

Statement by the H.E. Ambassador Beyene Russom, Permanent Representative of the State of Eritrea to the United Nations Environment Program, on behalf of the African Group on the 144th Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

Tuesday 8th January 2019

Agenda Item 5: Report of the Executive Director

Madam Chairperson,

Acting Executive Director,

Ambassadors, High Commissioners, and Dear Colleagues,

First and foremost, the African Group would like to align itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of 77 and China by H.E. Ambassador Dina Mufti, Permanent Representative of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

The African Group welcomes the report of the Executive Director that presents important highlights regarding the implementation of the decisions and resolutions of the Environment Assembly. The Group welcomes the launch of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Report on Global Warming 1.5 Degree-Celsius. The report indicates that 1.5 degree-warmer world significantly impacts lives around the globe. The impact of 1.5 degree-warmer environment on Africa would be devastating. In this regard, the Group calls on the Member States to be considerate of the mounting challenges especially to the developing world and discharge their respective responsibilities.

The Group notes the preparation of the Sixth Global Environment Outlook. The Group believes that one of the major events this month will be the negotiation of the Summary for Policymakers of the Sixth Global Environment Outlook Report and its Summary for Policy Makers. In this regard, the Group wishes to express its readiness for constructive engagement with other political groups and individual member states.

Madam Chairperson,

The Group also takes note and appreciate the Executive Directors mission to African countries such as South Africa and Tanzania. The Group is encouraged by the expression of intent by the Republic of South Africa to introduce a ban on single-use plastics and other products. The Groups notes that the wave of the 'ban on single-use plastic ban' initiated by the countries such as the State of Eritrea, Rwanda and Republic of Kenya is resonating across the continent. In this regard, the Group requests the United Nations Environment Program to provide technical assistance within its mandate to other African countries who may wish to follow the same path. The Group also recognize and appreciate the Executive Director's mission to the Republic of Tanzania that aims at strengthening coordination on environmental priorities, expanding entrepreneurship and innovation for the environment.

Madam Chairperson,

Last but not least, the Group wishes to recognize the active coordination role played by the UNEP Secretariat and the Regional Office for Africa for the successful launch of the Africa Environment Partnership Platform in close collaboration with the African Union. Similarly, the Group also extends the recognition provided above for the successful conclusion of the 7th Special Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment held in Nairobi. The session under the theme “investing in innovative solutions and interventions and promote sustainable consumption and production” deliberated on key messages especially for forthcoming UN Environment Assembly. In this regard, the Group reiterates its standing position for the inclusion of the critical messages of the 7th Special Session of AMCEN to be captured in the major event and all side events of the Fourth United Nations Environment Assembly, including the Science-Policy-Business forum. Accordingly, the Group avails its Technical Team to provide support, upon request, by the Secretariat to this end.

Africa welcomes the substantive discussions on the Report of the Secretary General on Gaps in International Environmental Law and Environment Related Instruments: Towards a global pact for the environment scheduled to take place in Nairobi on 14th - 18th January 2019.

As may be recalled, Africa was on the frontline in advocating for the inter-governmental environmental governance review to take place in the UNEP headquarters where the environmental expertise resides. The substantive

meeting on the Secretary General's report in January 2019 will therefore provide an excellent opportunity for Member states to present their views on the Secretary General's report on gaps in international environmental law and environment related instruments before the UNEA 4 in March 2019.

As we anticipate a successful conclusion of the first substantive discussions of the report, Africa reiterates support for an outcome that will strengthen the UNEP as the leading global environmental authority.

I thank you.

Agenda Item 6: UNEA-4 Resolutions

Madam Chairperson,

Acting Executive Director,

Ambassadors, High Commissioners, and Dear Colleagues,

The African Group has availed cover notes for four resolutions such as Accelerating Implementation of Resolutions and Decisions, Poverty environment Nexus, Innovations on Biodiversity and Land Degradation and Enhancing Environmental Sustainability through Green Business. In this regard, the group encourages fellow political groups and member states for a constructive dialogue with our Group through the newly elected chairperson of the African Group Technical Committee, Mr. Zerubabel Tefera from the Ethiopian Mission.

I thank You!

Agenda Item 8: South-South Cooperation

Agenda Item 5

Madam Chairperson,

Acting Executive Director,

Ambassadors, High Commissioners, and Dear Colleagues,

The African Group appreciates the briefing made by the Acting Executive Director and her team during the monthly meeting of the Group in December. Regarding the South-South Cooperation, the Group begins by reiterating its standing position of recognizing the important role of global partnerships in promoting sustainable development, with the environment being the core pillar; particularly within the current global discourse on the dire need to achieve development and eradication of poverty.

Madam Chairperson,

The African Group wishes to point out that south-south cooperation as an outlook towards global progress and a strategy for global development, is recognized at the highest level of the United Nations system, the General Assembly. The African Group further recalls the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries introducing South-South Cooperation under the impression that most developing countries are at similar stages of development and therefore have everyday environment protection

demands. In this regard, the Group firmly believes that cooperation between developing countries can break the asymmetric distribution of technology and embrace appropriate technology transfer.

Madam Chairperson,

Similarly, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (RIO+20) also stressed the centrality of working towards an inclusive Green Economy to achieve improved social equity and environmental quality. In doing so, RIO+20 identified South-South Cooperation as a critical enabling tool for developing countries to work along these lines.

Madam Chairperson,

Given the foregoing, the twenty-seventh UNEP Governing Council highlighted this link between Green Economy and South-South Cooperation by requesting UNEP to collect initiatives and experiences on different pathways for reaching a resource-efficient, low-carbon and socially inclusive economy, and to disseminate them, and facilitate information sharing among countries, so as to support them to promote sustainable development and poverty eradication. The Africa Group believes that it is these links that give UNEP a clear mandate to embrace the South-South Cooperation to deliver on its mandate. In this regard, the Group recalls the 23rd Session of UNEP Governing Council that adopts the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building, which requested

UNEP to strengthen its South-South Cooperation strategy to facilitate knowledge sharing and appropriate technology transfer among countries.

Madam Chairperson,

South-South Cooperation can more reflect the cooperation of equality, mutual benefit, and collective ownership; concerning national sovereignty at the core of this relation. Part of the value of South-South Cooperation lays in its primary purpose to empower countries to shape home-grown, local, responses rather than relying on external interventions to development problems; an idea which the Fourth United Nations Environment Assembly is embracing.

Madam Chairperson,

The African Group wishes to underscore that South-South Cooperation does not replace but complements other forms of cooperation especially towards the implementation of SDGs and the environmental agendas. It is worth noting that those frameworks such as GEF and GCF are clear examples of partnerships frameworks that could be viewed as mirrors of south-south cooperation.

In this regard, the Group further request UNEP to ensure to South-South Cooperation initiatives are effectively implemented in the spirit of accountability and transparency. The Group further requests the Secretariat to update on the work of South-South Cooperation regularly.

I thank You!