

**AFRICAN GROUP STATEMENT DELIVERED
BY**

**H.E. BEYENE RUSSOM
AMBASSADOR OF THE STATE OF ERITREA**

**AT THE CLOSING SESSION OF THE VIRTUAL
FIFTH UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY (UNEA-5.1)
AND LAUNCH OF UNEP@50**

23 FEBRUARY 2021

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**The President of the Fifth United Nations Environment Assembly,
Your Excellencies,
The Executive Director of UNEP,
The Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the outset, let me take this opportunity to thank Your Excellency, Mr. Sveinung Rotevatn, Minister for Climate and Environment of Norway, and President of this Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly for the way you have steered our discussions during this virtual session. It certainly was not an easy task.

Allow me to also thank all the member states and delegations for the commitment and understanding exhibited during the discussions on the three decisions, despite the limitations and technical challenges. This has indeed shown us that while we can continue having discussions for purposes of information exchange and understanding each other's positions, the situation is not ideal for the realisation of an inclusive, transparent and effective process with equal participation from all member States.

Mr. President,

Despite the lengthy and difficult discussions that took place, this virtual session of UNEA, has been able to adopt three key administrative,

budgetary and procedural decisions, which we believe will ensure UNEP is able fulfil its mandate without interruption. .

As we look ahead to the resumed UNEA-5 in 2022, the African Group would like to re-iterate its readiness and commitment to work with all Member States, Regional Groups, your Bureau and Secretariat towards the preparations for the resumed in-person session in 2022. We look forward to substantive deliberations during the inter-sessional period with the understanding that action can only be taken at the session in 2022.

Mr. President,

The African Group would like to sincerely thank the President of Kenya, H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta for accepting to launch the celebrations of UNEP@50. His presence is a clear indication of the importance of this commemoration for UNEP and the United Nations Office in Nairobi, the only UN headquarters in the global South and indeed in Africa. We look forward to further engagements on the outreach activities following the launch. The African Group sees the importance of ensuring that such activities, especially those happening alongside other meetings, are visible and impactful.

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The African Group would like to emphasize on the need to not only focus on the format, but also on substantive issues around UNEP@50. The commemoration should be approached with an overall view to strengthening international environmental governance and actions on that will impact the lives of our people, in line with paragraph 88 of the

outcome document of the Rio + 20 outcome document, entitled “The future we want”.

The African region remains committed to discussions on the preparations of UNEP@50, taking into consideration its key role as the incoming President of UNEA-6.

Finally, Mr. President,

I wish to thank the UNEP Executive Director and her team for the good work done in ensuring a successful OECPR 5.1 and UNEA5.1 despite the challenges encountered in the process.

I thank you.