

EU/MS messages – UNEP CPR Subcommittee meeting 17 November 2016)

UNEA-3 theme

- In order to be successful, UNEA-3 should result in concrete, actionable outcomes as well as clear political messages that are both communicable to the broader public and relevant for policy-makers.
- The decision of the bureaux of the Assembly and the Committee to focus the entire UNEA-3 session around one particular theme will help facilitate this.
- Additionally, the theme for UNEA-3 should be tangible and specific. A theme which is too general or too vague will make it more difficult to agree on actionable outcomes which are also meaningful to the outside world.
- EU/MS share the criteria for the UNEA-3 theme mentioned in the background paper drafted by UNEP. In addition, the UNEA-3 should not only resonate with the HLPF theme for 2018 but also with the SDGs which are under review at that session¹. Further, the theme should enable UNEA to demonstrate its added value vis a vis other fora/individual environmental conventions.
- In the light of the above, proposed themes 1 and 2 could both be suitable. Theme 3 provides less opportunities for visible and actionable outcomes.

- Proposed theme 1 (pollution) is tangible with a high global relevance. There are many opportunities here for Environment Ministers to demonstrate their leadership. It is also easily communicable to the broader public, e.g. through the links with health, sustainable transport, the New Urban Agenda etc. It should be avoided though that the discussion becomes a repetition of UNEA-2 where Environment and Health was one of the central themes and it should avoid duplication with ongoing work in other fora, the e.g. Global Report on Health and Pollution which is expected for early 2017.
- Instead the theme should build on the underlying report and the debates held in UNEA-2. Regarding the suggested outcome, we agree that an ambitious outcome is desirable but we also need to be realistic what can be achieved within a year regarding preparations of an ambitious action plan agreeable by all and adding value to what already exists. Another risk is that the discussion and related outcome remains too broad. It may be considered to make the theme even more tangible by focusing on e.g. clean air, water quality or addressing specific group of pollutants, e.g. plastic materials, chemicals, pesticides or pharmaceuticals. It could also be (for instance if it becomes difficult to agree in a very narrow pollution type) to decide on a selection of pollution types to be addressed as chapters in the “Pollution Plan” document proposed by UNEP as an outcome of the debate.
- Proposed theme 2 (resilience) is broader than theme 1. As a result this theme is relevant to a wide range of parties; further there is a strong link with the 2018 HLPF theme and the SDG’s due

¹The 2018 theme for the HLPF is “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies”. The SDGs under review in 2018 are (see UNGA Resolution A/70/60) SDGs 6 (Clean water and sanitation), 7 (affordable and clean energy), 11(sustainable cities and communities), 12 (responsible production and consumption) and 15 (life on land)

for reporting (SDGs 6,7,11,12,15). At the same time, such wider theme could attract more representatives from different ministries and private sector and thereby widening the impact of UNEA as the leading forum for environment.

- On the other hand, EU/MS do not support the current framing of the theme. It could be considered if it focuses on resilience, but the title would need to be changed in order to comply with the Paris agreement content and objectives.
 - The close link with areas beyond a more narrow environmental scope will in most countries require close cooperation with other than environment ministries which is at the same time an advantage and a challenge. Overall, the way the theme is currently framed it is building too much on negative threat scenarios, we would welcome a more positive framing as a chance to make societies stronger. However, such a general theme would require additional focus to avoid the risk of too dispersed discussions and to secure a tangible and communicable outcome. , including in the suggested action plan. A focus, e.g. on water-energy-food security could be envisaged. Lastly, the topic of climate adaptation may risk duplication of discussions under UNFCCC .
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