

## **Comments by Switzerland on the Development of UNEP Programme of work and budget 2020-21**

We thank the panel for the useful briefings and information.

It's an encouraging sign to have this important discussion in the presence of the Executive Director.

There was a briefing to the CPR earlier this year on the topic of the UN Secretariat Reform and possible implications on the programme and budgetary cycle of UNEP, but the discussions were superficial and remained inconclusive.

Against this background, we were surprised to read that UNEP should no longer be required to prepare a Strategic Framework for 2020-21. Apparently there is a new "Annual Budget and Performance Document" that should be submitted by 15 January 2019. I was not able to find more information about this document online.

Surely the Secretariat can share with the CPR the instructions it has received from the OPPBA, together with the template for the "Annual Budget and Performance Document".

In any case this novelty would in our view only concern the small portion of the budget which UNEP receives from the UN Regular Budget. For the Environment Fund, the recent decisions in New York do not change the relevant decisions taken by the UN Environment Assembly. This important distinction of income sources is not mentioned in the briefing note before us.

In addition, the deadline of 15 January poses a scheduling challenge. How can UNEP send a 2020 budget to New York before it has been approved by the 4th UNEA?

These points should be clarified in a future iteration of the budget note.

About the Programme of Work 2020-21: In Figure 1 of the briefing note, we find the notion of "essential revisions based on emerging issues". In this context, the Secretariat also mentions "many Strategic Focus Areas" developed by the new Executive Director. I have not found these "Strategic Focus Areas" in any official document of UNEP.

Switzerland has a more conservative approach to the POW. The development of the new Programme of Work must be based on the ongoing Medium-Term Strategy 2018-2021. The new plan has to be seen as a continuation of the preceding first biennial plan (PoW 2018-2019). The new plan must first and foremost address gaps not adequately addressed in the first plan in order to achieve the planned outcomes of the ongoing Medium-Term Strategy.

Emerging issues are not at the core of the new biennial plan. Certain amendments might be acceptable as long as they do not necessitate a revision of the Medium-Term Strategy.

Also on the budget, my delegation welcomes very much the information that was made available recently on the "Budget Formulation and Allocation Process". The document contains detailed information that will help Member States assess budget implementation but more importantly, it will support future budget decisions. The document makes a differentiation between operational costs and other costs, which I do not understand.

Could the Secretariat please explain the difference between the two? Are important cost factors such as consultants, travel, facilities and infrastructure, communications, IT, supplies and equipment operational or other costs? We would like to invite the Secretariat to present the budget 2020-2021 in an even more detailed manner, clearly indicating budgets for different kinds of operational and other costs.

We are furthermore interested in receiving the actual expenditures in 2016 and 2017, structured in the same way as the budget allocations for 2018, to make them comparable.

Finally, a word on the overall budget envelope for UNEP that the Secretariat plans to share with us next month. As a governing body we are not doing our job well if we continue to systematically overestimate both income and expenditure under the most important part of the budget, i.e. the Environment Fund. Many of the existing oversight and accountability challenges stem from the fact that we do not have a realistic budget for our organization. Switzerland is keen to change this starting with the next budget.

Allow me to summarize the information my delegation requests to be made available to the CPR as soon as possible:

- A conclusive enumeration and description of the so called “Strategic Focus Areas” of UNEP.
- Actual expenditures for 2016 and 2017, structured in the same way as the budget allocation for 2018.
- Explanation of the different costs under “operational” and “other” costs.
- Instructions received from New York on the budgetary reform, including a template of the Annual Budget and Performance Document.

===