

From: Inger Andersen
Sent: Monday, November 02, 2020 10:40 AM
To: Broadcast-UNEP
Subject: Monthly Letter - October 2020

Dear colleagues,

As we see little end to the COVID-19 pandemic after almost 8 months, I hope that at the very least, my email finds you and your families safe and well. I recognize that even as we have admirably and swiftly moved almost our entire universe to the virtual world, for many this has been a time of terrible tragedy. My sincere wishes of health and strength to UNEP personnel, in duty stations and in our sister MEAs, who are coping with this terrible illness, and my condolences to all those across the UN system who have suffered the loss of loved ones.

Update from the annual sub-committee

A significant part of October was devoted to the 7th Annual Subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, a first-ever virtual engagement for the subcommittee. [Setting the stage](#), I outlined how UNEP can be the platform for crafting inclusive multilateral solutions to some of the most pressing environmental challenges of the day. And I believe that the new draft medium-term strategy (MTS) will provide us just the lift we need to get the job done. We greatly benefited from the in-depth consultations on the MTS and the Programme of Work (PoW) with the Member States and I am confident that we are moving towards agreement on the MTS, and the PoW and Budget. We will have additional consultations at the next regular CPR meeting in November with a view to addressing all remaining concerns with the aim of seeking to dot the i's and cross the t's ahead of UNEA-5, "Step 1".

Meanwhile, Member States are working towards a decision by the UNEA Bureau to a two-step approach for UNEA-5, a procedural UNEA ("Step 1") to gavel the MTS and POW in February 2021 and a resumed UNEA-5 ("Step 2") in early 2022. In the Sub-Committee, Member States also continued to advance on strengthening the CPR and its processes. I encourage you to take a look at the [Chair's summary](#), which provides a very comprehensive overview of the meeting. My sincere thanks to the Governance Affairs Office and all Divisions for what was a very intense but successful week. I greatly appreciated the attention to detail and preparation by colleagues. Impressive also because complex discussions in virtual settings can indeed be draining.

UN Day and bravo to the World Food Programme

No one expected the global pandemic and I hope that the [75th UN Day served as a reminder](#) of why we all signed up to the United Nations in the first place. We at UNEP signed up for a better planet. For the principles of integrity, professionalism and respect for diversity. These are strong and enduring values that certainly inspired me when I joined the UN in 1987. Today, the world may seem impossible. The challenges are vast and huge but that's why we need the UN and multilateralism more than ever. [Bravo to the World Food Programme](#) for being awarded the Nobel Prize for their inspirational role in [combating hunger](#) every day around the world.

Making a strong case: An end to dumping of used vehicles

I was pleased to [launch an outstanding report](#) this month that makes a powerful call for transforming the global used vehicles market, especially in Africa. We can no longer allow Africa and developing countries in other regions to serve as the dumping ground for used vehicles that are not considered safe or clean in developed countries. This is as much a question of fairness, respect and equity, as it is about human and environmental health. A culmination of a two-year study, this work is part of a UNEP-led global programme that works with countries to develop clean fuels and vehicles regulations. As a result of our support and with the leadership of Ghana, the Economic Community of West African States Commission (ECOWAS) [announced new vehicle standards](#) for West Africa earlier this year. Huge thanks to Rob de

Jong, Jane Akumu and the sustainability mobility unit located in the Economy division for this great outcome. I urge colleagues to read the [report](#).

Greening finance: investing in sustainability

Also impressive, this month, the UNEP Finance Initiative hosted the [Global Roundtable on Financing A Resilient Future](#). While it is clear that some finance industry leaders have begun to acknowledge the need to realign capital with sustainability, I [outlined four essential actions](#) to make sure investments count because we need every cent to be spent on shifting the needle to sustainability. This is not just because the Earth's beleaguered natural systems need the finance industry. It is also because the finance industry – and its future profitability – need these natural systems even more. Great speeches were given by finance leaders, including [Kristalina Georgieva](#) who called for a right price for carbon and investments in low carbon industries. Christine Lagarde, President of the European Central Bank, indicated that the Bank should no longer be neutral in its bond purchase programme, instead using climate risks as a criterion for selection. And Mark Carney, the former Governor of the Bank of England and now advisor to the UN Secretary-General, suggested that the wages of bank executives be tied to meeting climate objectives. My sincere appreciation to Eric Usher and the UNEP FI team for this stellar effort.

Faith for Earth

You have heard me speak frequently of the need for a “whole-of-society” approach to addressing the three planetary crises of climate, nature and pollution. Faith-based leaders are important partners in the transformation we need. At the Faith for Nature: Multi-Faith Action conference, I [presented four messages](#) to faith leaders and faith-based organizations. One, the imperative of embedding environmental science in teachings to encourage nature-positive behavior; two, to green the assets that faith-based institutions manage; three, to provide nature-based solutions to socio-economic challenges; and four, establish networks through intra and interfaith collaboration that can make us stronger. Bravo to Iyad Abu Moghli and colleagues for driving this initiative, which brought together participants from more than 60 countries.

Ending biodiversity loss and addressing food waste

It was great to speak at the [closing](#) of the EU Green Week and the [Friends of Europe discussion](#) on global ambition to end biodiversity loss. At this forum, I argued that we cannot put a fence around nature and consider it a job done. As IPBES and many others continue to reiterate, we must systematically address the drivers of biodiversity loss and we will not see another opportunity in our lifetime quite like the stimulus packages, which are borrowing from present generations to fund the future. These packages must ensure that what we leave behind is nothing short of a sustainable planet.

In [reflecting](#) on the impact of COVID-19 on nature and protected areas to CNN, I made the point that nature cannot just soldier on as we degrade landscapes. We need strong environmental stewardship which extends beyond protected areas because it is outside protected areas that biodiversity loss is most severe.

For the first International Day of Awareness on Food Loss and Waste, I pointed out that we lose and waste absurd quantities of food in a world where over 800 million people go hungry each year. Transforming our food systems is vital to ensuring healthy climate, healthy nature and healthy people. Read my speech [here](#).

Continued donor support for UNEP

This month, we held [fruitful discussions](#) with Nordic countries on the importance of multilateralism in an increasingly complex world; the need for global leadership; and the role of UNEP in tackling unsustainable consumption and production to address the three planetary crises of climate, nature and pollution. We also discussed strengthening our work in support of achieving environmental commitments by Member States and as part of the UN Development System Reforms. Our Nordic partners reaffirmed their determination to continue supporting UNEP, including by providing some targeted additional financing. My thanks to Kati Autere and many colleagues who contributed to an energetic, frank and useful conversation.

Engaging with the UN system

Earlier this week, I chaired the 26th Senior Officials Meeting of the United Nations Environment Management Group. The heads of a number of UN agencies, including UNDP, OHCHR, and the Executive Secretaries of MEAs, and many others expressed the urgent need to develop an interagency process to identify system-wide opportunities for collaboration on the environment in the context of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, participants renewed their commitment towards building back better, and on nexus issues of human rights and environment.

COVID-19: updates on virtual and remote working

As predicted by scientists, many parts of the world are experiencing a second wave of infections, even whilst some countries continue to grapple with a first wave. Over the last few months, several UNEP duty stations opened, on a reduced footprint basis. Meanwhile some of our offices, such as most offices in Europe, have returned to full teleworking with the increase in infection rates. As has been the practice in other duty stations, at our Headquarters in Kenya, the UN Office in Nairobi has indicated a date for return to duty station for those working from outside the duty station under alternate working arrangements. However, this should not be misinterpreted as us letting down our guard, particularly not now that cases are also increasing in Kenya, or that a return date to the Gigiri compound has been identified.

I want to reiterate my call to all managers to exercise flexibility wherever possible. Duty of care, staff well-being should continue to be the primary consideration when making decisions in the midst of the pandemic. In turn, the responsibility for remaining absolutely vigilant and following all safety and social distancing guidelines must remain the guidepost for all of us at this time.

In the meantime, I look forward to seeing colleagues at UNEP's townhall on Wednesday, 4 November, when we will have an opportunity to hear about the great work being done to strengthen the Word Environment Situation Room.

With my warmest regards to you all.

Inger

P.S. You can always check what I am up to by following me on Twitter at @andersen_inger