



Distr.: General  
6 July 2017

English only



**United Nations Environment  
Assembly of the United Nations  
Environment Programme**

**Committee of Permanent Representatives to the  
United Nations Environment Programme**  
**140th meeting**  
Nairobi, 31 October 2017

**Draft minutes of the 139th meeting of the Committee of  
Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment  
Programme, held on 19 June 2017**

**Agenda item 1**

**Opening of the meeting**

1. The meeting was opened at 10.15 a.m. on Monday, 19 June 2017, 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 76 participants representing 51 members, and 3 participants representing 1 observer. Three non-resident representatives of major groups and stakeholders participated via videolink.
3. The Chair welcomed the following new members to the Committee: Ms. Lucija Ljubic, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Mr. Zaid Noori, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Iraq; Mr. Alain Piquemal, Permanent Representative of Monaco; Ms. Jillian Dempster, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of New Zealand; and Ms. Pindi Hazara Chana, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania.
4. She bade farewell to the following departing members: Mr. Konrad Paulsen Rivas, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Chile; Mr. Augusto Ruffo di Calabria, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Malta; Mr. Prasittiporn Wetprasit, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Thailand and Mr. Jhony Freddy Balza Arismendi, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

**Agenda item 2**

**Adoption of the agenda**

5. The agenda was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/CPR/139/1).

**Agenda item 3**

**Adoption of the draft minutes of the previous meetings of the Committee of  
Permanent Representatives**

6. The Committee adopted the minutes of the 138th meeting of the Committee, held on 10 March 2017 on the basis of the draft minutes (UNEP/CPR/139/2).

7. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noted that the term “Environment Assembly” was used in the document, which, she said, was not in line with General Assembly resolutions 67/213 of 21 December 2012 and 67/251 of 13 March 2013. She requested the secretariat to be consistent in the use of the correct terminology and asked that the title “United Nations Environment Assembly” be used in all documents. She also called for adherence to a note verbale from her mission dated 30 May 2017 on the use of official terms, including acronyms, in all official documents, and requested that the response of the secretariat be distributed to all permanent missions. On behalf of the group of countries, she also expressed concern that the initiative to change the name of the United Nations Environment Programme and acronyms used had been taken without adequate consultation with all Member States, and sought clarification from the secretariat.

8. The Chair confirmed that the secretariat would amend the minutes accordingly.

#### **Agenda item 4**

##### **Report of the Executive Director**

9. Introducing the item, the Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, drew attention to the written report of the Executive Director, entitled “Executive Director’s progress update to the 139th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives - March to May 2017”, noting that the Executive Director was unable to attend the present meeting. In his oral briefing, the Deputy Executive Director presented highlights from the report.

10. With regard to recent meetings, he noted that the Executive Director had attended the meeting of the Group of Seven environment ministers held in Bologna, Italy, on 11 and 12 June 2017. He expressed satisfaction with the communiqué emanating from the meeting which reflected a number of the priorities of UNEP, including economic, social and sustainable development issues, as well as the amendment of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, among others. The G7 had also adopted a five-year road map on those issues ahead of the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly to be held in December 2017.

11. On climate change, he expressed regret at the decision by the President of the United States of America to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, noting that the United States had been a long-term and solid partner in tackling key environmental issues. He urged the United States to continue its commitment to those issues. The United Nations Secretary-General, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Executive Director of UNEP had added their voices to those of many Member States that had reiterated their support for the Paris Agreement, demonstrating the importance that world leaders attached to the issue of climate change.

12. Climate change had also been highlighted at the spring meeting of the World Bank in Washington and at the forty-fifth session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, held in Guadalajara, Mexico, in March 2017. The Executive Director had also taken part in the first Climate Principals’ Meeting, held in May 2017. The private sector had shown massive engagement on climate change, both in the United States and other parts of the world, indicating that the drive to tackle climate change was continuing.

13. On the state of the world’s oceans, he highlighted the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (Ocean Conference), co-hosted by Fiji and Sweden and held in New York from 5 to 9 June 2017. The conference had shown the importance being attached within the United Nations to the state of the oceans from the economic, social, governance and environmental viewpoints. Urgent issues that had been identified at the conference included the depletion of coral reefs, pollution and marine litter, and overfishing, all of which had serious impacts for human health, the economy and security. The support for marine protected areas was increasing, while for the first time, in the current month, their surface area was greater than that of terrestrial protected areas.

14. He noted that similar conferences would be taking place in 2017 in Indonesia, Malta and Portugal, and he expressed the hope that the momentum would continue. The Government of Indonesia would be hosting the next intergovernmental review of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities under the auspices of UNEP.

15. On biodiversity, he highlighted the visit to Nairobi in May 2017 by the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the intensive discussions that had taken place on raising awareness among policymakers. The momentum created by the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, held in Cancun, Mexico, in December 2016, should be used at the forthcoming fourteenth and fifteenth meetings of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Egypt in

2018 and in China in 2020, respectively, to promote the post-2020 biodiversity targets. He urged Member States to consider the synergies among the biodiversity conventions and interrelations between global and regional conventions, as well as conventions specific to species and areas.

16. Among other significant meetings, he noted the recent back-to-back meetings of the conferences of the parties to 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 held between 24 April and 5 May 2017, at which over 60 decisions had been adopted and new chemicals had been included in the lists of the Conventions. He welcomed the ratification of the Minamata Convention on Mercury by 50 countries, triggering its entry into force on 16 August 2017, which would be followed by the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention to be held in Geneva in September 2017.

17. In the economic sphere, the ministerial conference on the Partnership for Action on Green Economy, held in Berlin in March 2017, had been well attended by Member States. Finland had hosted the World Circular Economy Forum in June 2017, and the circular economy concept was now widely understood, including by many developing countries, with positive effects on the environment and the economy. In China, the International Coalition for Green Development on Belt and Road had been launched at the first Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, held in Beijing in May 2017, which would bring positive benefits for environmentally-friendly growth.

18. The visit of the Secretary-General to Nairobi in March 2017 had highlighted the reforms he sought to implement within the United Nations system. UNEP was working to reduce the administrative processes within the organization's control. In particular, the Secretary-General's report on the reform of the United Nations development system, especially with regard to delivering the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, would be published by the end of 2017, and UNEP was following and supporting that process as well as the Secretary-General's initiatives on climate change, administration and finance, and peace and security.

19. The Executive Director had visited a number of countries affected by conflicts, including Colombia, Iraq and Somalia, to highlight the impact of conflict on the environment and the need for the environmental dimension to form part of the solutions to conflicts and of all peace agreements and long-term recovery programmes.

20. With regard to scientific matters, he noted that the subcommittee had been briefed on the UNEP Frontiers 2017 Report, which would be published in the coming weeks and would be distributed to members of the Committee. The sixth edition of the Global Environment Outlook report was under preparation and an authors' meeting had been held recently in Bangkok, hosted by the Government of Thailand.

21. In conclusion, he drew attention to the global World Environment Day 2017 event, which had been hosted by Canada and attended by the Prime Minister of Canada, with other events held around the world and more than 40,000 media articles published on the occasion as well as extensive social media coverage. The event was considered to have been one of the most successful World Environment Days organized by UNEP, largely due to the successful use of electronic means of communication.

22. In the ensuing discussion, representatives expressed appreciation to the Executive Director for his written report, delivered in a timely manner, and to the Deputy Executive Director for his oral briefing. Several members also expressed appreciation for the work of the outgoing Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

23. A number of representatives requested that more details be provided in the written report on concrete results and a greater focus on strategy within UNEP. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, called for the inclusion under the special highlights of details of the tangible results of each of the activities of the Executive Director and his team. Another asked for the contribution of UNEP to each of the activities to be better identified, and for a clearer overall strategy across all activities. He asked the secretariat to review the methodology of the report so as to provide precise information for effective decision-making by Member States. He stressed that cooperation within the United Nations system was critical in strengthening links between environmental and sustainable development issues and in emphasizing the cross-cutting character of various projects and programmes; that aspect was not made clear in the Executive Director's report. The report should clarify how environmental activities could be integrated within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals; such a cross-cutting, broad approach would facilitate more targeted commitment and boost the political visibility of UNEP.

24. One representative welcomed the significant progress that continued to be made on many environmental fronts, including the Minamata Convention, the successful conclusion of the Ocean Conference and increasing number of marine protected areas, the various UNEP campaigns that continued to attract attention and accolades, and most importantly, the smooth preparations for the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. She noted that there were a number of other noteworthy developments not mentioned in the report, such as the UNEP experts' process on environmental crime.
25. She also expressed continuing appreciation for the Executive Director's focus on private sector engagement and looked forward to the emergence of a relevant team and strategy. She urged UNEP to redouble efforts towards full private sector engagement. To fully harness the potential of the private sector in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, it had to be involved at all stages from early discussions to end solutions; in particular businesses were seeking to engage on international environmental governance. She stressed the importance of abandoning the outdated perception that business interests ran counter to the protection of the environment and human health. The business sector was keen to provide constructive input, and the United Nations would lose support within key constituencies if it could not fully engage the private sector, especially through the business and industry major group, at the United Nations Environment Assembly.
26. In connection with the forthcoming session of the Assembly, another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noted that a number of activities highlighted in the report of the Executive Director were relevant to the preparations for the session, including in particular the meetings of the conferences of the parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions. He called on the Executive Director to provide an analysis of the discussion and outcomes of the respective meetings. Given that the next meeting of the Committee would not take place until October, he also requested a briefing to the subcommittee on progress in the implementation of the programme of work and budget and on the draft resolutions for the Assembly as soon as possible and no later than early September 2017.
27. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed regret regarding the absence of reporting on the impact of UNEP work in the Caribbean region, calling on the Executive Director to raise the visibility of UNEP in Latin America and the Caribbean. She also emphasized the importance of translating documents into the six official languages of the United Nations so that regional UNEP websites were as comprehensive as the UNEP home page.
28. Two representatives drew attention to the plight of civilians and devastating consequences for the environment and infrastructure in areas affected by conflict, with one thanking the Executive Director for enhancing UNEP work in post-conflict areas and the other seeking UNEP assistance in his country, urging the secretariat to carry out an independent and expert technical study making use of inputs from the United Nations Human Settlements Programme country team.
29. One representative expressed appreciation for the support of UNEP to developing countries in achieving the sustainable development agenda. She urged UNEP to further reduce bureaucracy, enhance work efficiency and focus more on promoting sustainable development in developing countries, and to continue serving as an important leader in guiding global sustainable development.
30. One representative drew attention to the urgency of tackling marine pollution and stressed the important role of the United Nations Environment Assembly in bringing this major environmental problem to the forefront of the global agenda. He urged UNEP to take advantage of the existing momentum on oceans to demonstrate its leadership and relevance.
31. One representative highlighted the importance of the rehabilitation of peatlands.
32. The Chair requested that all comments be sent to the secretariat for publication on the website for the sake of transparency and for the benefit of non-resident Member States.
33. The Deputy Executive Director, thanking members for their comments, noted that the report of the Executive Director represented an update for the quarterly meeting of the Committee rather than a formal report. Annual and half-yearly reports to the Committee were produced by the secretariat, and the next report on the programme of work, implementation of resolutions and budget would be presented in September 2017. The annual report for 2016 had been presented to the annual meeting of the subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives in March 2017.
34. In response to the concerns expressed by one representative, he took note of the lack of mention in the report of activities in the Caribbean region in the previous quarter, but said that that was a reflection of the difficulty in including all the activities of the Executive Director. The subregional

office of UNEP was now fully established in Kingston, Jamaica, and activities in the region would be included in future reports.

35. On the issue of peatlands, he welcomed recent developments and the reiteration of commitments in that regard. UNEP was also working with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Congo to conserve the peatlands in those countries and further develop their government programmes as a major contribution to climate change.

36. He welcomed the support of UNEP by many countries for its efforts to combat marine pollution and the use of plastics.

## **Agenda item 5**

### **Preparations for the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly**

37. Introducing the item, the Chair noted that the structure and organization of the high-level segment and the provisional and annotated agendas for the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly had been endorsed at the joint meeting of the bureaux of the Assembly and of the Committee of Permanent Representatives held in May 2017.

38. At the second joint preparatory retreat of the bureaux, held in Puntarenas, Costa Rica, on 9 and 10 June 2017, recommendations had been made for four leadership dialogues on the themes of science, evidence and citizens' awareness for change; regulatory frameworks, institutions and the rule of law to address pollution; practical solutions for a pollution-free planet; and financing and innovation to combat pollution. The bureaux were seeking the endorsement of the proposed dialogue themes by the Committee at the present meeting.

39. The bureaux had also reaffirmed the timelines for the submission of draft resolutions and emphasized that they should be limited in number, linked to the overall theme of the session and address issues of global concern. Member States were requested to agree on the draft resolutions to be considered by the Environment Assembly by 15 July in order to allow time for their preparation and translation. The bureaux had requested the secretariat to determine the selection criteria for side events as soon as possible and to invite regional groups to conduct early consultations on the officers to be nominated for election by the sessional committee of the whole. They had also discussed the draft structure and organization of the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives and the sessional committee of the whole. The bureaux had requested the Executive Director to submit his draft report entitled "Towards a pollution-free planet" to Member States by 26 June 2017.

40. Agreement had also been reached on the outline of a ministerial declaration, the draft of which would be sent to Member States on 30 June 2017. Raising the profile of the Environment Assembly had also been discussed, particularly in terms of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, which would be meeting in July 2017.

41. In his remarks, the Deputy Executive Director expressed his appreciation for the successful retreat undertaken by the two bureaux. He confirmed that Member States would receive the Executive Director's draft report entitled "Towards a pollution-free planet" on 26 June 2017 and that a shorter edited version would be available for policymakers in September. He noted that communications teams were actively involved in preparations for the session, including with regard to the campaign on clean seas and marine pollution and a similar campaign on clean air. On side events, he urged members to submit their proposals in line with the guidelines to be issued by the secretariat in the coming week. He noted, however, that the budget for the session was not sufficient to cover side events and that organizers would be expected to cover the costs involved. With regard to private sector involvement, the secretariat intended to organize an electronic hub for exhibiting products as well as a physical space for information sharing. The science division would be organizing a science policy forum before the opening of the session; that event had attracted considerable interest at the previous Environment Assembly session.

42. On the question of funding, the Deputy Executive Director recalled that a minimum budget requirement of \$2 million for the Environment Assembly session and meeting of the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives had been presented to the Committee. Some \$1.5 million dollars had so far been raised thanks to contributions from many Member States, including developing countries. The remaining gap was critical in terms of the participation of countries in need, in particular least developed countries, and he urged all Member States to assist.

43. In the ensuing discussion, several representatives expressed appreciation for the Chair's summary and the additional information provided by the Deputy Executive Director, and congratulated the members of the bureaux on their hard work and the progress made in the preparations for the session.
44. A number of representatives welcomed the recommendation that the draft resolutions should be limited in number, linked to the theme of the Assembly and should address issues of global concern.
45. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, urged that the draft resolutions should also be drafted in succinct language, and he expressed a willingness to work on them with other Member States with similar interests. Welcoming the overarching theme of pollution, he said that in addition to air, water, marine and soil pollution, the Environment Assembly should also address cross-cutting issues such as environment and health and urban pollution.
46. A number of representatives considered that it would be useful to merge several resolutions, creating an omnibus decision, for instance on chemicals. That would make negotiations easier and would also facilitate the participation of small delegations, unable to attend many different groups, in the discussions. One representative appreciated efforts to group resolutions and said Member States should work together to merge resolutions that cover similar ground to reduce their number. Another called for omnibus resolutions to be considered.
47. A number of representatives signalled their intention to introduce draft resolutions, covering, among other things, pollution control in areas affected by armed conflict; the role of UNEP in promoting air quality and improving the monitoring and assessment of air quality; reduction of transboundary air pollution; marine litter and microplastics.
48. One representative said that there was a need for more knowledge on nanoplastics and that UNEP should consider developing a knowledge report on this little known issue, as well as increasing knowledge on human health and marine litter and microplastics.
49. A number of representatives expressed support for the draft resolution proposed by the United States of America on the elimination of lead paint and the sound management of chemicals and waste in the context of pollution. One representative highlighted the issue of indoor pollution, which affected millions in rural areas and poor urban areas, and also called for water, land and chemical pollution to be included in the draft resolutions.
50. One representative considered that transboundary pollution should be tackled by bilateral or regional mechanisms, and that regional practices should be established rather than treating it as a complicated political issue; transboundary pollution should therefore not be included in the discussions at the third session.
51. Several representatives welcomed the four proposed themes for the leadership dialogues. On the organization of the leadership dialogues during the high-level segment of the session, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries and expressing support for the four themes proposed by the Bureaux, noted in addition that good moderation and clear steering briefs should be provided with the aim of producing action-oriented outcomes of the dialogues. The titles of the themes should be sufficiently attractive to engage leaders and encourage participation. Another representative urged the secretariat to weave the four dialogues together to support a unified message.
52. One representative expressed the view that the main objective of the dialogues was to promote cooperation, and therefore a theme on international cooperation should be added to the dialogues in order to promote South-South and North-South cooperation on the prevention of pollution.
53. With regard to the second theme on regulatory frameworks, institutions and the rule of law to address pollution, two representatives proposed that the "rule of law" should be omitted on the basis that this was included in "regulatory frameworks" and broadening the topic would make it more difficult to reach consensus.
54. A number of representatives voiced concern at the shortfall in the budget. One representative welcomed the initiative to collect voluntary commitments for funding but sought further clarification. Another said that funding should not be found by cost-cutting in programmatic areas or important areas such as stakeholder engagement. Private sector engagement was a top priority but outreach to the private sector should not be at the cost of the equally important engagement of civil society. Full involvement of the latter was crucial to the success of the Environment Assembly. She called on the secretariat to detail all programme curtailments and cost-cutting resulting from the budget shortfall.

55. One representative noted that the issue of the financing of the third session of the Assembly had been discussed at previous meetings of the Committee and at subcommittee meetings and all parties had been aware that the problem would have to be faced when it had been decided to adjust the cycle of Environment Assembly sessions to the budgetary cycle of the United Nations. She expressed appreciation for the contributions submitted to date, especially those from developing countries, but said that substantial resources were lacking to finance the participation of least developed countries; the funding available should not go to financing private sector and other stakeholders, but primarily to countries in need.

56. On raising the profile of the Environment Assembly with regard to sustainable development, one representative stressed the need for a political message on the environment, particularly from the high-level forum. He advocated the consolidation of the Environment Assembly as the main authority on environmental and sustainable development in accordance with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The forthcoming session of the Environment Assembly should send a clear message on how to meet sustainable development objectives, and should adopt a limited number of resolutions to avoid dilution of the political message. Another representative called on all delegations to work together to achieve the robust political document required at a time when the world was facing major challenges.

57. One representative said that on the basis of the experience of the previous two sessions of the Environment Assembly, a chair's summary would reflect the views of all parties in a more comprehensive and objective manner than a declaration and represented a more suitable format for the outcome document of the session.

58. One representative said that it was very important for the President of the Environment Assembly to be able to adequately represent both the Assembly and UNEP to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, which was a prominent platform for the organization, and she requested an update on the preparations in that respect. She also sought clarification on the proposed content for the last day of the high-level segment, specifically the summary of commitments from Governments, the private sector and stakeholders; the summary of the leadership dialogue; and action on the ministerial outcome. She requested further information on the multi-stakeholder dialogue, its outcome and on the level at which it would take place. With regard to the draft resolutions, she noted that Member States were dependent on receiving UNEP reports on the outcomes of the mandates received at the second session of the Environment Assembly and called on the secretariat to present the relevant reports as soon as possible.

59. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, emphasized the need for the highest level of clarity in statements translated from the Spanish language and precise interpretation; during the current meeting, some difficulties had been noted in that regard. Another representative noted that the quality of simultaneous interpretation in the six official languages of the United Nations would have a direct bearing on the outcome and impact of the high-level dialogue at the session; the secretariat was urged to look into the lack of permanent Chinese interpreters at the United Nations Office at Nairobi and to resolve the matter as soon as possible.

60. The Chair took note of the comments made and the Committee approved the four leadership dialogue themes as submitted for endorsement. The Committee agreed that the resolution submitted by the United States of America on eliminating exposure to lead paint would be introduced at the next meeting of the subcommittee.

## **Agenda item 6**

### **Report of the subcommittee**

61. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to a document entitled "Chair's report of the subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives" (UNEP/CPR/139/3) which was available on the website. She noted that since the 138th meeting of the Committee, held on 10 March 2017, five subcommittee meetings and two briefings had been held. At the subcommittee meetings, significant progress had been made on the preparations for the third session of the Environment Assembly, including on the structure of the session, the background documents on the theme, organization of the leadership dialogues, and on financing and communications. In addition, Member States and stakeholders had expressed their appreciation of the briefings.

62. The Committee took note of the Chair's report.

## **Agenda item 7**

### **Election of officers**

63. In accordance with rule 18 of the rules of procedure of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the established pattern of rotation among the various regional groups of posts in the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, the following officers were elected by acclamation to the Bureau for the period 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2019, after nomination by their respective regional groups:

Chair:	Mr. John Moreti (Botswana)
Vice-Chairs:	Ms. Elizabeth Inés Taylor Jay (Colombia) Ms. Tarja Fernández (Finland) Mr. Raza Bashir Tarar (Pakistan)
Rapporteur	Mr. Marek Rohr-Garztecki (Poland).

## **Agenda item 8**

### **Other matters**

64. In her closing remarks, the Chair expressed her appreciation for the exemplary team work of her fellow outgoing members of the Bureau, highlighting particular successes achieved, including the GoToMeeting application which facilitated the participation in Committee meetings of non-resident Member States; the model set up for cooperation and decision-making between the bureaux of the Committee and of the United Nations Environment Assembly; increased transparency in the publication of all documents on an open website; and improved inclusivity with the participation of all regional political groups as well as major groups and stakeholders in consultations and decision-making of the Committee.

## **Agenda item 9**

### **Closure of the meeting**

65. The meeting was declared closed at 1.05 p.m. on Monday, 19 June 2017.

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