

**Statement by the delegation of the Russian Federation  
on the draft UNEP Medium Term Strategy for 2022-25  
and Programme of Work for 2022-23  
at the 153<sup>rd</sup> meeting of  
the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP  
(January 26, 2021)**

We thank the Secretariat for preparing the draft decisions on administrative and budgetary matters to be agreed during the first part of the 5th session of UNEA.

In the current format of conducting UNEA-5 there is no room for substantive negotiations within the OECPR. Therefore, all the documents should be agreed by consensus. Absence of consensus on specific points of the documents means that we cannot adopt these documents as a whole.

In this regard, we take note of the updated versions of the draft UNEP Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-25 and Programme of Work for 2022-23.

We have to state that these documents again fail to reflect our concerns as expressed during the last CPR Subcommittee meeting in December 2020 and before.

Firstly, the objectives of ensuring equitable geographical distribution in UNEP's professional and scientific work have not been adequately reflected in these documents.

As we have mentioned earlier, we could not find a single name of a Russian scientist neither in the Emissions Gap Report, nor in the Adaptation Gap Report. The Synthesis report appears to have not involved any Russian authors either. How these reports could be global if there is no Russian speaking professionals among their authors?

We believe that this is a matter of principle. We regularly raise the issue of geographical imbalance and the need for urgent action to redress it, but the trend towards reserving key posts in UNEP's professional staff for members of the WEOG still prevails. Despite recent assurances by UNEP management that they

will give priority to under-represented countries when replacing professional posts, recent appointments do not confirm these assurances.

We cannot agree with the Secretariat's usual justifications of a lack of applications from qualified professionals from other regional groups. This is just not the case.

In this regard, we believe it is necessary to add to the draft document specific objectives for achieving geographical balance in the staffing of the Secretariat within concrete timeframes similar to the gender equality objectives, and not limit them to just monitoring the situation.

We would also like to request the Secretariat to provide to the next CPR meeting information regarding the distribution of posts among regional groups throughout the entire professional posts category, starting from the P-2 level, excluding G-level administrative and technical posts. We are sure that this data will provide us with even more vivid illustration of the current geographical imbalances in UNEP's professional composition.

Secondly, we believe that UNEP's tasks in promoting environmental rights as described in the Strategy are not in line with the documents agreed upon within the UN system.

The Reference of the Secretariat to the Annex to the UNEP Governing Council Decision 17/23 of 1993, is located under the section "**Concepts or principles significant for the the future of international environmental law**" and reads as follows: "**Consider, as appropriate, the further development of environmental rights and responsibilities**". This decision contains no indication of the need to advance environmental rights in practice and there is no definition of what they even mean. Since that time, the term "**environmental rights**" has never been further defined in any of the decisions of UNEP's governing bodies.

To date, there is no inter-governmentally agreed decision within the UN system, and UNEP in particular, which give UNEP an explicit mandate to work on "**advancing environmental rights**" and to "**cooperate with the wider UN**

**system to enhance the effective and inclusive promotion, protection and respect of environmental rights"** (page 30 of the MTS). We believe that the "environmental rights" language should either be deleted from the text of the strategy, or brought in line with UN decisions, which to date contain only a recognition of the relationship between human rights and the environment, namely the "recognition that sustainable development and the protection of the environment, including ecosystems, contribute to human well-being and to the enjoyment of human rights " (HRC resolution 37/11 and UNEA resolution 2/15). There is nothing else on this issue!

We would also like to remind the Secretariat that, despite our repeated requests since to last July, we have not received a response to our request for information materials and documents regarding the process on development of UNEP's policy for supporting environmental defenders, including an updated draft of this policy.

It is our position of principle that any initiatives by the Secretariat in terms of UNEP policy should be meaningfully discussed in a transparent manner within the CPR.