

Committee of Permanent Representatives  
Subcommittee Meeting  
Thursday 27 May and 3 June 2021  
2:00 pm - 5:00 pm  
United Nations Office of Nairobi  
Online

### **MEETING SUMMARY**

*This summary report covers the full consideration of the 2020 Programme Performance Report, which was carried out at two consecutive subcommittee meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives on 27 May and 3 June 2021. Agenda and supporting documents and PowerPoint presentations are available [here](#) and [here](#).*

#### **Agenda Item 1: Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda.**

1. H.E. Ms. Saqlain Syedah, Vice Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representative, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of Pakistan, opened the meeting.
2. The Secretariat provided an overview of the participants present at the meetings.
3. The meeting [agenda](#) was adopted.

#### **Agenda Item 2: Presentation of the UNEP Programme Performance Report for 2020.**

4. The Secretariat presented an overview of the [2020 Programme Performance Report](#), which highlights UNEP's achievements during the first year of the 2020-2021 Programme of Work and demonstrates that UNEP is a nimble and agile organization that has been able to deliver on its Programme of Work during an unprecedented pandemic. Furthermore, the Secretariat recognized the lessons learned on adaptability and the increased call for UNEP to contribute to the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development as enshrined in the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The presentation is available [here](#).
5. The Secretariat also provided an overview of the financial and management component of the 2020-2021 Programme of Work including the budget, income, available resources and expenditure for the subprogrammes as well as the funding situation, gender and geographical representation of UNEP and what is being done to strengthen the management of UNEP. The presentation is available [here](#).

6. Delegations who took the floor welcomed the Secretariat report and its achievements outlined therein, took note of the improvements undertaken, appreciated information on opportunities, challenges and lessons, and provided the following general comments on the report:
  - Commended UNEP for its continued implementation the Programme of Work in 2020 despite the difficulties created by the Covid-19 pandemic;
  - Welcomed efforts to improve transparency and accountability, including the use of dashboards;
  - Urged UNEP to continue to capitalize on lessons learned for further improvement of its work;
  - Acknowledged that sustainable development is key in combating poverty and urged UNEP to continue its work to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals by Member States;
  - Requested further clarification regarding overachievement of some indicators, on underspending and overspending, and on major deviations in targets and results, where applicable;
  - Welcomed the progress made on gender policy and requested additional information on the “2019 gender score card”;
  - Requested additional information on the status of the implementation of the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse action plan, including information on areas where UNEP can improve its work;
  - Requested that future reports better reflect the uptake of UNEP’s work and that reporting is done at the outcome level, noting that some results in the report are activity/output-based;
  - Noted that the report could be further improved by better linking the narrative to the indicators, and suggested that future reports include a specific section on the impact of COVID-19 to the programming of UNEP;
  - Stressed the importance for all countries to contribute their “fair share” to the Environment Fund in line with the Voluntary Indicative Scale of Contributions (VISIC), with one delegation representing a political group asking for additional information on the impact of insufficient funding of the Fund;
  - Called for a better breakdown of the geographical and regional distribution of all UNEP professional staff.
7. The Secretariat took note of the recommendations and requests relating to the overview of the programme and budget performance.
8. Subsequently, the Secretariat gave a presentation on the performance of individual subprogrammes. The full presentations are available [here](#) and [here](#).
9. Delegations who took the floor shared observations and provided guidance on the subprogrammes as follows:

#### **Chemicals and Waste**

- Questioned the overachievements of some of the indicators;
- Indicated that the number of MEA ratifications may not be an adequate measure of impact and invited the secretariat to consider other or improved indicators;

- Noted that work on the management of plastic litter and microplastics is a nexus-area that is currently only reported under the chemicals and waste subprogramme, and requested clarification on how UNEP's work in this area plastics is coordinated across the secretariat;
- Indicated the need to further strengthen the activities of this subprogramme as it the center of gravity for sustainable management of chemicals and waste across UN agencies and Multilateral Environmental Agreements;
- Called for a stronger science-policy interface on chemicals and pollution;
- Requested clarification on whether the new programme on global electric mobility targeting countries in Latin America and the Caribbean corresponded to the ambition outlined in UNEA resolution 4/4 on sustainable mobility.

10. The Secretariat welcomed the inputs on the reports and took note of the comments e.g. relating to the need to improve the science-policy interface. It noted that the reported overachievement can be resolved by designing better indicators, in line with the new UNEP Medium Term Strategy for 2022-25 where a comprehensive had been made to make better forecasts of results and targets, hence making them more realistic while at the same time raising the ambition level. Regarding plastics, the Secretariat noted that the subprogramme works closely with colleagues across UNEP and has formed an inter-subprogramme group on plastic pollution and marine litter.

#### **Disasters and Conflicts**

- Requested further information on the ongoing review of the subprogramme;
- Expressed concern that the integration and mainstreaming of this subprogramme into the three pillars and four subprogrammes, in accordance with the new Medium-Term Strategy, there is a risk that some key activities in this area may be abandoned.

11. The Secretariat clarified that the work of the subprogramme will continue as it is well-integrated and mainstreamed not only in the three pillars, but also in the foundational and enabling subprogrammes, including in their result frameworks.

#### **Environment under Review**

- Expressed strong support for the work undertaking under the subprogramme and for the development of several flagship reports such as the Adaptation Gap Report, the Synthesis Report ("Making Peace with Nature"), and the reports relating to the green recovery and building-back better, while noting a large potential for additional outreach, political attention and action generated from these reports;
- Requested the secretariat to further consider the potential links between the Multilateral Environment Agreements / InforMEA platform and the World Environment Situation Room project.

12. The Secretariat informed delegations about a taskforce under the upcoming digital transformation subprogramme which will reflect on how to improve the various digital platforms and UNEPs

ability to better communicate and reach a wider audience, and about efforts to refurbish and adapt UNEP publications to suit different audiences such as the private sector and youth.

### **Climate Change**

- Welcomed the many achievements and appreciated the uptake of renewable energy activities within the subprogramme;
  - Expressed appreciation for the work done on climate adaptation and underlined the need for a continued balanced approach between adaptation and mitigation activities;
  - Noted that many COVID-19 recovery packages remain carbon intensive and encouraged UNEP to intensify its efforts to change this paradigm;
  - Requested additional information on expenditure, noting that available resources under this subprogramme had tripled in the past years, and that half of the available earmarked resources were spent during the reporting period;
  - Requested additional information on UNEP's value-added and collaboration with other UN agencies and on UNEP action on fossil fuel subsidies as part of the subprogramme.
13. The secretariat took note of the remarks, and noted that with regard to COVID recovery efforts, only about 2.5% has directly supported 'green' recovery and that COVID recovery investments remain an important opportunity to close the funding gap for climate action in support of necessary emission reductions. Regarding expenditures, the secretariat explained that earmarked and global resources include multi-year incomes which sometimes lead to a discrepancy between budgeted funds, available funds and expenditures for a given year. With regards to fossil fuel subsidies, UNEP collaborates with several other UN agencies, including UNDP, FAO, UNFCCC, WMO and UNIDO. In addition, the secretariat noted that UNEP is leading the work on the SDG indicator for fossil fuel subsidies (12.c.1) and that additional work on subsidies are undertaken under the resource efficiency subprogramme.

### **Healthy and Productive Ecosystems**

- Welcomed the success on several workstreams under the subprogramme including on the "Earth for School" and the "One Health" initiatives;
- Stressed the critical role of ecosystems and biodiversity in the overall achievements of the environmental objectives of the SDGs and Agenda 2030;
- Recognized the necessity of mainstreaming biodiversity across economic sectors, including the financial sector, and appreciated efforts made in accelerating the interface with the health sector;
- Requested additional information regarding the work of the Finance Initiative (UNEP FI), particularly on the signatories for responsible banking, as well as further details on what concrete results have been achieved and how UNEP will ensure that participating financial institutions live up to their commitments;
- A stakeholder representative provided an update on youth engagement in the context of the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration and biodiversity restoration, in line with the launch of the Decade during the 2021 World Environment Day.

14. The Secretariat took note of the comments made, highlighting that UNEP will continue working to mainstream environment into economic sectors including through the One Health approach. On UNEP FI, the secretariat pointed to the development of biodiversity targets for the finance sector as a key deliverable, and clarified that signatories to the Principles for Responsible Banking must regularly report on how they are implementing the principles, set targets, and progress made, and obtain a third-party limited assurance within four years of signing. To facilitate and guide assurance providers through the assurance process, UNEP has issued specific guidance for assurance providers.

### **Environmental Governance**

- Acknowledged that the environmental governance subprogramme is at the core of UNEP's mandate and recognized the work done on using integrated approaches for environmental sustainability and the contributions made towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;
- Requested an update on action regarding the UN system-wide framework on the environment within the UN System-Wide Sustainability Strategy;
- Requested information on follow-up action in relation to the recommendations from the Joint Inspection Unit Review;
- Requested an update on the current Montevideo programme cycle adopted at UNEA 4 and highlighted the need to broaden the resource base to enhance the uptake of international legislation in line with the Programme.

15. The secretariat thanked delegations for their continued support and acknowledged that the resource base of the subprogramme needs to be expanded to effectively respond to needs at national level in terms of strengthening environmental law, in line with ongoing discussions under the Montevideo Programme. It was noted that the COVID-19 Pandemic has led to a delay of the first meeting of the Montevideo Focal Points, with a negative impact on some work streams under the Programme. The Secretariat expressed readiness to provide a more detailed update on the activities of the Programme at a latest stage.

### **Agenda Item 3: Other matters.**

16. No other matters were raised.

### **Agenda Item 4: Closing of the meeting**

17. The meetings closed at around 5:00 pm.