

SPEECH ON THE REPORT OF THE 5TH OECPR
DELIVERED BY H.E. FERNANDO COIMBRA
CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES

Agenda item 4 - Report of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, Monday, 22
February 2021.

Mr. President of the United Nations Environment Assembly,
Honourable Ministers,
Madam Executive Director,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning, good afternoon and good evening to you all.

I have the great honor to provide you with a report on the work of the Committee of Permanent Representatives since the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly, as well as on the outcomes of the fifth meeting of Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives, held virtually from 15 to 17 February 2021. The content of this oral report is reflected in writing in document UNEP/EA.4/INF/2 “Report on the work of the Committee of Permanent Representatives”, and in document OECPR/5/3, entitled “Draft Chair’s Summary of the fifth meeting the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives”. They have been made available on the OECPR-5 and UNEA-5 meeting websites, respectively.

Mr. President,
Excellencies,

Since UNEA-4, the Committee has convened eight regular meetings, covering a very wide range of topics such as the follow-up of the many outcomes of UNEA-4, the process mandated by General Assembly resolution 73/333, the preparations towards an action plan to implement paragraph 88 of “The Future we Want”, the preparations for the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme, and presentations of UNEP flagship reports.

We have also convened twice in the format of the Annual Subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, in October 2019 and 2020, to review and oversee the implementation of the current Programme of Work and undertake consultations on the preparation of a new Medium Term Strategy for 2022-2025 and a Programme of Work and Budget for 2022-2023. We have also discussed the review our internal structures and working methods under the “Process for review by the CPR”, among other issues.

Moreover, the Committee has on average met once or twice a month under the format of subcommittee to advance the consideration of all these important matters.

Finally, it is my pleasure to announce that we successfully concluded the online segment of the fifth meeting of the Open-Ended Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives last week. In doing so, we took note of the official reports of the Executive Director to UNEA-5 and, following the constructive engagement of all delegations, despite the many challenges associated with holding virtual meetings and the technical difficulties we faced, agreed to recommend the following three draft Decisions for adoption by this Assembly:

- UNEP/EA.5/L.2 - Management of trust funds and earmarked contributions
- UNEP/EA.5/L.3 - Medium-term strategy for 2022–2025 and programme of work and budget for the biennium 2022–2023, and
- UNEP/EA.5/L.4 - Adjournment and resumption of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

In addition, the Committee heard a briefing from yourself, Mr. President, regarding the consultations on your proposal for a possible consensual message from the online session of UNEA-5.

The Committee took note with appreciation of your intention to put forward the proposed message for final consideration and possible endorsement by this Assembly, with the understanding that it does not constitute a negotiated outcome of UNEA-5 and shall not set a precedent for future meetings.

Further information about the fifth meeting of the Open-Ended Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives is available in the draft Chairs summary; document OECPR/5/3.

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

When the UN Environment Assembly is not in session, it is for the Committee of Permanent Representatives to perform indispensable roles for the functioning of our Programme. During the intersessional period, it is the intergovernmental body providing the UNEP Secretariat with regular and clear guidance, following up on the implementation of resolutions and decisions taken by previous sessions of the Assembly, and preparing all negotiated outcomes for the incoming session of the Assembly.

The impressive number of meetings held by the Committee over the past two years provide a solid testimony to the role of Nairobi as the world's environmental capital and of the progressive strengthening of the only UN headquarters in the Global South.

Since spring last year, as the world started to grasp with the tragic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and all of us were forced to adapt our working methods, all of the Committee's meetings have been held online and has not postponed or delayed a single meeting. I believe that this is another testimony of the commitment of the diplomatic community in Nairobi to the business continuity of UNEP, fully conscious of the need to foster sustainability as we build back better. However, holding online meetings has not been without its challenges, which range from those stemming from the digital divide to those associated with ensuring multilingualism. The Committee has nonetheless continued to consider matters of key importance, take crucial decisions and deliver effective guidance and advice to the Secretariat.

Aware of the limitations inherent to virtual meetings which hamper equal participation and inclusivity and of the need to ensure the good functioning of UNEP, the Bureaux of UNEA and the CPR consensually decided that the current online session of UNEA5 should focus solely on urgent and administrative decisions and further decided to postpone the preparation of substantive negotiated outcomes until in-person meetings can resume, which I sincerely hope can happen in the coming months.

The role of the CPR will become all the more necessary and relevant in this exceptional period between the virtual part of this session of UNEA and its reconvened session, which is expected to be held in person, in Nairobi, in February 2022.

Let me end by recognizing your leadership, Mr. President, and, once again, to wish you a successful presidency of UNEA5. Rest assured that the CPR will support your efforts and work tirelessly as it has done in these last two years towards the substantive and ambitious results we all aspire for the Assembly.

I must also thank the leadership and friendship of my fellow members of the CPR Bureau, as well as the dedication of the co-facilitators for the CPR-based review and for the process of informal consultations under the auspices of the CPR for General Assembly resolution 73/333. Allow me to express gratitude to the Executive Director, the Deputy Executive Director and to the colleagues from the Secretariat, who have so ably supported us throughout these challenging past two years, both for our face-to-face meetings and for the many online meetings. Adapting to virtual working methods has been – and continues to be – a learning curve for all. I sincerely thank you for sparing no effort that the CPR be allowed to continue performing its critical roles by furnishing us with real as well as virtual meetings rooms, background documents, interpretation, expertise, logistic support, legal advice, and screen editing.

Before I conclude, I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to former Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, and until a few months ago its Rapporteur, H.E. Ms. Francisca Ashietey Odunton, former High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of Ghana, who led the Committee until June 2019. I thank her for the transparency, comradery and diligent leadership.

With that said, I hereby formally submit the Chair's summary of the fifth Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives to the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly for its consideration.

I thank you for your attention.