

Committee of Permanent Representatives
Sub-Committee Meeting
Thursday 18 May 2017
10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.,
United Nations Office at Nairobi Gigiri,
Conference Room 4

MEETING SUMMARY

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

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

Agenda Item 2: Briefing on Environment and Emergencies Forum

2. The Chair invited Ms. Mette Wilkie, Director for Ecosystems Division and Mr. Oli Brown, Coordinator of the Disasters and Conflict Sub-Programme, to provide briefing on Environment and Emergencies Forum, which is scheduled for 26-28 September 2017, Nairobi, Kenya, under the theme: 'From Crisis to Opportunity: Building Resilience by Managing Environmental Risk in Emergencies'.
3. The presentation provided information on the upcoming Environment and Emergencies Forum highlighting background of the Forum including partnership with the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) since 1995. The forum objectives links environment and humanitarian policy and programming, drawing on actions outlined in the *Agenda for Humanity* and setting the scene for the third United Nations Environment Assembly. The forum will revolve around three themes: (i) Readiness for Environmental Emergencies Response, (ii) Integrating Environment in Humanitarian Response, (iii) Environment in Conflict Settings. The Forum continues to attract a diversity of participants from private sector, civil society, academia, research institutions, the United Nations, and governments. The presentation concluded with a brief introduction of Green Star Awards ceremony with a short video clip; and how to engage in the forthcoming Forum.
4. Following this presentation, one member State expressed interest in further briefings to get more information on the Forum. Although the registration window as reflected in the website was originally March – May 2017, upon request by member States, this will be moved to the end of July 2017, since the dates of the forum itself had also shifted. One member State, however, requested for more time for registration up to the actual days of the Forum itself, highlighting the importance of encouraging participation from capitals, a request that would be considered by the organizers and communicated back to members.

Agenda Item 3:

Briefing on Preparations of UN Environment Programme Frontiers Report

5. The Chair invited Ms. Jacqueline McGlade, Director of Science Division, to brief the meeting on preparations of UN Environment Programme Frontiers 2017 Report.
6. The Frontiers 2017 Report presentation covered six topics, which are: (i) Understanding the Environmental Dimension of Antimicrobial Resistance; (ii) Subduing Sand and Dust Storms; (iii) Exodus: Human in the Anthropocene; (iv) Marine Protected Areas: Flowing through the Heart of Sustainable Development; (v) Off-Grid Solar Solution; (vi) Nano-X: A Risk to Society and the Environment or a Growing Opportunity?
7. In the discussions that followed, member States shared comments and made inquiries. They spoke of the need for in-depth information (statistics) on marine protected areas, establishment of criteria for good governance and identifying external factors (externalities) that would impact governance of the Marine Protected Areas. They further underscored how important it was to speed up response and early actions on emerging issues highlighted in the report. Linking these emerging issues to the theme of the third session of the UN Environment Assembly was critical.
8. In response to comments raised on marine protected areas, the Secretariat responded by emphasizing the need to focus on livelihoods and greater health aspects in line with the whole ecosystems approach, not only for ecotourism, but on a larger cost-benefit analysis scenario. More practical ways of measuring local livelihoods improvement and promoting decision-making of the governments was stressed.
9. On partnerships for antimicrobial resistance, the meeting was informed that the World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and other organizations had been involved in global action plans as co-partners in this process.
10. With regard to the consensus about science and early interventions on the issue of antimicrobial resistance, the Secretariat took cognizance of the on-going conversations amongst pharmaceutical companies introducing alternative antimicrobial agents, and the urgency to address the challenge of genetic transformation that causes antibiotic resistance. A reference was made of emerging practice by companies in Sweden, which recommend the use of environment-friendly drugs as *green pharmacopeia* - a subject for future discussions – with the scope of possible enhancement and replication in other regions of the world.
11. Regarding the off-grid solar solution, the meeting was introduced to the aspiration of making access to cheap electricity a reality. An initiative promoted in Kenya through the M-PESA platform for affordable electricity, code named ‘M-KOPA’, was introduced to the member States. This hire-purchase product is a solar energy kit that is functional on stand-alone situations in the rural small households of Kenya where homes light-up and charge mobile phones from solar energy. However, the dark side of off-grid solar solution is the type of

material used in manufacturing energy storage batteries – which are radioactive and toxic in nature – invariably of lithium-cadmium category – and of significant health concerns.

12. Whereas some pockets of the international community still consider coal energy as attractive, the Secretariat, in view of the global impacts of climate change from black carbon, carbon-dioxide and a myriad of green-house gasses, is emphatic that a clear transition from coal is a major step towards mitigating the effects of global warming – and indeed supporting efforts to achieve a pollution-free Planet. The Secretariat confirmed the Emissions Gap Report will address this issue, and encouraged investments in renewable energy sources.
13. Sand and dust storms were highlighted as major catastrophic environmental events whose impacts are increasingly being understood. Iran, China and Sahelian African have recorded these phenomena with devastating effects on human life, livestock and infrastructure. It is now understood that whereas sand and dust storms must have been a common phenomenon in dry lands in the past, the incidence is increasing with devastating effects. Poor land-use, inappropriate agricultural practices, deforestation and other land degradation leaves soils exposed and vulnerable to strong winds that raise them in dust and sand storms that can travel across international borders. The Secretariat noted that efforts to subdue sand and dust storms at the local level calls for good land management systems and practices.
14. Concluding on this segment of presentations, the meeting was in agreement on the need for early actions and linkage with the theme of the third session of UN Environment Assembly. The meeting emphasized that it is important to seek for opportunities to discuss emerging issues, including the benefits, potentials, and effects of *nano-materials*, during the 2017 UN Environment Assembly.
15. The meeting paid special tribute to Dr. McGlade for her illuminating presentation and outstanding work during her tenure as the Director of Science Division of the UN Environment. Dr. McGlade effortlessly provided scientific evidence using simple layman's language in order to promote better understanding of the wider public. The Chair, on behalf of the Committee of Permanent Representatives recognized these attributes and wished Dr. McGlade well in her future endeavors after retiring from the UN Environment at the end of May 2017.

Agenda Item 4: Report on International Environmental Governance

16. The Chair introduced Ms. Elizabeth Mrema, Director of the Law Division to report on International Environmental Governance on behalf of the Secretariat.
17. The presentation made reference to the following areas: institutional framework for sustainable development; paragraph 88 of the “Future we Want” regarding ways on how to strengthen and upgrade UN Environment; potential of UN Environment and UN Environment Assembly to ensure effective international environmental governance; relevant events; and ideas to increase visibility and effectiveness of the UN Environment Assembly.

18. This presentation was a follow-up to the outcomes of the side-event held in July 2016 on the margins of the High Level Political Forum, in New York under the theme: “Achieving Environmental Sustainability for Sustainable Development”. The side-event highlighted thought-starters that included: (i) prioritize the implementation of resolutions adopted at previous sessions of the UN Environment Assembly; (ii) identify environmental nexus issues, including ‘environment and health’, ‘environment and food security’ et cetera; (iii) enhance the interface between UN Environment Assembly and multi-lateral environmental agreements; (iv) consider organizing future UN Environment Assembly sessions in other geographical locations to attract high level participation; (v) play a more active role as the environmental norm-setter within the Environment Management Group; (vi) align membership to address the discrepancy between member states, and members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives. These and other related issues are due for discussion at the forthcoming workshop on International Environmental Governance, scheduled for 20-22 June 2017 at Glion, Switzerland.
19. Following this presentation, the Chair indicated that this briefing was requested for in order to identify the appropriate inter-sessional governing bodies for the intergovernmental process in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as well as strengthen the visibility and efficiency of the UN Environment Assembly.
20. The Chair gave the floor to the delegation of Switzerland to briefly inform about the upcoming event, which has been organized by the Government of Switzerland in June 2017 in Glion, Switzerland.
21. The delegation of Switzerland informed that the workshop has been organized in order to identify the most important areas and options to support international environmental governance arena. The workshop would look at opportunities to overcome challenges to achieve environmental dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Swiss delegation highlighted that outcomes of the forthcoming workshop would feed into further discussions on international environmental governance process.
22. The Chair opened the floor to member States to share comments and reflections on the subject matter. Members requested for clarification on the following: (i) the way forward of the intergovernmental process; (ii) consideration of other geographical locations for organizing future UN Environment Assembly meetings; (iii) linkage to the Reform of United Nations’ Peace and Security structure and priorities of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.
23. In response to these questions and comments, the Secretariat noted the reviews of the Sustainable Development Goals with inputs received from member States and long negotiations process of the Sustainable Development Goals, and indicated that member states should be prepared to respond concretely and take actions from the next year.
24. On the issue of hosting future UN Environment Assemblies in different locations, the Chair clarified that the change of venue would not be possible based on the provisions in the Rules of

Procedure, which clearly stipulates that the Nairobi Headquarters of the UN Environment Programme is the permanent seat for all future Assemblies.

25. On the way forward after the forthcoming workshop in Glion, Switzerland, the Secretariat responded that member States will need to create opportunities to further consult and consider different recommendations and guidance emanating from member States following the outcome of the workshop.
26. Regarding availability of the outcome document or recommendations of experts' workshop on "Achieving environmental sustainability for sustainable development" held in July 2016 in New York, the Secretariat took note and undertook to share the document with member states as soon as possible. Further, the Secretariat confirmed that it has been planning to hold the next high-level dialogue, which would consider how UN Environment evolves into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
27. With regard to the frequency of Environmental Management Group meetings, the Secretariat informed members that these meetings continue to take place via video conferencing on a regular basis. The meeting was also informed that the next meeting of the Environmental Management Group would consider implementation status of resolutions of the UN Environment Assembly and the nexus between environment and other issues, such as health, food security, peace and security.
28. In terms of linkage with the United Nations Reforms, the Secretariat noted that the UN Environment Programme would have clear ideas on how to respond to the reforms proposals (within its mandate) and priorities of the Secretary-General of United Nations, mentioning that the Chief Executive Board meeting of all the Executive Directors which took place on 26-27 April, 2017 made reference to the reforms agenda.
29. Members requested the Secretariat for a paper or briefing notes on the workshop in Glion, Switzerland, to be prepared and circulated in advance and its outcomes shared with member States. They agreed that later, more ideas might be shared on who would be involved in the intergovernmental process and continuous discussions continued. The meeting also resolved that the agenda of reforms of the United Nations should be considered in the intergovernmental process as well.
30. Members took note of the need for clear guidance on the way forward and how to improve the UN Environment Programme and UN Environment Assembly to closely interconnect with the High-Level Political Forum. They echoed the need for further informal discussions on the way forward and balanced participation of regional political groups in this process.
31. The Chair proposed that UN Environment should work on how to frame the intergovernmental engagement after the workshop in Glion, Switzerland and continue discussions on shaping the process.

Agenda Item 5: Update on the intention of Member States to submit Resolutions

32. The Chair suggested that member States should agree on topics of resolutions by the end of June 2017 in order to initiate the drafting in an efficient manner. The Chair reaffirmed that resolutions should be aligned to the theme of the 2017 UN Environment Assembly “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”, and hoped that there will be a limited number of these resolutions.
33. While members States were encouraged to look at, and follow-up on, the progress of the resolutions that were adopted during the first and second UN Environment Assemblies, the Secretariat reported that progress reports on previous resolutions will be shared with member States during the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives. At the same time, the selection for the topics for resolutions will be made by the Member States on the basis of initial ideas/thoughts that have been shared on specific areas of resolutions relating to the theme of the Assembly. Not all ideas will be finalized as resolutions, but agreed clusters will form topics for negotiations into draft resolutions to be finalized during the third meeting of the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives scheduled for 29 November – 1 December, 2017 before the Assembly.
34. In the discussions that followed, members asserted that the number of initial thoughts for the resolutions were manageable. Noting that some issues in the proposed ideas were overlapping, member States emphasized that there was merit in early consultations amongst member States to consolidate these initial thoughts into few concrete proposals of resolutions, and avoid duplications. It was also stressed that these initial thoughts by no means meant that there will be a resolution on all topics – it is rather a list that gathers topics that may need to be addressed in one way or another.
35. Member States reported that clarity on the issue of resolutions from regional groups will emerge and be communicated after ministerial consultations in the regions, such as the 16th Session of the Africa Ministers Conference on Environment (AMCEN) to be held on 12-16 June 2017 in Libreville, Gabon.
36. Member States cited the Background Report by the Executive Director on the theme of the 2017 UN Environment Assembly as critical in advising and underpinning the formulation of draft resolutions. They agreed that under prevailing circumstances, the proposed ideas on air pollution, marine litter and micro-plastics are some of the greatest environmental challenges to be addressed in the context of human health, climate change and pollution. There was a unanimous call to get all member States to work closely with the Secretariat and experts in this regard to formulate resolutions that address issues that would lead to actionable outcomes.
37. The Chair proposed that the Secretariat should merge proposed issues into clusters with a view to identifying clear areas of pollution as well as emerging issues. Members suggested that while the Secretariat clustered these issues, considerations should be made of the issues raised in the UN Environment Programme Frontiers 2017 Report - to be launched in June 2017 - in order to put forward concrete ideas on resolutions.

Agenda Item 6: Other matters

38. The Chair informed that a Joint meeting of the Bureaux of the UN Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives that will take place on 22 May 2017. The meeting is expected to endorse the structure and agenda of the 2017 UN Environment Assembly; and the structure and agenda of the Second Joint Preparatory Retreat to be held on 9 to 11 June 2017 in Costa Rica.
39. The Chair raised the point that member States are looking forward to hearing details of the proposed structure of the Leadership Dialogues as well as the Private Sector Engagement framework during the next meeting of the Subcommittee scheduled for 24 May 2017.
40. The Chair also highlighted an earlier request by member States that the Secretariat prepares a briefing note to the Committee of Permanent Representatives on the use of the name, “UN Environment” in order to avoid the on-going confusion amongst member States on the issue.
41. In response to these requests, the Secretariat informed that member States would be updated on the Background Report of the theme of the 2017 UN Environment Assembly and the Leadership Dialogue at the sub-committee meeting of 24 May 2017. In terms of the Private Sector Engagement, the Secretariat informed that it has been working on a concept, and will be able to share this as soon as certain clarifications and details have been addressed. On the issue of side-events during the Assembly, the Secretariat clarified that it has been working on a concept proposal and would provide further information in subsequent sub-committee meetings.
42. In conclusion, the Secretariat reminded member States about the coming to an end of the term of the current Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives on 30 June 2017. The Secretariat further informed that a reception in honour of out-going Bureau members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives has been organized for after the sub-committee meeting of 24 May 2017. All Permanent Representatives and their deputies, and other senior UN and government officials will be invited to the reception. .
43. The meeting closed at 12:29 pm.