

---

Committee of Permanent Representatives  
Subcommittee Meeting  
Thursday 10 December 2020  
10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. (EAT)  
Online Meeting

### **MEETING SUMMARY**

#### **Agenda Item 1: Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda.**

1. H.E. Ms. Saqlain Syedah, Vice Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of Pakistan, opened the meeting.
2. Ms. Joyce Msuya, Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, provided introductory remarks that, in particular, stressed the importance of guidance from member States regarding the draft decisions for the virtual session of UNEA-5 and on the draft strategic plan for the organization of UNEP@50. She further recognized that this was the final CPR subcommittee meeting of the year, thanked member States for their support and participation, especially in view of the challenges related to COVID-19 restrictions, and wished the Committee a happy holiday season, further expressing hope to meet in-person in the coming year.
3. The meeting [agenda](#) was adopted. The agenda as well as the background documents and contributions submitted in writing from member States and stakeholders after the meeting are available on the [meeting portal](#).

#### **Agenda Item 2: Consideration of UNEP Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025 and Programme of Work 2022-2023**

4. The Secretariat presented a revised [UNEP Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025](#) and [Programme of Work 2022-2023](#), based on the inputs and discussion on the 152<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Committee.
5. Member States thanked the Secretariat for the revised documents that took into consideration several of the previous views expressed by member States, and provided the following additional guidance:
  - One delegation, representing a political group, emphasized the need to more clearly refer to sand and dust storms as an important issue affecting a number of member States, to enhance the ambition for the provision and mobilization of means of implementation to implement the new Medium Term Strategy and Programme of Work, and to grant equal access to funds for Member States.
  - Another delegation, also representing a political group, recognized that the revised document presented an improved and well-balanced Medium-Term Strategy and Programme of Work and welcomed in particular the focus on the planetary crises and the central role of sustainable consumption and production, the improved indicator framework, as well as the mainstreamed use of internationally agreed language, cautioned against any further substantive changes at this late stage, and advocated for endorsement of the documents for submission to UNON for translation without further changes. With respect to disaster risk reduction, it was important to ensure integration and continuity in the work of UNEP across the current and the future Programme of Work.
  - Some delegations noted that while the revised text was considered a clear improvement, minor adjustments would still be merited to address a number of remaining concerns,

including to avoid references to documents and processes that have not yet been agreed upon in multilateral fora, and to ensure that terminologies are in line with internationally agreed language. Some also reiterated the need for further adjustments to avoid the perception that the documents would prejudice the outcomes from ongoing negotiations under key Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).

- One delegation reiterated its concern with references to peace and conflict which were not considered fully within UNEP's mandate, and to "environmental rights" which was considered as a term that does not yet have an internationally-agreed upon legal definition, requesting that UNEP should further explain the operational aspects of these aspects, also to avoid possible diversion of limited resources.
  - One delegation also expressed support for the strategic objectives while underlining the need for a balanced regional implementation that is sensitive to national needs, and mentioned pollution control and plastic waste as a key topic for future cooperation.
  - One stakeholder representative suggested that the phrase "building better forward" is used instead of "building back better", and that more attention is devoted to post COVID-19 stimulus and green recovery packages, and to the damaging effects of possible future pandemics.
6. The Secretariat took note of the comments received, including with regard to using appropriate terminologies, and announced additional clarifications and adjustments in the documents, including on how UNEP can be enabled to respond to the outcomes of ongoing MEA processes without prejudging the results. Regarding sand and dust storms, the Secretariat clarified that UNEP is undertaking a full mapping exercise on this topic under the World Environment Situation Room and will review once more how to better address this in the document. Furthermore, it was noted that the Food and Agriculture Organization has been leading a coalition on dust storms and that UNEP will be joining this coalition. On disasters and conflicts, it was noted that UNEP is working in complementarity with other UN organizations to provide input on the environmental dimension, and that the topic was covered in the proposed indicators.
7. The Chair noted with appreciation that the draft Medium Term Strategy and Programme of Work had been subject to a long and fruitful consultation process, and proposed to entrust the Secretariat to take into account the comments made at this meeting, as appropriate, before sending them to UNON for translation to make them available to all Member States at least six weeks ahead of UNEA-5. She also reminded delegations that the Committee will initiate consideration of a draft decision on the subject matter, which provides further opportunity for Member States to express their individual positions. The meeting saw no objection to this proposal.

### **Agenda Item 3: Consideration of draft administrative and budgetary decisions for the virtual session of UNEA-5 in February 2021.**

8. On the basis of a [Secretariat note](#), the Secretariat presented three draft decisions on administrative and budgetary matters which are expected to be considered for adoption at the online meeting of UNEA-5 in February 2021: (i) draft decision on the on the Programme of Work and Budget for 2022–2023 and Medium-term Strategy for 2022-2025; (ii) draft decision on the management of trust funds and earmarked contributions and (iii) draft decision on date and format for the resumed session of UNEA-5 and for the resumed 5<sup>th</sup> OECPR. The drafts were developed based on guidance provided by Member States at the 152<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Committee held on 19 November and had been subject to initial review by the Bureau of the Committee.
9. Delegations thanked the Secretariat for the draft elements in the note, and provided the following initial guidance:
- One delegation reserved its position on all the three draft decisions.

*i) Draft decision on the Programme of Work and Budget for 2022–2023 and Medium-term Strategy for 2022-2025*

- Delegations who took the floor welcomed the draft decision without further substantial comments, with one delegation suggesting an editorial correction and one delegation underlining the need to ensure that the draft decision does not infringe on the independent legal nature of the MEAs.

*ii) Draft decision on the management of trust funds and earmarked contributions*

- The Secretariat was requested to clarify why some trust funds have an expiration date while others do not, what the purpose was on the trust fund for the Faith for Earth Coalition, and why the trust fund for the implementation of the General Assembly resolution 73/333 is proposed to be extended to 2025 instead of 2022 or -23 when the process is expected to end. The Secretariat informed the meeting that the expiry dates for many trust funds need to be aligned with specifications from Member States that provide the extrabudgetary funding, that the Faith for Earth Coalition was an expanding platform that promoted environmental awareness among faith-based organization, and that the trust fund for General Assembly resolution 73/333 may need to remain operative during a period after the finalisation of the process itself, for reporting and other reasons.

*iii) Draft decision on date and format for the resumed session of UNEA-5 and for the resumed 5<sup>th</sup> OECPR*

- Many delegations generally welcomed the proposed dates and structure for UNEA-5 and OECPR-5, with one delegation representing a political group suggesting that earlier dates for the resumed sessions of OECPR and UNEA-5 in February 2022 may be considered.
- Many delegations also welcomed the proposal to hold UNEP@50 as part of or back to back to the resumed session of UNEA-5, with some delegations preferred to hold the commemoration as a Special Session, while others preferred to commemorate UNEP as part of UNEA-5, preferably as a one-day event to ensure sufficient time to adequately conclude UNEA-5. The Secretariat was requested to provide additional information on budgetary implications of the two alternatives.
- Several delegations stressed the need to make best use of the intersessional period between the online and resumed session of UNEA-5, and one delegation representing a political group proposed a new paragraph *2bis* which would call upon the Secretariat and Member States to continue work on relevant work streams and to address relevant existing mandates from previous sessions of the Environment Assembly, including on the Future of the Global Environment Outlook, follow-up to UN General Assembly resolution 73/333, the CPR-based review, and addressing marine litter and micro plastics.
- Another delegation, representing a regional group, reiterated that while the development of a ministerial declaration requires negotiation and can only be considered at the resumed session of UNEA-5 in 2022, they may be open to consider a general political message without binding language at the online session of UNEA-5 in 2021.
- Some delegations proposed to extend the time frame in paragraph 6 in the draft concerning the submission of draft resolutions to the resumed session of UNEA-5 from 8 to 10 weeks, in line with the unanimous recommendation from the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the annual subcommittee. One delegation questioned the validity and asked for deletion of the reference to limited resources available for negotiation of draft resolutions in paragraph 6.
- One delegation suggested to add a new paragraph to extend the mandate set out in General Assembly resolution 73/333, and to spell out the full mandate of the CPR under paragraph 4.
- One delegation suggested adding a new preamble, recalling the theme of UNEA.

10. The Secretariat expressed readiness to propose some adjustments to take into account the comments made and to include a new paragraph to extend the time frame for the implementation of GA Resolution 73/333 in the draft. It was also noted that ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics will report on its work through the Executive director's report to UNEA-5, with a Chair's Summary as an annex, while the Steering Committee on the Future of GEO will submit its report directly to the Assembly in accordance with UNEA resolution 4/23. Finally the Secretariat clarified that the proposed date for the resumed session of UNEA-5 was set taking into account important holiday periods and that budget implications of holding UNEP@50 as a Special Session as compared to a high-level session at UNEA-5 was likely to be limited.

**Agenda Item 4: Preparations for the virtual fifth session of Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives.**

11. The Secretariat gave a presentation on the [draft structure of the fifth session of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives](#), to be held 15 – 19 February 2020. The presentation is available [here](#).
12. Delegations thanked the Secretariat for the proposal and welcomed the proposed 2-day structure of OECPR-5 as a sufficient time frame to allow for final consideration of administrative and procedural matters, and possibly allowing for online side events or other activities to take place during the latter part of the week. One delegation representing a regional group suggested to move the two day meeting to 18-19 February 2021.
13. The Secretariat pointed out that the starting date of OECPR-5 (15 February) was set out in UNEA decisions 4/2, and that the possibility of organizing additional online non-official events during the week preceding the online session of UNEA-5 will be further discussed with the UNEA President and Bureau.

**Agenda Item 5: Preparation for the commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of UNEP.**

14. The Secretariat presented a [draft strategic plan](#) for the preparations for the UNEP@50, taking into account previous guidance from the Committee and the decision to organize a two-step UNEA-5. The presentation is available [here](#).
15. Member States thanked the Secretariat for the draft strategic plan and provided further guidance as follows:
  - One delegation representing a political group questioned the idea of concluding the UNEP@50 celebrations before the date of the actual 50-year anniversary in June 2022, requested an intergovernmental discussion on the proposed Global Assessments Synthesis Report and communication initiative/visual identity, stressed that any interrelation between UNEP@50 and a possible Stockholm+50 initiative should only be considered on the basis of a possible mandate by the UN General Assembly, and objected to the idea to solicit views for a new course for UNEP's future as reflected in paragraph 13 of the draft strategy, as the course for UNEP's future is already outlined in the outcome document from Rio + 20.
  - One delegation representing another political group generally supported the proposed principles for the commemoration and the idea of launching the UNEP "Global Assessment Synthesis Report" at the online session of UNEA-5, questioned the proposal to launch an entire communication initiative and "visual identity" across the length of the intersessional period and suggested to substantively limit the list of events to engage with the UNEP@50 commemorations, and requested more time to consider whether the outcome of the 73/333 consultation process should be adopted at UNEP@50 or at Stockholm+50.
  - Some delegations reiterated their support for a kickoff of UNEP@50 at UNEA-5 and the need for the commemoration to, more generally, enhance the role and visibility of UNEP in Nairobi.

- Some delegations reiterated the need for ensuring that the commemoration is manageable and that it should not overburden the week of the resumed UNEA-5.
- Several delegations requested further on the concept and timing of the “legacy publication” as referred to in paragraph 18, and how this initiative may link to the Future of the GEO process.
- One delegation reserved its position on the draft strategic plan.

16. The Secretariat took note of the strong interest and support for many of the ideas outlined in the draft strategic plan, including with regard to the kickoff of UNEP@50 at the online meeting of UNEA-5, and committed to revise and update the note for further consultations in the near future.

**Agenda Item 6: Other matters.**

17. One delegation representing a regional group informed the meeting that the Permanent Representative of South Sudan had been designated as a new Rapporteur and member of the Bureau of the CPR representing the African Group in replacement of the Permanent Representative of Ghana.

18. The Chair thanked the Committee for their inputs and active participation during the subcommittee meeting and wished everyone a happy holiday season.

**Agenda Item 7: Closing of the meeting.**

19. The meeting closed at 5:30 p.m.