



Committee of Permanent Representatives 7th Annual Subcommittee Meeting

13 October 2020

Remarks by Brazil on item 4 Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025 Programme of Work and Budget 2022-2024

as delivered by Mr. Patrick Luna,
Deputy Permanent Representative of Brazil to UNEP

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for giving me the floor. I would like to start by aligning myself to the statement issued by the Ambassador of the State of Palestine on behalf of the G77+China. Brazil also takes this opportunity to thank the Executive-Director and many Secretariat colleagues for their hard work in preparing all these documents.

One of the main substantive outcomes of UNEA-5 will indeed be endowing UNEP with a new Medium-Term Strategy. The current MTS, adopted through a resolution issued at UNEA-2 and covering the period 2018-2021, was prepared at a time when the Sustainable Development Goals had not yet been complemented by indicators and when the Paris Agreement had not yet been adopted. Providing UNEP with an MTS for the period 2022-2025 will be essential not only to update it according to previous milestones in multilateral environmental debates, but also to firmly anchor the activities of UNEP in the context of the Decade of Action to achieve the SDGs, half of which contain an environmental component.

Mr. Chairman,

At this Annual Subcommittee Meeting, which is an important milestone in the road towards the further preparation of the MTS in the OECPR and then its adoption at UNEA-5, Brazil wishes to highlight some of the main points that inform our position on this issue - that is, that describe the UNEP we want.

First, we cannot lose sight of the fact that poverty eradication remains today's greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, to quote Paragraph 2 of "The Future We Want". This is regrettably all the more evident in 2020, as the world grapples with the recovery of a pandemic that has been claiming lives and could threaten much of the social and economic achievements of the past years - especially for those more vulnerable, pushing them back into hunger and poverty.

This point seems particularly relevant as we note that, in important parts, the draft still tilts uncomfortably towards the late doctrine of planetary boundaries, from which the international community consensually decided to steer away as it stated that human beings are the center of the concerns for sustainable development, to quote of Principle 1 of the Rio Declaration.

Second, Brazil deems it crucial that the next MTS be conceived in a way so as to increase UNEP's ability to assist Member States, upon their request and respecting their policy spaces, to implement their environmental commitments. Like China, Brazil would have preferred to see more ambitious language regarding the support that UNEP can provide to developing countries. The UN Reform creates opportunities in this regard, since the Resident Coordinator and the Country Teams are now better placed to increase the responsiveness to the particular needs of each Member State in terms of strengthening institutional, technical and scientific capacities.

Third, it is crucial that the MTS be tightly aligned with multilaterally agreed-upon language. Throughout the document, and in spite of numerous previous comments in this regard, we read a number of references to "nature-based solutions". As Brazil has been consistently stressing in the CPR and in all multilateral environmental fora, we lack an intergovernmental consensual understanding on this expression. Think-tanks, academia and governments have been forging their own understandings on what this expression means, and there are important differences among them. Brazil reiterates that UNEA-5 can serve as a platform to jointly and consensually forge such an understanding, and we forward to engaging constructively with all delegations to achieve this outcome. In the meantime, we would strongly encourage the Secretariat to refer to the expression "ecosystems-based approach", whose definition as contained in CBD Decision VII/11 emerged from a long and detailed intergovernmental negotiation process.

Fourth, the challenges associated with the mitigation of climate change and adaptation, as well as to the conservation, sustainable use and fair sharing of benefits arising from biodiversity are indeed pressing. They do require coordinated action by the international community and UNEP does have a role to play, which is above all to provide the best available science to inform the policy debates being held at UNFCCC, CBD and UNFF. It remains crucial that the MTS does not assume policy decisions not yet taken on these fora, as stated by other speakers before me, including Egypt, and that the legal autonomy of the MEAs is respected, as pointed out by the US, in line with Article 34 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties.

Fifth, Brazil welcomed the importance placed to sustainable consumption and production in the draft MTS. Unlike other environmentally-related issues, SCP is not dealt with specifically in any other MEA or UN body. From our vantage point, this issue falls within the vocation of UNEP as a "house for sustainable development", and the Programme could indeed take a greater role in it. At the same time, we agree with previous speakers, including Argentina, on the need to keep in mind that the cross-cutting nature of this challenge entails taking fully into consideration the trade, investment and financial debates in multilateral fora. We also recall that the document should be tightly aligned with the conceptual understanding of SCP as contained in UNEA-4 Resolution 1, entitled "Innovative Pathways to Achieve Sustainable Consumption and Production", especially in what relates to its relationship with circular economy.

As we read the proposal of establishing a subprogramme on digital transformation, we agree with the need to promote transformational SCP change in the scale we all need and in all parts of the world, with developed countries taking the lead. We cannot, however, turn a blind eye to the digital divide or to national sovereignty, including over national resources. While we are still reflecting on the repercussions of this particular proposal, which would involve significant programmatic and budgetary shifts, Brazil indicates - like Argentina - that it would require more robust capacity building efforts by UNEP, as well as closer connections to local scientific institutions from all around the globe.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
