

Committee of Permanent Representatives
Subcommittee Meeting
Thursday 21 January 2021
2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. (GMT+3)
Online Meeting

Agenda Item 4: Briefing on regional preparations for UNEA-5.

This document serves as a background note for consideration of Agenda Item 4: Briefing on regional preparations for UNEA-5. It summarizes the regional preparations for UNEA-5, including with regard to stakeholder engagement, and has been prepared by UNEP's Regional Offices. The document is complemented by an INF document for UNEA-5 entitled "Compilation of Statements and Recommendations by Major Groups and Stakeholders from Africa, West Asia, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean for Consideration by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its Fifth Session", which is also made available as background information at this meeting.

Member States are invited to review and provide feedback to UNEP's Regional Offices with regard to regional preparations for UNEA-5.

Asia Pacific Office

1. UNEP Asia and the Pacific Office has been working closely with the Member States and the Major Groups and Stakeholders to provide regional inputs to the preparation process of the UNEA-5.
2. We have already shared the Executive Director's notification, including pre-session documentation, on-line registration and accreditation process, with Member States and the accredited Major Groups and Stakeholders regarding the UNEA-5 scheduled to take place online in Nairobi, on 22 and 23 February 2021, to be adjourned thereafter, and to be resumed as an in-person meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, in February 2022.
3. The Pacific Island Countries and other Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) Members have been informed of developments regarding the UNEA-5 and regional preparations through the following:
 - Information paper to SPREP Executive Board, September 2020
 - Pacific Islands Nature Conservation Conference, November 2020 (ED's video message)
 - Correspondence from Regional Office (Regional Director), December 2020 to national focal points sharing key achievements and key events
 - Pacific Preparatory Meeting for UNEA 5 will be held in 3rd quarter to provide inputs to UNEA-5 outcome.
4. UNEP Asia and the Pacific office worked closely with relevant Divisions to organize virtual meetings/consultations with member states and other stakeholders to discuss progress on implementation of UNEA resolutions for the reporting by the Executive Director. These included:
 - The Asia Pacific general briefing to introduce the implementation of the UNEA Resolution 4/19 on mineral resource governance and present the discussion paper was held on 8th July 2020; Three sub-regional consultations were also held in July 2020.
 - There were two consultations in 2020 to review the implementation of resolution 4/1 on Innovative pathways to achieve sustainable consumption and production. A webinar on "Mainstreaming Sustainable Consumption and Production & Circular Economy Policies in the Asia-Pacific Region" was held on July 29th, 2020 to engage member states and acquire their inputs regarding the implementation status of SCP product policies; and a virtual regional consultation on "Mainstreaming coherent and effective SCP policies, including through circular economy models: Best practices and recommendations" was held on September 16, 2020.
 - The Asian Pacific Regional Consultation Meeting under the Ad hoc Open-ended Expert Group on marine plastic litter and microplastics (AHEG) was held virtual on 26-27 August 2020 to review regional implementation of UNEA Resolution 4/6 on marine plastic litter and microplastics;
 - A virtual meeting on 'International Cooperation for Sustainable Infrastructure' was held on 28 October 2020 to review UNEA Resolution 4/5 on sustainable infrastructure.

5. To support member countries to address the COVID-19 pandemic with the state-of the art knowledge on the key anthropogenic drivers for the emergence of zoonosis, built on the momentum of the UN Biodiversity Summit 2020, and in line with UNEA-5's overall theme: "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals", a webinar on Preventing the next pandemic - Zoonotic diseases and how to break the chain of transmission was organized by Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific on 22 October 2020, in close collaboration with Ecosystems and Science divisions, regional and global partners. The theme of the webinar is central to the theme on 'Nature for Human and Ecosystems Health', one of the priority topics for UNEA-5 and the 4th Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific. The discussions and exchanges will also feed into a regional report entitled, "Nature strikes back: COVID-19 and the risk of future pandemics in Asia Pacific".
6. Deputy Executive Director Ms. Joyce Msuya informed the ESCAP's Committee on Environment and Development held hybrid/virtual on 9-10 December 2020 in Bangkok about the UNEA-5 process and its regional preparations. The meeting discussed region's environmental challenges and necessary actions needed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. DED also informed the meeting about UNEP's approach and support on sustainable and green recovery in the context of Covid-19.
7. I would like to inform the Subcommittee that the 4th Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific will take place from 5 to 8 October 2021 in the Republic of Korea. The meeting will be jointly organized by the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Environment and UNEP. The Forum serves as a platform for Member States and other stakeholders to provide regional inputs to the resumed 5th session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5 Step-2) in February 2022 in Nairobi. The Forum is also an occasion for UNEP's partners, UN agencies, private sector representatives, scientists, academia, and civil society to bring their perspectives and ideas to achieve the environmental dimension of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.
8. We will also keep the Member States in our region informed about the General Assembly Resolution 73/333, in the context of the commemoration of the creation of UNEP by the 1972 Stockholm Conference, "with a view to strengthening the implementation of international environmental law and international environmental governance, in line with paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development entitled "The future we want". A roadmap has been agreed by the Bureaus of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) and of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR). The President of UNEA and the Chair of the CPR appointed Excellency Ado Lomus (Estonia) and Excellency Saqlain Syedah (Pakistan) as Co-Facilitators.
9. Finally, I would like to inform the subcommittee that we have been following up closely with Member States to ensure active participation and engagement from Asia and the Pacific at the UNEA-5 sessions. We will also coordinate closely with the Secretariat of the Governing Bodies to organize the 4th Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific with participation of UNEA-5 President and other Asia Pacific Bureau Members.

Africa Office

The UNEP Africa Office has been working closely with the Member States and the Major Groups and Stakeholders in the African region in preparation for the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5). Several virtual meetings were organized including:

A virtual meeting of the Bureau of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) was convened on 28 May 2020, to discuss the African response to the Covid-19 pandemic from the environment perspective and endorsed a proposal for the development and implementation of a Green Stimulus Recovery Programme for Africa. The Bureau took note of Africa's preparations for UNEA-5, and the theme for UNEA-5, which focuses on Nature-Based Solutions in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication noting that it addresses the priority of utilizing Africa's rich biodiversity and diverse ecosystems to empower African countries.

Several briefing and consultation meetings were held between the Africa Office and the Nairobi-based African Diplomatic Corps (ADC) regarding the implementation of previous UNEA resolutions, the development of the new UNEP Medium Term Strategy for the period 2022—2025, and preparations for UNEA-5. (ADC meetings on 29 May; 2 June; 13 July; 2 September; 29 and 30 September; 6 October; and 23 November 2020)

A pre-AMCEN African Major Groups and Stakeholders Regional Consultative Meeting was held on 26 November. The meeting, among other issues, deliberated on preparations for UNEA-5 and delivered a statement to the 8th AMCEN special session.

The 8th AMCEN special session was convened on 30 November, 1 and 4 December 2020 under the theme "Enhancing environmental action for effective post-COVID-19 recovery in Africa". In addition to the focus on COVID-19, the session deliberated on Africa's engagement in UNEA-5. During the session, messages were delivered by Mr. Sveinung Rotevatn, President of UNEA-5 via a pre-recorded video message; Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director, UNEP; and Jorge Laguna, Secretary of Governing Bodies of UNEP, who informed the meeting on the progress made so far in the organization of UNEA-5.

Member states committed to participate actively in UNEA-5 and supported the two-stage approach of holding a short online session as the first part of UNEA-5 in February 2021 to consider only the medium-term strategy and the programme of work and budget, to be followed by a resumed in-person session in 2022 to consider substantive matters. They agreed to the principle that there should be no online negotiations regarding substantive matters in Environment Assembly processes, including in resolutions, decisions, ministerial declarations and high-level leadership dialogues.

African countries reiterated the importance of commemorating the 50th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP. In that regard, Africa will play a key role in the preparations for the commemoration.

In the meantime, African countries will continue to engage, online, at both the regional and global levels, on matters relating to the environmental dimension of the COVID-19 pandemic and in preparation for the online part of UNEA-5 in February 2021.

West Asia Office

1. The preparations for UNEA-5 in West Asia started in early 2020. We have been working closely with Members States and the Major Group and Stakeholders to provide regional inputs to the various streams of UNEA-5.
2. Observing the weak participation and engagement from the region in the CPR and OECPR meetings, I have put UNEA-5 as one of the main topics discussed during my meetings with senior officials from the environment ministries and authorities as well as the CPR members from the region. The aim is to ensure stronger participation and engagement from West Asia to the UNEA processes including CPR deliberations.
3. The restructured Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) of 2019 Clarified and officially communicated that UNEP is not a core member of the Technical Secretariat, leaving the West Asia region without an inter-governmental political forum to solicit and get feedback from Countries on UNEA processes, topics and resolutions etc. Therefore, the West Asia Office, with leadership and support from Member States, is in the process of establishing a West Asia Environment Forum, similar to other UNEP regions. The first meeting of the Forum is planned to be held during the third quarter of 2021.
4. The Regional Meeting on the Medium-Term Strategy and UNEA-5.1 will be held virtually 1-2 February 2021. We invited Environment Ministries/Authorities, CPR representative from the Region, League of Arab States, Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council as the main inter-governmental bodies in the region. The notification and the pre-session documents for UNEA-5.1 were already shared with Members States through our invitation to the regional meeting scheduled for 1-2 February. We are ready to assist delegates with on-line registration and any other technical and logistical support needed.
5. The First Environment Ministerial Meeting for West Asia on COVID-19 and the Environment was held on 18 August 2020. The Ministerial Statement voiced the commitment of the countries to address the repercussions of the pandemic and work to support a more sustainable and environmentally friendly post-pandemic recovery phase. The Ministers acknowledged that the main theme chosen for the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly - "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals", is an important focus for the West Asia region.
6. A series of awareness raising events and webinars were held throughout 2020 in support of UNEA-5 theme and its link to the pandemic.
7. The West Asia Consultation Meeting of the Major Groups and Stakeholders took place on the 8th of December 2020. The outcome statement was submitted to the Secretariat of the Governing Bodies and will be delivered to the regional meeting on 1-2 February 2021. Prior to this, I personally held two bi-lateral meetings with the co-facilitators. A dedicated meeting to present UNEA procedural matters and the UNEP Handbook for Stakeholders Engagement was held on 18 November 2020 with support from the Secretariat of the Governing Bodies.

8. The West Asia Office, with support from the Economy Division, prepared update reports and held virtual meetings/consultations with Member States and other stakeholders to discuss progress on implementation of UNEA resolutions for the reporting by the Executive Director. These included:
- General Briefing for West Asia on UNEA Resolution 4/19 on mineral resource governance that took place on 23 July 2020, with over 35 participants from the region. The Regional consultation on the same resolution took place on 26 August 2020.
 - The Regional Consultation on UNEA Resolution 4/5 Sustainable Infrastructure for West Asia took place in 27 July 2020. With over 40 participants, the region provided its feedback on the sustainable infrastructure Good Practice. Guidance Framework. examples and good practices shared by countries as well.
 - The regional consultation meeting on UNEA Resolution 4/1 “Innovative ways to achieve sustainable consumption and production” took place in 30th of September with over 40 participants. Feedback and experiences have been collected from 11 countries during the interactive discussion.
 - In response to UNEA Resolution UNEA/4/7 on environmentally sound management of waste, we launched the first Regional Waste Management Outlook on the World Environment Day 2020. The Outlook reviews and assesses current waste and environmental management legal and legislative systems in the 12 West Asian countries and highlights the potential of the circular economy, in which waste serves as a resource and as a driver of regional economic growth.
 - West Asia Office, in close consultation with Member States, is preparing a regional assessment report on national actions taken by Member States in West Asia to improve air quality as per UNEA resolution 3/8 on preventing and reducing air pollution to improve air quality globally.
 - Expert Group Meeting on “Resource Efficiency in the Arab Region: Monitoring Progress of SDG 12 and Building Back Better from COVID-19 took place on 7-8 October 2020 organised jointly with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ECSWA) and the League of Arab States.

Europe Office

Europe Office has been working very closely with the Member States, sister UN agencies and Major Groups and Stakeholders to brief and engage them on both the outcomes of UNEA4 and its implications at the regional level, and preparations for UNEA5.

1. Briefing to Ninth meeting of the European Environment and Health Task Force (EHTF) on preparations for UNEA5 on Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (9-10 December 2019). The EHTF is represented by leading officials from the 53 Member States of the WHO European Region, nominated at national level as focal points for the European Environment and Health Ministerial Process.
2. Briefing and exchange of views at Twenty-fifth session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (13 - 15 November 2019). Thanks to the close working relationship between UNEP and UNECE, presentation and exchange of views on UNEA has become a standing agenda item of the CEP. The CEP was provided relevant information both on the outcome of UNEA4 and the preparations for UNEA5. CEP is represented by senior environment focal points from capitals.
3. Fourteenth meeting of the UNECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development, (2 - 3 May 2019). Briefing both on the outcome of UNEA4 and preparations for UNEA5 was made to representatives of environment and education sectors, and representatives of international organizations and non-governmental organizations who are observers to the process.
4. Briefing to Geneva-based permanent missions and partners on the Act #ForNature Forum in support of UNEA5. This briefing was particularly organized to draw attention to the forum considering it was first of its kind for UNEP to go virtual and to encourage as many member states and stakeholders to join virtually (2 June 2020).
5. Europe Office played an important role in the preparations for the International Consultation of Major Groups and Stakeholders and the Oslo Act #ForNature Global Forum for UNEA5 (7-10 June 2020).
6. Organized a Sub Regional Consultations on the implementation of Mineral Resource Governance Western and South-Eastern Europe as well as Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The Consultations was made to support the implementation of UNEA resolution (UNEP/EA.4/Res. 19) on Mineral Resource Governance (August 2020).
7. Briefing to the fifteenth meeting of the UNECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development, on latest development of preparations for UNEA5 and the MTS 2022-2025 (19 - 20 October 2020).
8. Organized briefing on the preparations of UNEA5 provided by the Governance Affairs Office at the occasion of the meeting of the Working Party on International Environment Issues of the European Union Council – WPIEI Global (6 November 2020).
9. Briefing to the twenty-sixth session of the Committee on Environmental Policy (09 - 10 November 2020).

10. Briefing to the 6th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention (COP6), (25 November 2020).
11. Organized a briefing to permanent missions based in Geneva and specifically targeting Member States who are not represented in Nairobi and provided relevant information on the UNEA5.1 session in February 2021 and a resumed session in February 2022. (15 December 2020).
12. Organized the European MGS Regional Consultation Meeting (RCM) in preparations for UNEA5 (15-16 December 2020).
13. Europe Office is currently preparing another pre UNEA5.1 briefing to the Geneva-based permanent mission with the President of the UN Environment Assembly and Minister of Climate and Environment of Norway, Mr. Sveinung Rotevatn. (3 or 4 February 2021).

In addition to specific briefings on UNEA, Europe Office has been promoting:

14. The Act **#ForNature** hashtag on social media and drawing attention to UNEA5.
15. Throughout the year, Europe Office has organized and supported several events within the framework of the Geneva Environment Network linked to UNEA themes, and this will continue in 2021.

North America Office

In preparation for the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5), the United Nations Environment Programme's North America Office (UNEP North America) hosted a series of six virtual consultation workshops on the theme of "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals." In partnership with MIT Solve, the World Environment Center, and the United Nations Associations in Canada and the United States, UNEP North America convened a total of 428 North American stakeholders across the Major Groups to explore the topic of nature as a solution to the climate and biodiversity crises.

Building on the distributed consultation model implemented in preparation for UNEA-4, UNEP North America and its partners designed this regional consultative process to ensure broad and diverse stakeholder participation in UNEA-5, given the challenges and restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Playing a crucial role in the design and implementation of the process were the four UNEA Regional Facilitators for North America. The Regional Facilitators were nominated by UNEA-accredited organizations, UNEP partners, and other stakeholders in the region, and were chosen by UNEP North America. They are:

- Regional Facilitator (Canada): Jennifer Garard, Science Officer, Future Earth
- Alternate Regional Facilitator (Canada): Dan Burns Board Member, One Earth Initiative
- Regional Facilitator (United States): Anne Bowser, Director of Innovation, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
- Alternate Regional Facilitator (United States): Celeste Connors, Executive Director, Hawai'i Green Growth

The six consultations were executed as follows:

- 20 May 2020: Youth consultation (United States), in partnership with the United Nations Association of the United States of America, via their Global Engagement Online Series platform, with 50 participants.
- 18 June 2020: Youth consultation (Canada), in partnership with the United Nations Association in Canada, with 92 participants.
- 3 September 2020: Public sector consultation (Canada), in partnership with the United Nations Association in Canada, with 107 participants.
- 24 September 2020: Private sector consultation (Canada), in partnership with the United Nations Association in Canada, with 79 participants.
- 8 October 2020: "Apex" major groups consultation (United States and Canada), in partnership with MIT Solve, with 60 participants.
- 14 October 2020: Private sector consultation (United States and Canada), in partnership with MIT Solve and the World Environment Center, with 40 participants.

In each consultation, participants were asked to share examples of nature-based solutions and best practices in North America, reflecting on both successes and challenges, and to formulate key messages to policy makers about the enabling conditions needed to scale these best practices. Best practices, key messages, and recommendations from the six consultations were compiled in a regional report entitled "Strengthening Actions for Nature in North America: Regional Input to UNEA-5."

Latin America and the Caribbean Office

1. At the XXI Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), held in Buenos Aires, Argentina 9-12 October 2018, it was decided to hold the XXII Meeting of the Forum in advance of UNEA 5 to serve as the regional preparatory meeting for the Assembly. The current Bureau for the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment comprises Barbados (Presidency), Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Honduras, Grenada, Guatemala and Peru (Rapporteur).
2. An Inter-sessional Meeting of the Forum was held on 5-6 November 2019 in Bridgetown Barbados, and was chaired by the Honourable Trevor Prescod, former Minister of Environment and Natural Beautification of Barbados and President of the XXII Forum. The meeting was updated on the status of preparation for UNEA 5 and the work of the Committee of the Permanent Representatives, though a brief from the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, Ambassador Fernando Coimbra, followed by Jorge Laguna, Secretary of Governing Subsidiary Bodies of UNEP. Both were connected from Nairobi to the meeting via videoconference.
3. The Intersessional Meeting adopted several Conclusions and Recommendations and endorsed three regional initiatives, namely a) Ecosystem Restoration in the Framework of the UN Decade of Restoration; b) Environmental Data Framework and c) Environmental Emergency Preparedness and the SIDS Programme for Sustainable Development.
4. Having regard to the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus which had a devastating global impact and caused the cancellation of travel and in-person meetings, the Bureau of the Forum took the decision that all meetings, including the actual XXII Meeting of the Forum would be conducted virtually in advance to UNEA 5, with the overall theme of “the Environmental Dimensions of COVID-19 Sustainable Recovery Response for Latin America and the Caribbean”. The Bureau conducted the preparation of a Communique on this matter which will be part of the Political Declaration of the Forum and presented as a set of strategic commitments and actions for mainstreaming the environmental dimensions of a Sustainable Recovery Agenda for the Region to the Covid-19 pandemic.
5. The challenge of operationalizing the work for the Forum during the Covid-19 caused a new modality whereby a decision was taken by the Bureau to establish a Negotiations Committee to enhance the work of what would normally be the High-Level Meeting of Officials.
6. The countries of the region have provided inputs in writing to the MTS and POW development process, on topics that would be discussed during the first part of the UNEA 5 in 2021. The celebration of the Forum of Ministers in a virtual manner will allow a broader participation of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) in the Meeting of the Forum.
7. There have been six meetings held with the High-Level Officers of the countries of the region, in preparation for the XXII Meeting of the Forum, and three meetings of the Bureau of the Forum. During the third meeting of the Bureau held on 25 November 2020, we also had the participation of Ambassador Fernando Coimbra, and by Jorge Laguna, Secretary of Governing Subsidiary Bodies of UNEP, who informed the meeting on the progress made so far in the organization of UNEA-5.

8. The Bureau was invited to continue its engagement in the UNEA 5 preparation process and send written inputs as required to the UNEA Secretariat and may coordinate with Ms. Andrea Meza Murillo Vice President and Minister of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica, and H.E. Mr. Reggy Nelson Vice President of UNEA, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Suriname, who are the two members of the UNEA Bureau from the region.
9. The Negotiation Committee has progressed in the negotiation of the outcome documents of the Forum, which comprises eight decisions and a Political Declaration near completion. The Forum will be held virtually on 1 and 2 February 2021.
10. The Civil Society Regional Consultative Meeting was held on 23 November. A report of the meeting is available at the forum's website. The meeting was followed by an interactive constitutive process for consolidation of the regional statement for UNEA 5, which was submitted by the regional facilitators on 30 December 2020. A Regional Civil Society Forum will be held in advance to the XXII Forum, on 29 January 2021.