work to make it policy-relevant. She suggested broadening the selection of authors to involve both Governments and scientists. She signalled that UNEP Live still needed significant work to become a truly effective tool for policymakers, and reiterated a call for a long-term plan for the platform. The other representative looked forward to the publication of other UNEP flagship reports of particular importance for policymakers, including the *Emissions Gap Report*, the *Global Waste Management Outlook* report and the first *Global Gender and Environment Outlook* report, as well as the European Commission’s 2015 *Report on Equality between Women and Men*, which would provide important input to the discussions on “Healthy environment, healthy people” at the second session of the Environment Assembly.
7. Two representatives provided feedback on the report on the relationship between UNEP and multilateral environmental agreements. One, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noted that the report raised many issues to be addressed, and that a substantive decision was required. Her group of countries had submitted some initial reflections on the matter and were willing to propose a draft resolution, but would only be in a position to do so following the present meeting, as coordination with the experts of the various multilateral environmental agreements was required. Another representative stressed the importance of integrating the assignment of responsibility with management and budgeting. He said that, because each of the multilateral environmental agreements had a separate decision-making body, the Executive Director could not review memorandums of agreement unilaterally, and should instead be encouraged to propose the individual review of such memorandums by the appropriate decision-making body.
8. The same two representatives also provided comments on the report on coordination across the United Nations system in the field of the environment, including the Environment Management Group. The representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries welcomed the approach of UNEP, underscored the importance of moving forward and indicated that she had proposed language in that regard for possible inclusion in a resolution on the 2030 Agenda. The other representative expressed his appreciation for the emerging consensus for multi-stakeholder partnership as the preferred operational modality for implementing the 2030 Agenda. While allowing that it was important for UNEP to be in charge of the function of coordination across the United Nations system, as agreed at Rio+20, he cautioned that integral system-wide management was somewhat different, being more about the need for joint budgeting and reporting on programme results. Careful study of the objectives of integration was therefore needed.
9. The representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries indicated that she intended to submit detailed feedback in writing on all the reports, but nevertheless provided brief comments on a number of the topics. With respect to chemicals and waste, she said that the adoption of several chemicals-related and waste-related targets in the 2030 Agenda called for policy direction from the Environment Assembly and the proactive involvement of UNEP to provide adequate support and guidance for the chemicals and waste conventions and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, with particular emphasis on support at the national level; she had submitted a proposal for a resolution on the matter to that effect. On the matter of air quality, she expressed support for the priority pollutants identified in the report and encouraged UNEP to work on indicators of progress and to continue work on affordable monitoring systems, awareness-raising and capacity-building. Regarding ecosystem-based adaptation, she suggested that the integration of national development planning would depend strongly on the capacity to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of adaptation actions to which countries had committed at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and that involving the relevant stakeholders was therefore crucial. Noting good progress in enhancing synergies among the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements, she called for stronger international environmental governance through even better synergies among such agreements and for UNEP support for their coherent implementation at all levels, which would also benefit the overall implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
10. One representative provided feedback on the report on the illegal trade in wildlife, saying that given its role in financing terrorism, the illegal trade in wildlife was recognized as a security threat, and it would be interesting to explore synergy-building among countries and the benefits of a holistic approach with a wide range of actors. She went on to address the report on the midterm review of Montevideo Programme IV. Among other things, that report highlighted the ongoing challenge of upholding the rule of law in the environmental arena, which had to be addressed if the Sustainable Development Goals were to be achieved. That would require strengthening the effectiveness of environmental law, which could be achieved by strengthening public access to information, participation and justice in environmental matters, and by stronger action against environmental offences. In that regard, one of the most important tasks of UNEP was to contribute to a sound knowledge base.
11. One representative called for additional momentum in advancing the entire environmental agenda, particularly in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, and called for financial support for capacity-building and technology transfer for developing countries in general and the least developed countries in particular.
12. The representative of the business and industry major group addressed three main issues in a context where, he said, both business and Government needed to adopt new roles. First, with respect to the environmental aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals, all pathways to environmental sustainability involved fostering and deploying innovation and using multi-stakeholder models. Second, given the level of investment needed, mobilizing finance for sustainable development would require not only active private sector participation, but also policy and regulatory frameworks with incentives to invest in and finance the long-term transition to more sustainable, lower-carbon economic pathways. Furthermore, an “all-of-economy” perspective was needed, encompassing raising living standards, prioritizing poverty eradication, offering sustainable livelihoods, mobilizing domestic resources and ramping up investment and trade to be part of the solution rather than the problem, while also providing for the good governance and rule of law that enabled frameworks for entrepreneurship and business. Finally, the draft report by UNEP, entitled “Healthy environment, healthy people”, made a powerful case for integrated action to tackle planetary and human health as parts of a whole, which could best be achieved with resources and know-how mobilized through multi-stakeholder partnerships, particularly public-private sector partnerships, which had strong potential for addressing health and environmental challenges.
13. The representative of the local authorities major group noted numerous references in all the outcomes of the recent major intergovernmental processes to enhanced engagement of local and subnational governments, and he encouraged the Environment Assembly and the environmental community to be actively involved in their implementation, follow-up and review. He also called for the agenda of the second session of the Environment Assembly to include an item enabling ministers and the environment community to provide input into the preparations of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), with a view to preserving and improving the environmental dimension of that Conference.
14. Responding to comments, the Executive Director of UNEP said that the flagship reports clearly took science as a departure point but their policy relevance was more complex to express, in part because of the broad range of policy contexts. The regional assessments were therefore key to articulating the policy agenda that was closest to how countries in both their diversity and their regional similarities were approaching these issues. Considerable experience in the *Global Environment Outlook* process had already been gained through the regional assessments, and he said that he remained confident that the envisaged deadline of no later than 2018 for the sixth assessment report could still be met.
15. Underscoring comments made by the major groups, he noted the joint importance of the products and technologies emerging beyond the direct control of Governments and of the regulatory models that provided a framework for them. He also stressed the importance of Habitat III and urged the representatives to develop a clear sense of the role of the Environment Assembly in that Conference.

VI. Review of programme performance for 2014−2015

1. The Committee took up the item at its second session, on the afternoon of Monday, 15 February 2016, chaired by Ms. Julia Pataki.
2. The Deputy Executive Director began his introduction by stating that the programme performance review had focused on the performance of UNEP during the biennium 2014–2015. Overall performance had been good, with 70 per cent of expected accomplishments met and 79 per cent of target indicators achieved. Total expenditures had been $795.8 million, 128.6 per cent of the projected budget for the biennium, with income exceeding the overall projected budget. Where UNEP had not fully met the targets, it had invested effort in further developing capacities internally, filling key vacant positions and strengthening resource mobilization efforts for areas that required extra funding.
3. He also noted that the evaluation process had provided lessons that had fed into the development of the new medium-term strategy for 2018–2021 and the programme of work for   
   2018–2019. A key lesson learned was that planned work should be more closely tied to key outcomes; the concept of outcome mapping would be used to ensure that the work of UNEP was planned with a long-term vision that linked to the delivery of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.
4. The Head of Strategic Planning then presented the programme performance review for   
   2014–2015, and the Director of the Evaluation Office presented the evaluations for 2014–2015.
5. Following the presentations, a number of representatives welcomed the report and applauded the overall performance of UNEP. Three representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed particular appreciation for the results-based budgeting and planning. One representative characterized the decrease in audit recommendations as a particularly impressive feat, and expressed the hope that trend lines, such as the one illustrating audit recommendations, which he said provided a powerful historical perspective, could be used more extensively in future reports.
6. Most of the representatives who spoke expressed appreciation for the positive project evaluation results, including one representative who said that the evaluations were a mark of strategic relevance. One representative noted that UNEP had made its measures for evaluation more stringent but that the evaluation report still indicated a need for performance improvement with respect to the “likelihood of impact” of projects, and another representative suggested that measures were needed to standardize the state of implementation to ensure that the work done was in accordance with the programme of work. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, while noting the good progress achieved, highlighted the underperformance of the disasters and conflicts and the chemicals and waste subprogrammes, which he said was not fully accounted for in the document.
7. Several comments were made with respect to funding, with one representative calling on all countries to strengthen UNEP by contributing to predictable and stable funding through the Environment Fund. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Secretariat to ensure that earmarked funding complemented the regular budget and the Environment Fund in the implementation of the programme of work, but stressed the importance of having a mechanism in place to ensure transparent prioritization of extrabudgetary funding, as well as the need to close the gap between the agreed and collected amounts for the Environment Fund and to broaden the contributor base.
8. Two representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, supported the new longer-term vision discussed in the performance review and embedded in the medium-term strategy for 2018–2021, acknowledging that results often took more than two years to deliver. The same two representatives called for attention to be paid to gender balance when filling vacancies in the organization, and the representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries expressed additional concern about the time required to fill vacancies.
9. One representative suggested that the Committee bear in mind the project performance review exercise during the negotiation of resolutions, for example by framing work clearly and concisely.
10. The Deputy Executive Director of UNEP welcomed the comments, noting in particular that one of the best ways to support successful project implementation was to ensure that resolutions were taken into account in the budget. On gender balance, he reported that UNEP had made progress but that incorporating gender balance into projects remained a challenge. Addressing comments on performance across various indicators, the Director of the Evaluation Office said that project design improvements had been made but would take time to become evident through the project cycle. The Head of Strategic Planning added that UNEP was strengthening its resource allocation process, which would affect the resource allocation for the following year and lead to more balanced results. She also noted that the less-than-optimal results for the disasters and conflicts subprogramme was less due to poor performance than to a lack of sound indicators, a situation that had been fully addressed for the biennium 2017–2018. The performance of the chemicals and waste subprogramme was largely the result of a substantial portion of the funding having been earmarked for mercury.

VII. Consideration of the draft medium-term strategy for 2018−2021 and the programme of work and budget for 2018−2019 and other administrative and budgetary matters

1. The Committee took up the item at its second session, on the afternoon of Monday, 15 February 2016, chaired by Ms. Julia Pataki.
2. The Deputy Executive Director introduced the agenda item, under which four documents were considered: a report of the Executive Director on necessary changes to the programme of work and budget for 2016–2017; the draft medium-term strategy 2018–2021; the proposed biennial programme of work and budget for 2018–2019; and a report of the Executive Director on the management of trust funds and earmarked contributions.
3. The representative of the secretariat gave a presentation on the medium-term strategy, which, she said, had been updated in order to align it more closely with the 2030 Agenda, enabling a   
   longer-term view of the outcomes and impacts of the strategy. This had been achieved by a process of outcome mapping, whereby successive programmes of work had been considered against the 2030 Agenda in order to ensure that the outcomes were tied to the Sustainable Development Goals. Efforts had also been made to bring the indicators more in line with the Goals, and to develop indicators that could successfully measure the progression from the policy arena, to implementation, to real outcomes. She then reviewed each of the seven subprogrammes in turn, and provided information on how well they had achieved their targets.
4. Another representative of the secretariat gave a presentation on the proposed budget for   
   2018–2019. The total budget proposed was $793.2 million. A reduction in staff costs to a level below the traditional ceiling of $122 million had been achieved. The resulting saving of $3.6 million would be used to deploy more resources for activities. A results-based management approach had been applied to budgeting, although the unpredictability of resource inflows presented a challenge. A further major challenge had been the amount of time and resources devoted to the launch of Umoja, but considerable savings would be achieved once the benefits of the Umoja system were realized.
5. In the ensuing discussion, several representatives expressed satisfaction at the overall balance and direction of the proposed programme of work and budget, and at the results-based management approach that had been adopted. A number of representatives noted that the results achieved may not be wholly attributable to UNEP in cases where several partners were engaged in a project, with one representative noting that the prime interest was the achievement of environmental targets, by whatever agent, so all outcomes should be reported, regardless of whether or not UNEP was the sole agent of change. Several representatives praised the efforts that had been made to align the medium‑term strategy with the 2030 Agenda, including through outcome mapping, although several representatives said that greater efforts should be made to ensure consistency between the strategy indicators and the Sustainable Development Goals. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the gender dimensions of the environment were better reflected in the latest draft of the medium-term strategy, but more could be done to make the programme of work prioritized and   
   policy-relevant. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that inconsistencies in the titles of the subprogrammes should be rectified.
6. Several representatives said there was a need to narrow the gap between the budget approved by the Environment Assembly and the funds actually received. One representative said that the projected Environment Fund contributions of $271 million for 2018–2019 remained aspirational, while expressing appreciation that funding priorities had been identified in the event of a shortfall. A number of representatives acknowledged the difficulties presented by the relatively large proportion of earmarked funding, and encouraged Member States to increase their contributions to the Environment Fund. One representative urged the secretariat to make further efforts to widen the donor base. A number of representatives said that it was important to have an estimation of the budgetary implications of the resolutions to be considered by the Environment Assembly at its second session. One representative said that such a task would present a number of difficulties, including how to determine the costs, on what basis the costs would be allocated to particular budget lines, and how the objectives of the resolutions would be included in UNEP long-term planning, including in the medium-term strategy for 2018–2021, and indeed further into the future as the outcomes of projects started to have longer-term, sustainable impacts.
7. Regarding the subprogramme on climate change, one representative said that it was important to ensure that a proper balance was achieved between mitigation and adaptation measures, and to ensure that the least developed countries were provided with adequate resources to implement the Paris Agreement.
8. With regard to the subprogramme on disasters and conflicts, one representative said that the terminology used in the programme of work for 2016–2017 should be retained, and that the focus for resilience to disasters should be on natural and anthropogenic disasters.
9. Regarding the chemicals and waste subprogramme, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, opposed the specific focus given to air quality in the subprogramme, noting that a number of other issues were worthy of similar attention, including access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Another representative said that air quality was an important issue, and welcomed its specific inclusion in the subprogramme.
10. On the resource efficiency subprogramme, one representative said that there were a range of instruments to achieve sustainable development and, in keeping with the outcome document of Rio+20, the subprogramme should adopt a general approach to the economic models that could be applied to achieving sustainable development. Another representative welcomed the focus on sustainable consumption and production in the subprogramme.
11. On the matter of the business model of UNEP, one representative suggested that greater clarity could be achieved on how the service lines were applied, for example through the use of tables.
12. The Deputy Executive Director responded to a number of the issues raised. He thanked representatives for their positive comments on the medium-term strategy and programme of work, and assured representatives that the secretariat had made every effort to capture their earlier comments. On the budgetary implications of resolutions, he drew attention to the difficulty presented by the fact that the Environment Assembly in the present year could adopt decisions that had an impact on the programme of work and budget for 2016–2017, as well as for the programme of work and budget for 2018–2019, which was a topic under discussion at the present meeting. In any event, further debate was needed on the relationship between the resolutions to be considered by the Environment Assembly, the budgetary cycle of UNEP and the modalities of Environment Assembly sessions.
13. The Deputy Executive Director also introduced a report by the Executive Director on the management of trust funds and earmarked contributions for consideration by the Committee, noting that the Committee might consider recommending that the Environment Assembly approve an extension of the trust funds listed in the report.

VIII. Stakeholder engagement policy

1. The Committee took up the item at its fourth session, on the afternoon of Friday, 19 February 2016. The session was chaired by Ms. Pataki.
2. Introducing the item, the Chair recalled that President of the Environment Assembly, Ms. Oyun Sanjaasuren, had been requested by the Committee at its 132nd meeting to undertake informal discussions with Member States on the stakeholder engagement policy.
3. The President began by recalling that, in accordance with Governing Council decision 27/2, on implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the Environment Assembly, at its first session, had considered a draft shareholder engagement policy, but had been unable to reach consensus thereon. Recent informal discussions had been limited to only those elements of the draft policy on which the Environment Assembly had been unable to reach agreement, namely the definition of a stakeholder, the accreditation process and criteria, access to pre-session and in-session documents, and meetings of accredited major groups and stakeholders with the Bureau of the Environment Assembly. Based on the discussions, she had produced a new proposal contained in two documents: one setting forth the text of the proposed policy as it stood at the end of the first session of the Environment Assembly with the paragraphs containing contentious issues removed so that it only contained the previously-agreed elements of the policy; and the second, entitled “Elements for consideration from the President of UNEA”, containing proposed text for the outstanding elements. The documents were not being presented for endorsement by the Committee, but would be considered by the Environment Assembly at its second session. She urged the Member States to review the proposal during the intersessional period and to raise any concerns with the secretariat, while indicating that she remained at the disposal of the representatives to facilitate the process as needed.

IX. Modalities for changing the cycle of Environment Assembly sessions

1. The Monday Plenary session included a short brief on the changing of cycle of UNEA sessions, chaired by Mr. Raza Bahir Tarar, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of Pakistan and coordinator of cluster 5, presented the agenda item. He said that at the third meeting of the annual subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, held in Nairobi in October 2015, Member States had broadly agreed on the rationale of shifting from the current even-year cycle for meetings of the Environment Assembly to an odd-year cycle. The issue had been further considered at a number of subcommittee meetings, and a revised note by the secretariat on the matter was before representatives at the present meeting.
2. The Committee agreed that the issue would be discussed further in the working group on cluster 5 resolutions at the present meeting (see annex).

X. Preparation of draft resolutions and decisions for transmission to the second session of the Environment Assembly and outcome and structure of the high-level segment

1. This session was chaired by Ms. Julia Pataki and the Committee took up the item at its fourth session, on the afternoon of Friday, 19 February 2016.
2. The facilitators of the five clusters reported back to the Committee on the outcome of the work accomplished during the course of the week. All reported good progress, with most, but not all, the proposed resolutions having received a first reading, and bilateral talks during the week leading to the merging of resolutions in two of the groups. Noting that the discussions had produced a good basis for work to continue during the intersessional period, the facilitators urged the representatives to hold bilateral talks where needed and not to reopen discussions on text that had already been agreed upon. The Committee agreed to continue discussions during the intersessional period, with the support of the Bureau. The Bureau would prepare a compilation of the draft resolutions and documents for submission to the Environment Assembly at its second session, together with a proposal on how to move forward in the future and how to preserve the progress achieved at the meetings of the Committee.
3. The Chair reported that the secretariat had gathered a great deal of information and many ideas for the draft outcome document and that it would, in the intersessional period, prepare and distribute to the Committee a “Chair’s draft” that was “concise, punchy and appealing” and that resonated among the ministers; such a document, she added, might also assist in guiding the high-level discussions on the overarching theme of delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda.
4. As to the structure of the high-level segment, which the Committee had not managed to discuss at the current meeting, she said that more details on the modalities for the high-level segment and the policy review session on “Healthy environment, healthy people” would be provided in the coming weeks, and that the comments received in response thereto would be submitted to the Bureau of the Environment Assembly for further consideration.
5. A summary of the discussions in the working group meeting on the draft outcome of the high-level segment of the second session of the Environment Assembly is set out in the annex to the present report.

XI. Other matters

1. The Executive Director briefed the Committee on the side events to be held during the second session of the Environment Assembly. He said the secretariat had tried to ensure through the various side events a broad dialogue on environment-related matters among members of the international community, thereby providing opportunities for networking and creating partnerships. Over 120 proposals for side events had been submitted, and it had been challenging to do justice to such a broad cross-section of interests in narrowing down the proposals to 26 official side events. In order to widen the scope, a sustainable innovation expo would be held in parallel to the Environment Assembly session, allowing organizations to participate in a separate context and creating a further opportunity for wide-ranging interaction during the week.
2. The Chair requested regional groups to submit their nominees for membership of the Bureau as soon as possible.
3. The Chair informed the Committee that a compilation of draft resolutions and a Chair’s summary of the present meeting would be circulated.

XII. Closure of the meeting

1. A number of representatives of regional organizations, States and other entities delivered closing statements. All delegations and Member States hightlighted their appreciation on the work done by CPR bureau and extend the appreciation to the Secretariat for the excellent preparation of the second session of the EOCPR.
2. Many representatives expressed appreciation for the progress that had been made on a number of important issues during the week, including the draft resolutions. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that further efforts could be made to merge the resolutions to make them more effective and less repetitive, adding that every Member State had the right to voice its position in the process of democratic debate, and that the entire package of draft resolutions should be open for discussion during the Environment Assembly session. Another representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries highlighted the crucial role of work during the intersessional period to ensure that the draft resolutions addressed key and emerging policy issues and contained concrete messages for UNEP, Governments and other stakeholders. Several representatives said that it was of paramount importance that documentation for the second session be distributed in a timely manner in all six of the official languages of the United Nations.
3. Several representatives noted the importance of the outcome document of the high-level segment of the second session in giving voice to the role of UNEP in shaping the global environment agenda. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the outcome document should be concise and should outline the political guidance of ministers in relation to the 2030 Agenda, while reflecting the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.
4. Several representatives spoke of the importance of finalizing the stakeholder engagement policy, and of the need for compromise and flexibility to arrive at a consensus on the matter. One representative, noting the valuable contribution of major groups and stakeholders to the work of UNEP, said that it was important to develop a progressive policy that facilitated the inclusion of those partners while respecting the intergovernmental nature of the Environment Assembly.
5. A number of representatives thanked the Executive Director for his reports presented at the current meeting and expressed appreciation for his contribution to the work of UNEP during his tenure, and to the environmental agenda as a whole.
6. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the meeting was declared closed at 4.50 p.m. on Friday, 19 February 2016.

Annex

Summary of the discussions in the working group on cluster 5 on the draft outcome of the high-level segment of the second session of the Environment Assembly

The working group on cluster 5 – A Special Working Group on the draft outcome of the high-level segment of the second session of the Environment Assembly - took up the item on the morning of Thursday, 18 February 2016, with an introduction by the Chair of a draft outcome document. Noting that the format of the document had yet to be agreed upon, she stressed that she had developed the draft outcome at the request of the President of the Bureau of the Environment Assembly taking into account comments provided by Member States during subcommittee meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP.

In the ensuing discussion, the Committee provided a first round of general comments on the draft outcome document, including its possible format, and then provided more specific remarks on the text.

In their general remarks, the great majority of representatives who spoke expressed support for a concise, short and “punchy” outcome document that, whatever its format, should not exceed two pages in length. One representative said that ministers themselves should decide how long the document should be.

With regard to the format of the document, many representatives, including two each of whom spoke on behalf of a group of countries, expressed support for a negotiated outcome or ministerial declaration that conveyed a clear, meaningful message from ministers that could easily be understood by ordinary people as well as the business community and the media; included topics that ministers considered important and that were relevant to local actors and the public; and made clear the links between health and the environment.

One of the representatives who expressed support for a negotiated outcome, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the outcome should clarify and demonstrate the leading role of UNEP and the Environment Assembly in the implementation of the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals; convey a sense of urgency about the actions needed to address global environmental trends; provide guidance to UNEP as the world’s leading environmental authority and emphasize its role in keeping the environment under review and providing science-based information to policymakers; and highlight key concerns reflected in other documents adopted by the Environment Assembly at its second session, including its resolutions and the UNEP medium-term strategy and programme of work, and the willingness of ministers to address them.

Many other representatives said that they preferred the format of the outcome document to be a Chair’s summary, which several of them said would make it easier for delegations, in particular those that were small, to focus on the multiple resolutions to be considered and possibly adopted by the Environment Assembly at its second session and would help prevent a possible repetition of the Assembly’s first session, at which protracted negotiations held late into the night had produced a negotiated outcome that many representatives had found unsatisfactory. One representative who favoured a negotiated outcome said that it was precisely because of past experience that early negotiations on the outcome were needed, and another commended efforts made by the Committee, through its working group on the format and outcome of the high-level segment of the second session, to engage in such early negotiations.

Among elements suggested for inclusion in a Chair’s summary were concrete proposals for the implementation by UNEP of the 2030 Agenda, taking into account the three dimensions of sustainable development and the scope of the UNEP mid-term strategy and the programme of work, and calls for the mobilization of international support, in particular additional assistance from developed countries, to help developing countries in achieving the environmental goals of the 2030 Agenda. One representative who favoured a Chair’s summary said that, should a negotiated outcome be agreed upon, it should be short and concise and call on UNEP to implement the 2030 Agenda.

One representative, supported by several others, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the outcome document should reflect the mandate of UNEP vis-à-vis other bodies; focus on the main interests of developing countries; address issues pertaining to means of implementation, including technology transfer and capacity-building; and explicitly mention the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building. Another representative urged Member States to focus on elements on which consensus could easily be achieved, noting that certain issues and priorities had proven to be controversial in the past and expressing the hope that contentious language could be avoided in the outcome document under consideration.

Regarding specific comments on the draft outcome document, several representatives said that the current text placed too great an emphasis on the environmental dimension of sustainable development and should better integrate all three dimensions of such development, while a number said that it should place greater emphasis on poverty eradication; and should not include references to the risks and root causes of conflicts but focus instead on the technical aspects of the environmental dimension of the humanitarian crisis. One representative queried whether text entrusting the Environment Assembly with the task of undertaking thematic progress reviews of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda might be giving the Assembly a mandate that belonged to the High-level Political Forum, noting that such a transfer of mandates was unacceptable to her country.

Two representatives said that the draft outcome should include text calling on developed countries to provide financial and technical support to assist developing countries in their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, with one urging special reference to African States, least developed countries and small-island developing States. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that references should be made in the text to partnerships and multi-stakeholder engagement, gender equality, the strengthening of the regional and subregional presence of UNEP for improved delivery of capacity-building and the alignment of the financial system with environmental objectives, all of which were required for the effective implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda, he said.

Several representatives proposed issues or themes that they thought should be included in the document. One representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries said that the document should include a paragraph recognizing the progress made since the first session of the Assembly, in particular the major instruments adopted in 2015, and articulate a commitment by ministers to making progress in seven areas, namely climate change; resources and sustainable consumption and production; the sustainable use of the world’s oceans and seas; technology, science and innovation; the sound management of chemicals and waste; the environmental dimension of the humanitarian crisis; and sustainable urban development.

Other themes or sub-themes proposed for inclusion in the outcome document included biodiversity and the maintenance of ecosystem services; ocean-related matters, in particular marine litter; air quality – which one representative said demonstrated clearly the strong links that existed between health and the environment; environmental crimes; the relationship between the Environment Assembly and the High-level Political Forum; the Antarctic ecosystem; the mainstreaming of climate and disaster resilience in national development plans; and the decoupling of resource consumption from economic growth.

Representatives of the African group and the group of Latin American and Caribbean countries indicated that their respective regions planned to discuss the draft outcome document of the high-level segment of the second session of the Environment Assembly at regional meetings of environment ministers to be held in Cartagena, Colombia, and Cairo in March and April 2016, respectively, and would probably submit further comments on the draft to the secretariat following those two meetings.

Following the discussion, the Committee agreed to submit to the secretariat specific written proposals by 6 p.m. on Thursday, 18 February 2016, to enable the secretariat to produce a revised, concise draft outcome document for consideration by the Committee on Friday, 19 February 2016.

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