

152nd Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives
19 November 2020
1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Online meeting

CHAIR'S SUMMARY

Note: This Chair's summary complements the detailed minutes of the meeting developed by the UN Office in Nairobi. All pre-meeting and post-meeting documents, including statements provided in writing by member States, are available [here](#).

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the meeting by the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

1. The meeting was opened by H.E. Mr. Fernando Coimbra, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Brazil and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives. The meeting welcomed newly arrived representatives to the Committee and bid farewell to departing representatives.

Agenda Item 2: Adoption of the agenda of the 152nd meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

2. The provisional meeting [agenda](#) was adopted.

Agenda Item 3: Adoption of the draft minutes of 151st meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

3. The Committee adopted the draft [minutes](#) of the 150th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives held on 14 September 2020.

Agenda Item 4: Adoption of the draft Chair's Summary of the 7th meeting of the Annual Subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

4. The Committee adopted the draft [Chair's Summary](#) of the 7th meeting of the Annual Subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives held on 12 -16 October 2020.

Agenda Item 5: Report of the Executive Director.

5. Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UN Environment Programme, provided a statement, available [here](#). The Quarterly Report of the Executive Director to the 152nd meeting of the CPR is available [here](#). In the ensuing dialogue, delegations who took the floor, inter alia:

- Welcomed the report and statement of the Executive Director and expressed appreciation for the effective operation of UNEP during the pandemic, including the provision of online translation services, and the role UNEP has been playing within the UN system
 - Appreciated the references in the report to the Emissions Gap Report, the inclusion of challenges and opportunities relating to the Programme of Work, as well as relevant information on resources and management issues.
 - Requested an update to the Committee on the 2020 annual report on private sector engagement, as well as additional updates on UNEP's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and activities related to sustainable recovery.
 - Noted with appreciation that the contributions to the Environment Fund had improved compared to previous years, and encouraged member States who had not already done so to contribute in line with the Voluntary Indicative Scale of Contributions (VISIC) to the Fund.
 - Recognized that the Ad-hoc Open-ended Group on marine litter and microplastics had successfully concluded its mandate and thus provided a good basis to address the issue of marine plastic litter at UNEA-5.
 - Reiterated the support for the adoption of the new Medium Term Strategy and the Programme of Work as a key outcome of the virtual session of UNEA-5 in 2021.
 - Welcomed the participation of UNEP in the One Health process, to ensure the environmental dimension is taken into account.
 - Requested the Secretariat to update the report with regard to information related to the consultation process under General Assembly resolution 73/333.
 - Some delegations requested more information on the process to update the UN policy on disaster affected states, noting that it is not within UNEP's mandate to identify and resolve conflicts, and suggested that references to environmental rights should be avoided unless properly formalized through internationally-agreed upon legal terms.
 - Delegations reiterated that the virtual session of UNEA-5 in 2021 should focus on urgent procedural and administrative issues essential to UNEP's business continuity and underlined the need to avoid online negotiations on substantive matters and decisions which should be reserved for the resumed session of UNEA-5 in 2022, or until in-person meetings are possible.
 - Several delegations stressed the need for a political outcome at the virtual session in order to ensure that UNEA will remain a relevant decision forum and an authoritative voice for the environment also in times of a pandemic, as well as reaffirm the status of Nairobi as the only UN Headquarters in the continent and called on the Secretariat to explore with UNON if the OECPR may be conducted in a "hybrid" format while still respecting relevant restrictions and host country regulations. Several other delegations indicated that the convening itself of a virtual session of UNEA-5 during a pandemic, including leadership dialogues and allowing for the adoption of important administrative and budgetary decisions, such as the next Medium-Term Strategy, would already constitute a successful first part of UNEA-5.
 - Several delegations reiterated their concern over a persistent geographical imbalance with regard to the composition of staff members in UNEP, with one delegation calling for an action plan to address the issue.
6. The Executive Director thanked delegations for their inputs and guidance and expressed her sincere appreciation for the continued contributions to the Environment Fund. With regard to the point

raised on geographical imbalance, she assured member States that UNEP will remain dedicated to address the imbalance and requested member States' indulgence noting that it will take time to resolve the issue. The Executive Director also informed the meeting that UNEP was in the process of drafting an in-house policy on how to deal with environmental defenders; and confirmed the legitimacy to speak on these matters emanates from legal basis such as the UNEA resolution on Montevideo Programme IV, the Governing Council Dec 27/9, the Escazú agreement among others, further noting that UNEP works within the mandates provided by member States on protection of the environment in conflict areas.

Agenda Item 6: Consideration of UNEP Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025 and Programme of Work 2022-2023.

7. The Secretariat presented a [third draft of the Medium Term Strategy 2022-25](#) and a [second draft of the Programme of Work 2022-23](#), pointing out the main improvements taking into account guidance received by the Committee at its meetings on 14 July 2020, the 14 September 2020, and the 12-16 October 2020.
8. The Committee took note of the changes made, expressed general support for the revised documents, and provided the following additional guidance:
 - Reiterated the appreciation for the open, inclusive and transparent process led by the Secretariat in the development of both documents, commending the progress made so far, including through previous consultations.
 - Appreciated the changes proposed by the Secretariat in both documents, while recommending further alignment of the text to internationally agreed language, including through referencing multilaterally agreed norms and standards, where relevant and appropriate, respecting and not pre-judging the outcome of the post-2020 frameworks for biodiversity, chemicals and waste, and securing alignment with UNEP's mandate in particular areas of work.
 - Reiterated the need to more explicitly underline the intrinsic link between a healthy environment and social and economic development, particularly in the MTS background and situation analysis sections, as well as further highlight gender integration across the subprogrammes.
 - Suggested that further emphasis be placed on UNEP's comparative advantage, particularly in the thematic subprogrammes and to showcase how UNEP can contribute, upon request, while working in synergy with others, as well as highlighting its ability to take into account the capacities and needs of developing countries, including in relation to poverty eradication.
 - Welcomed substantial improvements made by the Secretariat in the Programme of Work, including on the theories of change and indicator framework, while recommending that the Secretariat undertake further refinement of the indicator framework, to bring it in line with the 3 levels for interventions envisioned in a practical manner, including improved measurability and interlinkages across subprogrammes and their outcomes, and how to better mainstream sustainable consumption and production mainstreaming.
 - Welcomed the textual additions to the sections on executive direction and management, policymaking organs and programme management and support, including corporate indicators on cross-cutting issues such as gender and UN Reform, as well as an overview of related funding allocations, while requesting further clarification on some of the related items, including increased costs and the allocation of resources to the subprograms.

- Underscored the importance of multilateralism and the need to include concrete proposals on how to mainstream geographical balance in UNEP, and the need to enhance collaboration, coherence and collective environmental guidance to the UN resident coordinator system
 - Suggested the inclusion of language that encourages member States to contribute in line with the Voluntary Indicative Scale of Contributions (VISIC) and enhance financial predictability, and welcomed the new opportunities to be explored for funding, bearing in mind the need not to add additional administrative burdens to or diverting funding from the Environment Fund.
 - Cautioned against making reference to issues outside of UNEP's mandate such as conflict and peace and transformative finance, and emphasized the need to ensure that language on environmental rights under the Environmental Governance foundational programme is accurate and in line with its mandate.
 - One delegation noted with concern that a previous reference to environmental defenders had been removed, and another delegation requested additional information from the Secretariat regarding the consultations for the update of its policy on this matter.
9. The Secretariat took note of the additional comments received, reiterating that further work will be undertaken on the draft documents to align them with the guidance received, as appropriate.
 10. In response to questions raised by Members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, the Secretariat shed light on UNEP's role on policy coherence, including with regard to multilateral environmental agreements, in accordance with UNEA resolution 2/17 and paragraph 89 of the Future We Want.
 11. On the indicator framework of the Programme of Work, the Secretariat welcomed the comments received and clarified that UNEP has strived to follow a streamlined and integrated approach to capture the ambition of the MTS, as well as contributing to the SDGs and other internationally agreed frameworks, and that the indicators will strive to reflect a balance between UNEP's contribution and the achievement of impact, in support of action undertaken by Member States.
 12. The Secretariat also highlighted that the subprogramme Resilience to Disasters and Conflicts is envisaged to be fully embedded in the proposed indicator framework and the thematic subprogrammes, and provided additional clarification on UNEP's work on gender and its role in the advancement of environmental rights, making reference to relevant UN General Assembly and/or Human Rights Council resolutions.
 13. The Chair requested the Secretariat to consider the inputs from the 152nd CPR and resubmit both documents in due time to be considered by the subcommittee on 3 December 2020 with a view to finalize, translate and submit them at least six weeks ahead of UNEA-5 and OECPR-5 shortly thereafter, in accordance with the UNEA Rules of Procedure, and encouraged member States to send their comments in writing to the Secretariat as soon as possible. The Chair also requested the Secretariat to develop elements for a draft decision on the matter as soon as possible, for initial consideration by the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives at its next meeting, and onward submission for Member States for consideration at the subcommittee on 3 December 2020.

Agenda Item 7: Preparation for the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly.

14. The representative of the UNEA President referred to a recent letter from the UNEA President, in which he has proposed to defer the consultation of the ministerial declaration on the agreed theme for UNEA-5 to the resumed session of UNEA-5 in 2022, and to seek broad support for a short consensual political message from the virtual meeting of UNEA-5 in February 2021, while underlining that this would not entail formal negotiations.
15. The Secretariat presented a [draft structure and agenda](#) for the virtual meeting of UNEA-5 in February 2021 as well as a [proposed list of outcomes](#), which will also be considered by the UNEA and the CPR Bureau during its joint meeting scheduled for 1 December 2020.
16. The Committee welcomed the briefing of the UNEA Presidency and the presentation by the Secretariat and provided following comments:
 - All delegations who took the floor supported the proposal to consider the following three decisions at the virtual session of UNEA-5, which are essential to ensure UNEP's business continuity: UNEP Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025 and Programme of Work and Budget 2022-2023; management of trust funds and earmarked contributions; and on date and format for the resumed session of UNEA-5 in 2022.
 - Some delegations suggested that the virtual session could address other issues from a procedural perspective, such as the outcome of the process for review under the Committee of Permanent Representatives and the action plan to implement paragraph 88 of the Rio+20 outcome document that have been considered in a thorough process and are in advanced stages of completion, and many noted that further work will be needed in the course of 2021 to prepare for substantive decisions on marine litter and the future of the Global Environment Outlook. Other delegations, on the other hand, noted that these processes require additional substantive consultations, and recalled the understanding that such consultations are to be deferred to a moment when in-person meetings are resumed.
 - Delegations reiterated the need to avoid substantive negotiations in a virtual format and some cautioned against the initiative by the UNEA President to elaborate a consensual political message from the virtual meeting of UNEA-5. Some welcomed the President's initiative and considered it desirable that consensual key messages be considered as part of the virtual session of UNEA-5, which could focus on the environmental dimension of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - With regard to the number of days for the virtual session of UNEA-5, some member States recommended a short and lean virtual session at technical level without ministerial participation, focusing solely on the procedural decisions days in the virtual session in 2021, while other delegations expressed support for the proposed 2 day-session with the high-level segment, leadership dialogues and a multi-stakeholder dialogue. The Secretariat was also asked to clarify if the number of days for a UNEA session was regulated in the Rules of Procedure.
 - Some delegations reiterated their support for a kick-off of the commemoration of UNEP@50 at the virtual session of UNEA 5 in February 2021 and for the culmination of the commemoration in conjunction with the resumed session in Nairobi in 2022, while others noted that such an agreement would require understanding the entirety of the process and asked for more information on the nature of these events.

- Some delegations called on the Secretariat and the host country to explore opportunities to conduct CPR meetings, including OECPR-5, in a hybrid format with limited physical presence, should the conditions related to the COVID-19 pandemic so allow.
- Some delegations encouraged the Secretariat to make the main Executive Director’s report to UNEA-5 available for the virtual session in line with the Rules of Procedure and others requested more information on possible side events at both sessions of UNEA-5.

17. The Secretariat informed the meeting that the rules of procedure do not regulate the number of days that UNEA can be held, and that it is up to UNEA itself to decide how many days they wish to meet during a resumed session in 2022.

18. The Chair concluded that there is continued broad support for the “two-step approach” for UNEA-5 and for the approach to resume consultations on the Ministerial Declaration for UNEA-5 on the theme only when in person meetings are possible, noted that the Committee agrees to consider three procedural decisions at the virtual session in 2021 – on the approval of a new UNEP Medium Term Strategy and Programme of Work, management of trust funds and earmarked contributions, and date and format of the resumed session of UNEA-5 and the OECPR in 2022 – and called on the Secretariat to develop draft elements for consideration by the CPR Bureau with a view for the CPR Bureau to submit zero draft decisions for consideration by the Committee at its next subcommittee meeting on 3 December.

The Chair further noted that there was no consensus on whether UNEA-5 should also consider other procedural decisions, nor on the elaboration of a political message as proposed by the UNEA President. With regard to the structure of the virtual session UNEA-5, the Chair noted that these matters would be further considered at the joint meeting of the UNEA and CPR bureaux on 1 December. Finally, with regard to UNEP@50, the Chair considered that further discussions were needed, also foreseen to take place at the next subcommittee meeting.

Agenda Item 8: Report of the Subcommittee.

19. The [report](#) of the Subcommittee was adopted.

Agenda Item 10: Other matters.

20. No other matters were raised.

Agenda Item 11: Closing of the meeting.

21. The meeting closed at 8:20 pm.