

## Annual sub-committee speech

*Excellencies,*

I am delighted to welcome you to the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Subcommittee. Our meeting comes at a critical juncture this year. We have just concluded the first part of the COP 15 on biological diversity in Kunming, China. And next week, world leaders will gather at COP26 on climate change in Glasgow, UK. As the science has made abundantly clear – action is long overdue – as we seek to overcome the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution and waste. The environmental emergency is no longer something to be tackled in the near future – but is very much here and now.

While much of the focus of this two-part COP on biodiversity, necessitated by the pandemic was on administrative and budgetary matters, it was an important moment to mark the significant need to up the ante on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. Two overarching concerns dominated discussions – higher ambition and effective implementation. As we head into the climate COP26 next week, we carry with us the same concerns. The Secretary-General has clearly outlined the ask. To close the emissions gap. To close the financing gap. And to breakthrough on adaptation. In this regard, I look forward to the launch of UNEP's flagship reports in the coming days – the Emissions Gap and the Adaptation Gap Reports which while certainly offering tough messages – clearly outline the opportunities whether through net-zero actions (not pledges), through adaptation, through methane reductions, or through market mechanisms - that can help shift the needle. Indeed, the just-released Production Gap Report makes abundantly clear that we are off track and that urgent action is needed. But the window of opportunity to convert ambition to action is very much open and this is what gives me hope.

A word in this regard on preparations underway for the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management which has also been delayed by the pandemic. Over the past year, working groups have been meeting virtually to lay the ground for negotiations on the chemicals and waste management framework beyond 2020. Work has focused on specific, concrete, and technical issues that underpin the broader negotiation process which we hope to see kick-off next year. As the pollution and chemicals crisis continues to weigh down on the planet, I cannot underscore the importance of these negotiations in securing a nature-positive future for us all.

Overall, I think irrespective of where you sit in the environmental negotiations, on climate, on biodiversity or on pollution and waste, we know the path to move in the right direction and many encouraging steps are already being taken. But this needs to turn into a sprint for people and planet because the sum total of our actions till date are simply not enough. And this particularly the case on financing where we look to see countries both deliver what has been committed, and to stretch further.

*Excellencies,*

The growing chorus of understanding on the triple planetary crisis must now be accompanied by action – to demonstrate how exactly we can reimagine environmental governance so that we can deliver on a multitude of environmental challenges. And there are three moments on the horizon that allow us to lift this chorus – and deliver real policies and actions.

The first is of course a universal resumed session of the fifth UN Environment Assembly next year. This will be an opportunity for Member States to provide policy direction on critical issues such as plastics, the future of our flagship publication Global Environmental Outlook, and others.

Secondly, the UNEA special session – or UNEP@50 – held back to back with UNEA-5.2 provides a unique opportunity to elevate and strengthen UNEP's capacity to support implementation of the environmental dimension of Agenda 2030 and to strengthen the science-policy interface, while also strengthening our Nairobi headquarters.

And finally, Stockholm plus 50 is an opportunity to return to our roots – and tap into the inspiration of 1972 – to strengthen the environmental dimension of the sustainable development goals. As you are aware, I had the great honor to be appointed Secretary-General for this International Meeting, with UNEP as the focal point for the UN system.

This week, following the in-depth performance review of the implementation of UNEP's current Programme of Work for the period January 2020-June 2021, we will take stock of preparations for all these upcoming moments. I am very encouraged by the recent announcements and initiatives from Member States, shifting into high gear, our preparations. This includes work on draft resolutions, and fresh guidance on how to ensure an impactful special session. I am confident that at the end of this week, we will have a clearer view of the scope, content and structure of both UNEA-5.2 and UNEP@50. The Secretariat will continue to support your efforts as we approach the final stretch of this process.

To ensure that all of these important opportunities deliver, we remain in the hands of Member States and we look to your leadership to steer towards a low-carbon, nature-positive, pollution-free and just future. In so doing, we can both draw upon and make important contributions to the Common Agenda report released by the Secretary-General and thereby demonstrate that through determination and drive multilateralism can make a difference in improving our world.

### *Excellencies,*

Over the past year, UNEP has continued to move full speed ahead on our mandate even as many of our own have continued to struggle with the pandemic. While we have much to be proud of as an organization, I am particularly gratified by our efforts to enable a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of the environmental challenges before us – and that the climate crisis, the nature crisis and the pollution crisis – and that the triple planetary crisis is clearly linked to consumption and production patterns that are out of sync with the regenerative capacities of the planet.

I am also encouraged by our deepening efforts to mainstream environmental action in the UN system as exemplified by the UN system-wide adoption of the common approach to biodiversity which provides the normative framework to organize collective action and ensure joint delivery to mainstream biodiversity. Only through a reinvigorated whole of UN-effort will UNEP be able to effectively support Member States to address the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In tandem, we continue to take steps in-house, to strengthen our organization to deliver on the ambitious mandate of the new medium-term strategy (2022-25).

*On the Environment Fund*, I am pleased to report that income to the Environment Fund at the end of September this year surpassed that of the past five years. I note also a significant and impressive rise

in the number of Member States contributing at the “fair share” level – corresponding to the Voluntary Indicative Scale of Contributions. This in a sense is indicative of the reality of our times- no matter where we sit in the world, environmental threats are a clear and present danger to people and countries everywhere. I continue to urge Member States to narrow the funding gap.

*On resource mobilization and partnerships*, UNEP has updated its resource mobilization and partnerships strategy to effectively align with priorities articulated in the new MTS. We also continue to consolidate our internal functions, so that we may be more efficient and ensure synergies across our work with Member States, with the private sector, and with key partners including the Global Environment Facility and the Green Climate Fund. In this context, we also continue to work closely with the OECD Development Assistance Committee on our eligibility for funding related to Official Development Assistance (ODA). Earlier this year, the OECD-Development Assistance Committee reviewed UNEP’s ODA-eligibility as part of a technical review of UN secretariat agencies. After their review, OECD/DAC proposed to reduce UNEP’s co-efficiency rating from 100 per cent to 79 per cent. The rationale being, as per the ODA methodology, UNEP’s normative work is not considered ODA eligible. However, it is precisely the normative work that we do, that establishes the *raison d’être* of UNEP’s support to developing countries. Based on our discussions with DAC, the DAC Chair agreed to maintain the co-efficiency rating at the previous 100% until a new assessment is conducted, which may take place in 2022. But let me be very clear, should OECD member states agree to this downgrading of UNEP, this would be a serious blow to UNEP’s resources. It is unimaginable, to me, that OECD Member States would be in agreement with a reduction in funding to UNEP -- due to generic accounting rules – at the very time when the environment is at the core of our planetary existence. So, I ask all OECD Member States to engage directly to fix this because UNEP cannot fix this without your help -- we count on your support.

*On audit performance*, I am pleased to share that significant progress has been made in the implementation of outstanding audit recommendations, risk management and improved project management. Five audits have been undertaken this year of the Convention on Biological Diversity; the Multilateral Fund, CITES; the Africa Office; and the Management of Data Classification and Data Privacy at the UN Office in Nairobi, UNEP and UN-Habitat.

*On MOPAN or Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network assessments*, UNEP participated in two assessments on the multilateral response to climate change, and a 2020 assessment of UNEP. We welcome the constructive recommendations on resource mobilization and project cycle management, and we will be hosting a special discussion with the Committee of Permanent Representatives to discuss the assessment of UNEP in greater detail.

*On diversity*, as you have heard me say previously, I am committed to improving diversity in UNEP. Progress is steady and we are capitalizing on vacancies and succession planning. However, much is to be done in this area. I hope that in the coming years significant improvement will be seen and where we are currently under-represented, we will have increased representation.

With these words, I conclude my summary today as we embark on an intense week ahead. I look forward to continued engagement as we seek to build global momentum and action in the critical months ahead.