

Summary of the Joint Preparatory Retreat of the Bureaux of the UN Environment Assembly and of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

24 June 2021, 16:00 – 19:00 (GMT+3), Virtual meeting

This document summarizes the main points of discussion at the [Joint Preparatory Retreat](#).

In summary, the Joint Bureaux addressed and agreed on the following main conclusions:

- Provided guidance to the UNEA President on the way forward with regard to the consultations on a Ministerial Declaration for the resumed the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5.2);
- Recognized that UNEA-5.1 was a successful event that delivered impactful and meaningful outcomes, and endorsed the main conclusions in the Secretariat document “[The online fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly: Assessment and lessons learned](#)”, while also recognizing the challenging circumstances imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the technical and logistical limitations of online meetings
- Provided general guidance in support of [a draft structure of UNEA-5.2](#) and the involvement of Multilateral Environmental Agreements in UNEA preparations, including through their governing bodies, as appropriate, while underlining that more time will be needed to consider the format and structure of UNEA-5.2 in light of future developments;
- Encouraged Member States to present draft resolutions for UNEA-5.2 at the meeting of the annual subcommittee scheduled for the last week of October;
- Agreed to launch an early call for UNEA-5.2 side events in July;
- Requested the Secretariat to launch the process to identify early nominations to the Bureau of UNEA-6 from the regional groups, to ensure inclusivity and ownership in the preparation for UNEP@50.

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the Joint Preparatory Retreat.

1. The President of the Assembly, H.E. Mr. Sveinung Rotevatn, welcomed participants and opened the meeting, followed by opening remarks from H.E. Mr. Fernando Coimbra, Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, and Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director UN Environment Programme. A list of participants can be found in Annex 1.
2. The agenda of the meeting was adopted (available [here](#)).
3. The Members of the two Bureaux congratulated the newly elected members of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives for the period 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2023, who attended the meeting as observers.

Agenda Item 2 and 3.1:

- **Assessment of the online UNEA-5 (UNEA-5.1).**
 - **Preparations for the resumed meeting of the fifth session of UNEA (UNEA-5.2) - Structure and format.**
4. H.E. Mr. Fernando Coimbra, Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives recognized that the online session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5.1) was successfully organized despite the technical challenges, and restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. He noted that this success resulted from a consensual expectation regarding outcomes, a focused debate and adequate use of the inter-sessional period. He also commended the Secretariat for adapting quickly to the virtual environment and providing adequate support to Member States. He referred to the draft

structure and format of UNEA5.2 and the note on Multilateral Environmental Agreements prepared by the Secretariat and suggested considering them together.

5. The Secretariat presented the evaluation and lessons learned from UNEA-5.1, which had been revised according to guidance provided by Member States at the 154th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, as well as a draft format and structure of UNEA-5.2 and a related note entitled “UNEA-5 pathway involving the Multilateral Environmental Agreements. The Secretariat presentation is available [here](#).
6. Members of the Bureaux welcomed the presentation by the Secretariat and provided the following general guidance:

On the assessment and lessons learned for UNEA-5.1

- Commended the leadership of President and Bureau of UN Environment Assembly and the Chair and Bureau of Committee of Permanent Representatives, as well as the constructive approach of the entire membership of the Committee;
- Recognized that UNEA-5.1 was a successful event that delivered impactful and meaningful outcomes, and took note of the main conclusions in the Secretariat document “[The online fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly: Assessment and lessons learned](#)”, while also recognizing the challenging circumstances imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the technical and logistical limitations of online meetings;
- Underscored the need for in-person meetings to resume in Nairobi as soon as possible, taking into account the persistent uncertainties relating to the ongoing pandemic, with several Members of the Bureau expressing the view that online meetings should be regarded as a transitory arrangement due to exceptional circumstances imposed by the pandemic and that they would not be suitable for line-by-line negotiations of a significant number of texts;
- Underscored the persistent challenge of the digital divide for online meetings, especially for developing countries;
- Recognized the significant value of regional engagement and contributions to UNEA;
- Requested the Secretariat to continue improving the online meeting platform and addressing connection challenges;

On the draft structure and format of UNEA-5.2

- Reiterated the aim that UNEA-5.2 should be ambitious, substantive with result in tangible outcomes, with some Members expressing, due to the negotiating limitations imposed by the pandemic, a preference for a manageable number of resolutions;
- Provided general guidance in support of a draft structure of UNEA-5.2, while underlining that more time will be needed to consider the format and structure of the meeting in light of future developments;
- Recognized the need for clarity on modalities and format for UNEA-5.2 as early as possible;
- Underlined the need for early preparations to allow for enough time to prepare for draft UNEA resolutions and decisions, and noted that the 8th meeting of the annual subcommittee might provide a milestone to this end;
- Some members stressed the need to ensure that all negotiations should be in-person, while others considered that there might be room for conducting consultations and/or negotiations online or in a hybrid format, as long as all delegations are treated equally;
- Supported the proposal from the secretariat to initiate the organization of side events and exhibitions at an early stage while maintaining flexibility in terms of the format of the side events (i.e. fully online or hybrid) and avoiding overlap between official meetings and side events;
- Reiterated the importance of meaningful engagement and participation of representatives of Major Groups and Stakeholders;

- Supported in principle and as appropriate the involvement of Multilateral Environmental Agreements in UNEA preparations, with some Members calling for inputs from relevant scientific panels and full ownership from MEA governing bodies;
 - Some members called for further clarity on the linkages between UNEA-5.2, UNEP@50 and Stockholm+50.
7. The Executive Director thanked members for their inputs and guidance and committed to applying the learning experience from UNEA-5.1 for the resumed session. She added that the situation regarding the spread of the pandemic and the access to vaccination remains highly uncertain and that there is a great potential to better involve Multilateral Environmental Agreements, including at the political level, in UNEA deliberations while respecting their legal independence.
 8. The Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives thanked the Bureau Members for a rich debate with unanimous support for a successful UNEA-5.2 and called for further discussions, in an inclusive manner, to identify the best way forward. The Chair noted general support for the main conclusions and lessons learned contained in the secretariat assessment of UNEA-5.1, as well as for the draft structure for the UNEA-5.2, but called for further examination in light of future development relating to the pandemic. The Chair also noted the recommendation to encourage Member States to present draft resolutions for UNEA-5.2 at an early stage. He encouraged the Secretariat to launch an early call for UNEA-5.2 side events and explore further appropriate ways to involve Multilateral Environmental Agreements in the preparation and organization of UNEA-5.2 while respecting their respective mandates.

Agenda Item 3.2: Preparations for the resumed meeting of the fifth session of UNEA (UNEA-5.2) - Ministerial Declaration

9. The President of UNEA introduced a [discussion paper on the ministerial declaration from UNEA-5](#) and suggested re-initiating the consultation process in September in an inclusive and transparent manner.
10. Members of the Bureau generally supported the approach proposed by the President and recognized the importance of the ministerial declaration as one of the key political outcomes of UNEA. Some Members specifically pointed to the importance of early consultations, the usefulness to consult with the Committee of Permanent Representatives, the need to consider the outcomes from other important environment-related international meetings taking place before UNEA-5.2, and the possibility to identify inputs to the Stockholm + 50 meeting as part of the ministerial declaration.
11. The President of UNEA thanked the members for their valuable inputs and committed to take them into account in the planning of upcoming consultations on the draft declaration.

Agenda Item 4: Outcome of the consultation on General Assembly resolution 73/333.

12. The Co-Facilitators of the consultations on the follow-up to General Assembly resolution 73/333 under the auspices of the CPR provided an update on the outcomes of recent informal workshops which were held in June, noting that the CPR Bureau has decided to postpone the in-person second consultation meeting from June to November.
13. The co-facilitators reported that during the workshops, many delegations have expressed the view that the political declaration should fully implement paragraph 88 of the Rio+20 Declaration and secure the role of UNEP as the leading global environmental authority. The political declaration should be drafted as a non-binding document supporting existing international environmental law frameworks, conventions and agreements. Many delegations support further calls to strengthen cooperation and

synergies among and between environmental instruments and bodies to create policy coherence, reduce overlap and enhance coordination, while others are cautious about expanding the role of UNEP and are concerned about how means of implementation, including financial commitments, should be addressed in the political declaration.

14. Members of the Bureaux thanked the co-facilitators for their report and their leadership to advance the process and welcomed the organization of the informal workshops. Some Members called for an ambitious and action-oriented political declaration to be adopted at UNEP@50. Others asked for more clarity on the value-added of the declaration, stressing the need to keep within the mandate of General Assembly resolution 73/333, advocating for a balanced approach that also focusses on means of implementation and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.
15. The Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives thanked the members for their inputs and invited the Secretariat to continue to assist the process, with the view to prepare the second consultation meeting in November.

Agenda Item 5: Preparations for the commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP@50).

16. The Secretariat presented a revised and updated strategic plan for UNEP@50 in view of the special session to be held on 3-4 March 2022 in Nairobi as mandated in paragraph 10 of UNEA Decision 5/3. The Secretariat presentation is available [here](#).
17. Members of the Bureaux welcomed the update and took note of the preparations.
18. One Member reiterated the need for a successful and impactful commemorative event, informed the meeting that the African group had tasked Algeria to coordinate the process within the CPR Bureau, and called for substantive support and collective ownership from all regional groups. Another Member stressed the importance to engage Major groups and Stakeholders in the preparation process
19. The President of UNEA requested the Secretariat to facilitate the launch of an early nomination for the Bureau of UNEA-6 and support appropriate modalities to allow for a constructive and inclusive dialogue on the preparation for UNEA@50, ensuring the ownership of the incoming UNEA-6 Presidency and Bureau. He suggested that to revert to this matter at the next joint Bureau meeting.

Agenda Item 6: Closing of the Joint Preparatory Retreat.

20. The President of the UN Environment Assembly suggested that the next joint meeting will take place at the end of September or beginning of October, ahead of the 8th meeting of the annual subcommittee scheduled for the last week of October 2021.
21. The President of the UN Environment Assembly and the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives thanked the Members of the two Bureaux for their valuable guidance and active participation in the meeting and declared the meeting closed.

Annex 1: List of Participants of the Joint Retreat of the Bureaux of the UN Environment Assembly and of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

Bureau of the UN Environment Assembly

H.E. Mr. Sveinung Rotevatn, UNEA President, Minister of Environment and Climate – Norway;
H.E. Ms. Bérangère ABBA, UNEA Vice President, Secretary of State for the Biodiversity - France;

H.E. Ms. Andrea Meza Murillo, UNEA Vice President and Minister of Environment and Energy - Costa Rica;

H.E. Mr. Dragan Zupanjevac, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative on behalf of H.E. Mrs. Irena Vujovic, Vice President and Minister of Environment – Serbia;

H.E. Dr. Mohamed bin Mubarak Bin Daina, UNEA Vice President, Special Envoy for Climate Affairs and Chief Executive of the Supreme Council for Environment - Bahrain;

H.E. Mr. Reggy Nelson, UNEA Vice President, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Suriname;

H.E. Ms. Laksmi Dhewanthi, UNEA Vice President and Senior Advisor to the Minister of Environment and Forestry of Indonesia;

H.E. Mr. Ado Lohmus, UNEA Vice President, Permanent Representative of Environment of the Republic of Estonia;

H.E. Mrs. Madina GANOU DIABY KASSAMBA, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Representative on behalf of H.E. Mr. Simeon Sawadogo, UNEA Vice President, Minister of Environment, Green Economy and Climate Change of Burkina Faso;

H.E. Mr. Mninwa Mahlangu, Permanent Representative to UNEP, Representative on behalf of Hon. Barbara Creecy, UNEA Rapporteur, Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries of the Republic of South Africa

H.E. Ms. Elin Rognlie, Ambassador and Permanent Representative – Norway

Members of the current Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

H.E. Fernando Coimbra, Chair, Ambassador and Permanent Representative – Brazil;

H.E. Saqlain Syedah, Vice-Chair, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative – Pakistan;

Mrs. Gudi Alkemade, Deputy Permanent Representative, Representative on behalf of H.E. Maarten Brouwer, Vice Chair, Ambassador and Permanent Representative – The Netherlands;

H.E. Mr. Marek Rohr-Garztecki, Vice-Chair, Ambassador and Permanent Representative – Poland;

Elected Members of the next Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives for the period 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2023

H.E. Ambassador Luísa Fragoso, Chair, Ambassador and Permanent Representative – Portugal;

H.E. Mr. Ado Lohmus, Vice-Chair, Permanent Representative – Estonia;

H.E. Ambassador Erasmo Roberto Martínez, Vice Chair, Ambassador and Permanent Representative – Mexico;

H.E. Selma Haddadi, Vice Chair, Ambassador and Permanent Representative – Algeria;

H.E. Saqlain Syedah, Rapporteur, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative – Pakistan

UNEP Secretariat

Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director;

Ms. Joyce Msuya, Deputy Executive Director;

Mr. Rafael Peralta, Chief of Staff;

Mr. Jorge Laguna-Celis, Secretary of Governing Bodies, Director of Governance Affairs Office;

Mr. Tim Kasten, Director of Programme and Policy Division

Mr. Ulf Björnholm, Deputy Secretary of Governing Bodies, Deputy Director of Governance Affairs Office.