



South Africa's intervention during the UNEP Subcommittee meeting: Agenda Item 2: UNEP Mid-Term Strategy narrative and budget approach

14 July 2020

Mr Chair,

My delegation wishes to thank the Executive Director for her presentation on the Mid-Term Strategy narrative and budget approach. My intervention will be based mostly on the narrative, in particular the strategic pillars, while looking forward to hearing more views on the budget options. The full statement will be shared with the secretariat.

On the three strategic pillars that underpin UNEP's vision, my delegation wishes to call for a standard approach that encapsulates the three pillars for sustainable development. We welcome the pillars presented and wish to make the following comments.

Strategic Pillar 1 - Climate Stability

We call for enhancing Climate Action through scaled up resources that support adaptation programmes, including highlighting the economic sectors with greatest potential for green recovery and job creation, which can rebound and develop sustainably through international investment and financial, technological and capacity building support.

While we seek further clarity on UNEP's approach in supporting countries with both mitigation and adaptation strategies, attention needs to be drawn on issues of scaling up Climate Smart Agriculture and Food Security - programmes for adaptation and building the resilience of farmers to climate and economic shocks including policies for climate smart agriculture should be stepped up to improve food security and agricultural livelihoods.

Strategic Pillar 2 - Living in Harmony with Nature

We call for conserving biodiversity and combatting illegal wildlife trade. The contribution of our biological resources and their services to sustainable development needs to be realised through promoting opportunities offered by the biodiversity economy. The implementation of the "Pan African Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration and Increased Resilience" can serve as a useful approach as one of the central pillars of UNEP's commitment to the implementation of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

Addressing the threats facing biological resources is required to alleviate the impact of these challenges. There is an urgent need to address illegal and unregulated wildlife exploitation and trade in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its origins in addition to understanding the transfer of viruses and other disease agents from wildlife to humans to prevent similar future zoonotic transmission of diseases.

We call for inclusion of eco-tourism and the Biodiversity Economy - globally, the tourism industry has been hit hard by the COVID-19 Pandemic and negatively impacted across the African region. Tourism that is environmentally and socially responsible promotes conservation and there is a need to revitalise it as it has low visitor impact and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local people, including at local level. There is need to build resilience of nature based tourism against future shocks - not just COVID-19 pandemic - and this need to be part of the support that is provided to member States.

We call for combating land degradation, drought and desertification. Enhanced commitment to providing adequate resources to address the drivers of desertification and land degradation remains important. The value of land degradation neutrality and its potential to improve development and prosperity and to create decent jobs,

including green jobs and other employment-generating opportunities, for vulnerable communities in degraded areas should be realised.

We call for enhancing sustainable management of forests to enable countries to achieve significant reduction in deforestation rates, while enhancing agricultural productivity, biodiversity conservation, sustainable management of natural resources and income of small-scale food and forest producers. This should improve cross-sectoral collaboration between different sectors including private and public in the fields of forestry, wildlife, agriculture, livestock, water, energy, tourism, etc. and address issues related to human-wildlife-livestock-ecosystem interface and sustainable value chain development.

We call for investing in the blue economy. There is an imperative need to enhance the environmental contribution to the development of the blue economy states as well as to mitigate the impacts of natural disasters including extreme weather events such as floods and cyclones. There is a need for focused attention on sustained contribution of blue economy to the livelihoods of people, especially those living in coastal and riparian areas.

Strategic Pillar 3 - A Pollution-Free Planet

We call for investing in renewable energy. Globally, the renewable energy sector created 7.7 million jobs in 2015, an 18 per cent increase from 2014. UNEP should provide sufficient support to enable countries to take bold action to advance to the smart, people-centred renewable energy and energy efficient systems as well as value chains in terms of new and emerging markets and job creation. This should result in increases in transaction efficiencies, improved transportation and mobility, deepening internet access and e-commerce; decentralization of distributed renewable energy; and the emergence of new services

We call for improving Chemicals and Waste Management and the Circular Economy. Upscaling the work on Circular Economy to support the transition to a circular economy at the national and regional levels has great potential to improve the way in which we produce and consume goods and services, reduce waste, create jobs and contribute to sustainable development. The private sector and other non-state actors

should be encouraged to promote and invest in the circular economy to create employment and sustainable trade in and markets for green products and services.

A Transformed UNEP - Delivering High Performance

Mr Chair, on the segment of a transformed UNEP, my delegation wishes to underscore the importance of the implementation of para 88 of Rio +20 outcome document on the “future we want” in its entirety. An emphasis needs to be drawn on the strengthening of UNEP regional presence. Strengthened regional presence has not been actualised. For instance, member States continue to be unclear about the structures UNEP uses to implement its work in the region and countries. All units of the organization appear to be competing to deliver support at these levels.

Regional offices are still not in control of coordinating UNEP's delivery in regions and sub-regions. Some language therefore needs to be included to ensure that UNEP delivery of work is through the regional offices, including through allocation of the necessary resources. This will then positively impact on the work done by UNEP on the ground. Regional programmes should be developed to ensure coherent implementation and delivery as countries do not see UNEP in sub-programmes or divisions but see one UNEP. This progressive approach will enhance the spirit of delivering as one UNEP and reinforce the high performance envisioned in this document. Again, this section should also emphasize that UNEP work will be delivered through UN Country Teams as required by the UN reforms.