
Meeting of the Bureau of the Environment Assembly
20 January 2021
4:00 – 6:00 p.m. (GMT +3 – Nairobi time)
Online meeting

MEETING SUMMARY

Meeting background documents and presentations are available on the [meeting portal](#).

Agenda item 1: Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

1. The meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Sveinung Rotevatn, President of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) and Minister of the Climate and Environment of Norway.
2. The meeting welcomed H.E. Irina Vujovic Minister of Environment Protection of Serbia as a duly elected member of the Bureau of UNEA.
3. The meeting was attended via video conference by the following Members of the Bureau of UNEA:
 - Norway (P) H.E. Mr. Sveinung Rotevatn, Minister of the Climate and Environment, Western European and Others Group;
 - France (VP) H.E. Ms. Bérangère ABBA, Secretary of State for Biodiversity, Western European and Others Group;
 - Indonesia (VP) Ms. Laksmi Dhewanthi, Senior Advisor to the Minister of Environment and Forestry, Asia-Pacific Group;
 - Estonia (VP) Mr. Ado Lohmus, Permanent Representative, Eastern European Group;
 - Bahrain (VP) H.E. Dr. Mohamed Bin Mubarak Bin Daina, Chief Executive of Supreme Council for Environment, Asia-Pacific Group;
 - Burkina Faso (VP) H.E. Mr. YAGO L. Abdoul Kader, Deputy Permanent Representative to UNEP, representing H.E. Mr. Simeon SAWADOGO, Minister of Green Economy and Climate Change, African Group;
 - Costa Rica (VP) H.E. Ms. Andrea Murillo, Minister of Environment and Energy, Latin America and Caribbean Group;
 - Suriname (VP) Ms. Ivette Patterzon, Senior Legal Advisor, National Coordination Environment of the Office of the President of Suriname, representing H.E. Mr. Reggy Nelson, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Latin America and Caribbean Group;
 - Serbia (VP) Ms. Sandra Dokić, Assistant Minister of Environment Protection, representing H.E. Ms. Irena Vujovic, Minister of Environment Protection, Eastern European Group;
 - South Africa (Rapporteur) Ms. Shahkira Parker, Senior Policy Advisor, Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, representing Hon. Ms. Barbara Creecy, Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, African Group.

Other representatives present were:

- H.E. Ms. Elin Bergithe Rognlie, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Norway;
- H.E. Ms. Aline Kuster-Menager, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of France;
- Ms. Guri Sandborg, Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway;
- Ms. Ana Campos, Minister Counsellor and General Consul – Chargé d'affaires of Costa Rica;

- Ms. Estelle Halimi, Deputy Permanent Representative of France

The Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives was represented *ex officio* by:

- H.E. Mr. Fernando Coimbra, Chair of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Brazil;
- Mr. Patrick Luna, Deputy Permanent Representative of Brazil.

The Secretariat of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) was represented by:

- Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director;
- Ms. Joyce Msuya, Deputy Executive Director;
- Mr. Jorge Laguna-Celis, Secretary of Governing Bodies;
- Mr. Ulf Bjornholm, Deputy Secretary of Governing Bodies;
- Mr. Rafael Peralta, Chief of Staff a.i.;
- Mr. Stadler Trengove, Legal Officer.

4. The meeting adopted the provisional agenda.

Agenda item 2: Preparation of a possible consensual message or statement from the online session of UNEA-5

5. The President briefed the meeting on the outcome of the recently held open-ended informal consultation on a draft statement from the online meeting of UNEA-5 held on 8 December 2020 and presented a [revised proposed message from UNEA-5](#) which was shared with Bureau Members on 15 January 2021. He noted that while some member States are yet to be convinced of the merits of this initiative, there is a strong and growing interest and support for the efforts to finalize a text that may meet with general acceptance.
6. The President invited Bureau members to support the proposed approach, in particular taking into account the following considerations:
 - The online session of UNEA-5 is an opportunity to communicate that the environment is relevant for our global understanding of, and recovery from, the current pandemic crisis;
 - It is also an opportunity to send a message that the global community should not abandon efforts to address environmental challenges during the pandemic;
 - The online meeting of UNEA-5 will be seen as a test to meet expectations to manifest its visibility and relevance in 2021, by stating that the environment ministers of the world have met online and that our important work will continue.
 - The draft message contains no new commitments; rather it recalls what the international community is collectively already working on, laying out a foundation for the substantive issues that will be addressed at the resumed UNEA-5 in 2022.
7. The President suggested that UNEA-5 could – fully respecting the UNEA Rules of Procedure – be invited to endorse the message and include this within the proceedings of the online meeting of UNEA-5 in accordance with its rules of procedure and avoiding setting a precedent for formal negotiations of a declaration or resolution which would have a different legal status.
8. In response, many Members expressed their full support to the President for the draft message, including with small modifications, from the online session of UNEA-5, underlining the critical importance for Ministers of Environment attending UNEA-5 to send a joint message to the world also in these unprecedented times, to demonstrate the important role of UNEA as the world's

highest-level decision-making body on the environment. Some delegations indicated that they will provide written inputs.

9. Some Members, while thanking the President of the new draft as a good compromise text, pointed out that some delegations have maintained reservations against adopting a message from the online meeting of UNEA-5, underlining that the online session of UNEA should only focus on administrative and budgetary aspects and that there is no agreement to undertake formal negotiations on a specific message from the session. To this end, it would be important to have full clarity on the decision-making process and on the legal status of such a message, in advance of the online session of UNEA-5.
10. The President of UNEA thanked the Bureau for their guidance and proposed to continue the consultations on a shared message in advance of fifth Open-Ended Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives on 15-16 February 2021, and take stock of the status at the next joint meeting of the Bureaux of UNEA and of the CPR, scheduled for 19 February 2021. He stated it was important to have certainty on this question at the start of UNEA.

Agenda item 3: Update on preparations for the online session of UNEA-5.

11. The President of UNEA invited the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) to provide an update on the status of preparation for UNEA-5, including with regard to the draft decisions on administrative and budgetary matters, by the Committee of Permanent Representatives.
12. The Chair noted that a first reading of the three draft UNEA decisions on procedural and administrative matters was held on 10 December 2020, whereby several delegations had asked for clarifications on the drafts and submitted a limited number of proposed amendments. A second reading will take place at the upcoming 153rd meeting of the CPR on 26 January, on the basis of revised draft decisions prepared by the Secretariat under the purview of the CPR Bureau, and final consultations and negotiations will take place at the fifth meeting of the OECPR. He also noted that the Committee had discussed the 50th anniversary commemoration of the creation of UNEP (UNEP@50), and that further consultations are necessary to clarify the contours of UNEP@50, including with regard to communication aspects and the planned kick-off at UNEA-5. He underlined that no substantive discussions are foreseen on the Executive Director's reports to UNEA-5, and that future consultations on General Assembly resolution 73/333 will require face to face meetings.
13. Members of the Bureau welcomed the update and encouraged the Committee and the Secretariat to continue its preparatory work to ensure a successful online meeting of UNEA-5.
14. The Chair of the CPR suggested that the inscription process for the leadership dialogue should be moved from 25 January 2021 to a later date, to allow ensure equal possibility for delegations to attend.
15. Another Member of the Bureau encouraged the Secretariat to organize an interactive leadership dialogue and noted that the role of the moderator will be of crucial importance to this end.
16. The President thanked the CPR Chair and the Bureau members for their inputs, expressed confidence in the preparations for adopting the three procedural decisions at the online meeting of UNEA-5, under the able leadership of the CPR bureau and Chair, and offered his continued support

as well as the support of the UNEA bureau to ensure a successful meeting of the fifth OECPR.

17. The Secretariat welcomed the guidance received and committed to undertake every effort to ensure that all leaders, in particular ministers, will be given the opportunity to intervene in a timely manner at the leadership dialogue.

Agenda item 4: UNEA-5 communication strategy

18. The Secretariat proved a presentation to the Bureau on the proposed UNEA-5 communication strategy, which had been made available to the Bureau Members in advance of the meeting.
19. Members of the Bureau welcomed the presentation and noted that the strategy as a useful tool raise awareness and visibility amongst member States, stakeholders and the general public on the role and function of UNEA and UNEP, and recommended that best use be made of the UNEAP regional offices in its implementation.
20. One Member requested more information on organisation of informal side events for the online session of UNEA-5.
21. One Member of the Bureau underlined the importance of a continuous dialogue with Member States on important communication initiatives, and noted that while effective communication will require creative thinking and use of a simplified language, it needs to be consistent with what Member States have agreed to, such as the agreed theme for UNEA-5. On this basis it was proposed to include the UNEA-5 communication strategy as a new agenda item at the next regular meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.
22. The Secretariat took note of the comments and guidance received and confirmed that UNEP's regional offices are well equipped to implement more tailor-made regional outreach efforts, to maximize impact form the Communication Strategy. With regard to informal side events relevant to the online session of UNEA-5, the Secretariat clarified that all such events, including a Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum, a Global Youth Forum and a Science Policy Business Forum, are informal in nature and will not be held in parallel with the UNEA or the OECPR sessions. An overview of informal events open to all interested participants is under development and will be shared with all interested parties through the UNEA website.
23. The President thanked participants for their contributions, requested the Secretariat to continue to reach out at global, regional and national levels to create maximum visibility for UNEA-5, and encouraged Bureau Members to take an active role in communication activities, including media interviews and social media activities, to increase the awareness about UNEA.

Agenda Item 5: Other Matters

24. No other matters were introduced for consideration by the meeting.

Agenda Item 6: Closing of the Meeting

25. The meeting closed at 5.20 pm.