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**United Nations Environment  
Assembly of the United Nations  
Environment Programme**

**Committee of Permanent Representatives to the  
United Nations Environment Programme  
158th meeting  
Nairobi, 26 May 2022**

**Draft minutes of the 157th meeting of the Committee of  
Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment  
Programme, held on 1 February 2022**

**Agenda item 1**

**Opening of the meeting**

1. The meeting, which was held in Nairobi in a hybrid format, both online and with a limited number of representatives attending in person, was opened at 10.15 a.m. on Tuesday, 1 February 2022, by Ms. Luísa Fragoso, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.
2. The meeting was attended by 77 participants representing 76 members and 1 observer mission.
3. The Chair welcomed the following new members to the Committee: Mr. Alexander McDonald and Mr. Jovan Reid (Barbados); Mr. Michael Lotem (Israel); Mr. Okaniwa Ken (Japan); Ms. Callista Jennie Mutharika (Malawi); and Mr. Muhammad Junaid Wazir (Pakistan).
4. She then bade farewell to the following departing members: Mr. Patrick Luna (Brazil); Mr. Joseph Oded (Israel); Mr. Ryoichi Horie (Japan); Ms. Agrina Musa (Malawi); and Mr. Mokhtar Ghambou (Morocco).
5. A representative of the secretariat provided guidance on the use of the interpretation platform, which would also be used for the resumed fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme and the special session for the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of UNEP, UNEP@50.
6. In her oral briefing, the Executive Director of UNEP, Ms. Inger Andersen, said that the eruption of an underwater volcano in Tonga had caused widespread devastation and that the resulting 1.2-m tsunami and rain of ash had affected the entire population of the country. Although relief efforts had been complicated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, several countries had made contactless aid deliveries and, at the request of the Government, the Joint Environment Unit of UNEP and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs had assembled a team of international experts to provide support. In Peru, in the wake of a catastrophic environmental emergency caused by an oil spill at a refinery in Lima, a similar team from the joint unit had been dispatched at the request of the Government to conduct assessments and provide assistance. Far too frequently, single, catastrophic events were wiping out decades of progress, leaving people behind to rebuild after environmental devastation. In a context where only eight years remained to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the report of the Secretary-General entitled *Our Common Agenda*, released in 2021, was a useful framework within which to step up integrated and collective action to achieve the Goals.

7. In that regard and in the context of the reform of the United Nations development system, UNEP had worked diligently to prepare for the implementation of its medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025, including by embedding strong internal accountability structures across the Programme to provide greater clarity on function, form and finance and to improve the delivery of the programme of work for the biennium 2022–2023. The foundations laid for the strategy on digital change would enable the creation of institutional mechanisms to harness the digital transformation in order to advance the work of UNEP. Achievements had been made in achieving gender parity in the workforce of UNEP and in enhancing women’s empowerment across programming activities while seeking to maintain operational agility and flexibility. The lessons learned over the coming four years and feedback from Member States would be taken on board to swiftly adapt to emerging environmental priorities.

8. She drew attention to three important upcoming meetings, the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly, the first special session of the Environment Assembly to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of UNEP, known as UNEP@50, and the international event marking the fiftieth anniversary of the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm+50. Regarding the first two milestone events, she expressed her gratitude to Member States for their constructive engagement on the topic of event scheduling, noting that after a thorough assessment of the positive and negative aspects of rescheduling in the light of the emergence of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, most Member States had agreed that the dates originally chosen should remain unchanged. She extended her sincere appreciation to the United Nations Office at Nairobi and to the Government of Kenya for the excellent support provided to prepare for both events.

9. The resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly would be conducted in a hybrid format. She called for Member States to exercise restraint in the submission of draft resolutions and to focus on achieving a manageable number of high-impact outcomes. It was encouraging to see the growing momentum to take decisive, ambitious, determined action to address the global plastic pollution problem. The establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee on plastic pollution could be the most momentous achievement for the environmental community since the adoption in 2015 of the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. UNEP would continue to stand with Member States on every step of that journey.

10. UNEP@50 was an opportunity to reinvigorate international environmental governance and an important reminder that multilateralism was essential if environmental issues were to be tackled successfully. The event would include an exciting mix of leadership and multi-stakeholder dialogues and side events. Representation at the highest level was expected at both the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly and UNEP@50.

11. Turning to the political declaration mandated under General Assembly resolution 73/333, she called for recognition that, decades and even centuries from now, scholars and environmentalists would be reading its text. The political declaration would become a part of history. It should be poetic and ambitious, with a vision of justice, prosperity and peace for all through the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

12. Ms. Joyce Msuya, the Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, would be leaving UNEP shortly following her appointment as Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator. Ms. Sonja Leighton-Kone, currently serving as Director of the Corporate Services Division, would take over as acting Deputy Executive Director. The Executive Director expressed her heartfelt thanks to Ms. Msuya and wished her well in her new appointment.

13. Responding to the comments, Ms. Msuya said that, even during the most challenging of times, the vital nature of the work of UNEP had been widely recognized and its global environmental mandate had continued to be supported. That unwavering support was a clear sign of the strong multilateralism that was so vital to help countries combat the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. She expressed her gratitude to the many Member States that had helped UNEP to deliver more for the planet and people over the previous three years. The medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025 and the programme of work for the biennium 2022–2023 provided clear direction for the work of UNEP in striving to achieve a more sustainable and equitable world. With a robust business operating system and top-notch science driving real policy change, UNEP was increasingly being recognized for its innovation, convening power and policy support. Multilateralism was the only way to tackle the biggest threats facing the Earth and its inhabitants and she called for planetary engagement to find planetary solutions.

## **Agenda item 2**

### **Adoption of the agenda**

14. The agenda was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda and the annotated provisional agenda (UNEP/CPR/157/1 and UNEP/CPR/157/1/Add.1).

## **Agenda item 3**

### **Adoption of the draft minutes of the 156th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives**

15. The Committee adopted the minutes of its 156th meeting, held online on 30 November 2021, on the basis of the draft minutes of the meeting (UNEP/CPR/157/2).

## **Agenda item 4**

### **Preparations for the resumed fifth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives and the resumed fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly**

16. A representative of the secretariat provided a briefing on a power outage that had interrupted the subcommittee meeting held on 19 January. One of the phasers supplying power to the meeting room had experienced an alternating current bypass overload fault while the uninterrupted power supply was on bypass, meaning that the batteries could not support the load when the power outage occurred. The relevant technical team had since carried out extensive rebalancing to ensure that no further such incidents occurred. Extra units of 40 kVa had been installed to replace the original 20 kVa units. During the fifth session of the Environment Assembly, specialist electrical engineers would be on standby to immediately resolve any such incident. A backup generator could also be set up, which would guarantee no outage, fluctuation or variability, and discussions were ongoing as to whether that mitigation measure should be implemented.

#### **(a) Update from the President of the Assembly on the consultations on the draft ministerial declaration**

17. The Ambassador of Norway said that, while inspiration was needed to draft a poetic and visionary political declaration, flexibility and hard work would also be required for a resumed fifth session that would truly be historic. Thanking all those who had participated in the preparations for the meeting, he said that although the pandemic had made the consultation process for the ministerial declaration more cumbersome and challenging, the process had also been robust, scientifically sound, thorough, transparent and inclusive. Rich and constructive input had been received from Member States and stakeholders. First, Member States had been asked what issues required particular leadership from the Environment Assembly in the light of the session's theme. Several rounds of consultations had led to numerous inputs that had often included lengthy proposals for altered text. All of those had been taken into consideration while striving to limit duplication. Requesting flexibility and support, he said that the process presented by the secretariat would be followed and the latest draft of the ministerial declaration would be shared to prepare for further consultation during the meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives. The resulting ministerial declaration should offer real guidance on the way forward for common ambitions and the environment.

18. In the ensuing discussion, all of those who took the floor thanked the Deputy Executive Director for her service, wishing her well in her new role, and thanked all who had been involved in the preparations for upcoming meetings and events. Many representatives, including several speaking on behalf of groups of countries, said that in the context of a hybrid meeting format, it would be important to ensure that the voices and interests of all Member States were heard and considered in an equitable and inclusive manner in both in-person and online settings, in particular during negotiations.

19. Regarding the ministerial declaration to be issued as an outcome of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly, many representatives, including two speaking on behalf of groups of countries, expressed appreciation to Norway for the transparency and inclusivity of the related consultations. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noted that expectations were very high and expressed full support for the adoption of an ambitious ministerial declaration with a focus on the theme of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly, "Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals", which should reflect key environmental governance outcomes and provide guidance for Stockholm+50. One representative, speaking on behalf

of a group of countries, said that the ministerial declaration should be strong and balanced and should convey the plurality of perspectives and concerns of Member States. One representative said that the document should reflect a vision for people, planet and prosperity, as set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and should include a firm commitment to international cooperation. Many representatives, including two speaking on behalf of groups of countries, emphasized that effective action required adequate means of implementation, which should be mentioned in the ministerial declaration. Several representatives, including two speaking on behalf of groups of countries, recalled the importance of mentioning in the ministerial declaration the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and emphasized that developing countries continued to face significant financial, technical and technological constraints in implementing international environmental commitments, which had only been aggravated by the pandemic. Two representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the declaration should speak with authority on the triple planetary crisis, while another said that the declaration should be ambitious and should acknowledge global responsibility for the worsening environmental situation. One representative said that the ministerial declaration should be concise. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the declaration should be based on concepts and language that had been agreed multilaterally. One representative urged delegations to demonstrate flexibility in the interest of the adoption of a meaningful, balanced and substantial ministerial declaration, while another noted that the declaration should be consensual rather than becoming the subject of contention based on the priorities of a given delegation.

20. Responding to the comments, the representative of Norway thanked members for their constructive engagement and said that work on the draft ministerial declaration would continue in a spirit of consultation, openness and transparency.

**(b) Draft agenda and programme of work for the resumed fifth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives**

21. Introducing the sub-item, the Chair drew attention to the provisional agenda and the provisional annotated agenda of the resumed fifth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (UNEP/OECPR.5/1/Rev.1, UNEP/OECPR.5/1/Rev.1/Add.1).

22. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed satisfaction with the structure proposed by the secretariat for the resumed fifth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives, but requested more detail on the time slots allotted to the consideration of each cluster of draft resolutions. Delegations should strive to make as much progress as possible on the draft resolutions during the time between the present meeting and the fifth meeting of the Open-ended Committee. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that, in making the working arrangements for the meeting, it would be vital to ensure the meaningful and active participation of smaller delegations in negotiations. Many representatives, including two speaking on behalf of groups of countries, emphasized the importance of avoiding parallel or informal negotiation sessions, as some delegations would not be in a position to ensure sufficient representation if parallel sessions were held. If parallel sessions were unavoidable, no more than two sessions should be held at the same time. One representative noted that any instance of COVID-19 positivity during meetings could affect the ability of representatives to participate in negotiations, which was another reason to avoid parallel sessions. One representative said that, in a hybrid setting, inclusivity was extremely important and that it would be improved by advancing the preparatory work as much as possible before the fifth meeting. Two representatives stressed the importance of taking all necessary measures to ensure the success of interpretation into the six official languages of the United Nations during the fifth meeting of the Open-ended Committee, and one representative urged Member States to submit their statements in advance to facilitate the work of the interpreters.

23. Ms. Selma Haddadi, Vice-Chair of the Bureau of the Committee and coordinator of the preparations for the special session, recalled that the Second Committee of the General Assembly had adopted a resolution designating UNEP@50 as the appropriate United Nations high-level meeting for the adoption of the political declaration mandated by General Assembly resolution 73/333, which would therefore be an outcome of that event (see A/76/533/Add.7). With respect to item 7 of the provisional agenda of the meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives regarding an update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 73/333, the wording of the item did not reflect the progress made since the first part of the meeting. Noting that the approach taken would set a precedent, she suggested that members consider whether the wording of the agenda item should be amended to mention the outcome document.

24. Responding to the comments, the representative of the secretariat said that in the light of the limited time available at the fifth meeting of the Open-ended Committee, it had been proposed that

two working groups be convened in parallel, each of which would be responsible for one set of clusters of draft resolutions. Member States would be invited to provide input on the proposed structure of the meeting at the beginning of the meeting. Following the established practice for previous meetings, any working group meetings would be held in English only, but all accredited representatives would be able to intervene in the negotiations, whether in person or online. All the outcomes of those working groups would be reported back to the members in plenary, where any decisions would be taken. Interpretation in the six official languages of the United Nations would be available in the plenary sessions. Regarding the agenda for the resumed fifth meeting of the Open-ended Committee, the agenda had been adopted at the first part of the fifth meeting, held in 2021, while the annotated agenda had been adjusted in the intersessional period to reflect new developments. The secretariat would consult with Member States and the UNEP legal adviser to reach agreement on any further adjustments required for the purpose of accuracy.

25. The Executive Director said that, as usual, every effort would be made to ensure that formal meetings were interpreted in the six official languages of the United Nations. Representatives participating online could support the success of interpretation by using a proper headset and turning on their cameras while speaking, as the quality of the work of the interpreters could be negatively affected when visual cues from the speaker were absent. UNEP remained deeply committed to multilingualism, a cornerstone of the values and mission of the United Nations.

**(c) Stocktaking of draft resolutions for consideration by the Environment Assembly at its resumed fifth session**

26. Mr. Erasmo Martínez, Vice-Chair of the Bureau of the Committee and coordinator of the working group on draft resolutions and decisions to be considered by the Environment Assembly at its resumed fifth session, said that, to date, 17 draft resolutions and 1 decision had been prepared. The draft resolutions had been distributed among five clusters. Thanking the co-facilitators for their work, he called on members to use the available time before the resumed fifth meeting of the Open-ended Committee as prudently as possible in the light of the significant volume of documents that would be before the Committee for its consideration.

27. The co-facilitators of the five cluster groups provided an overview of progress made and highlighted the dates and details of further consultations for each cluster, encouraging members to prepare questions for resolution proponents, ensure the availability of relevant technical experts, identify emerging consensus and issues of concern, upload comments to the PaperSmart portal and organize informal exchanges between representatives of Member States, including those from capitals, to expedite the preparatory process. Cluster group co-facilitators would continue to provide feedback at subcommittee meetings. Updated draft resolutions and draft decisions would be made available through the PaperSmart portal as work progressed.

28. In the ensuing discussion, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the adoption of a resolution establishing an intergovernmental negotiating committee for a global, legally binding agreement to curb plastic pollution was of paramount importance. However, the resolution should also provide the minimum necessary conditions for the proposed committee's mandate so that negotiations could begin without delay; clearly set the scope of work to cover the full life cycle of plastics, including microplastics; and embrace the circular economy approach. Another representative, also speaking on behalf of a group of countries, mentioned the need for the agreement to include both ambitious goals and provisions related to means of implementation. Many representatives, including a number speaking on behalf of groups of countries, expressed strong support for the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee to begin work on drafting a global, legally binding agreement on plastic pollution.

29. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that areas of convergence between draft resolutions should be sought with a view to merging them. One representative said that the quantity of work before the Committee continued to increase with the recent submission of two new draft resolutions. He urged representatives to put aside national pride for the greater good and to merge draft resolutions where possible, noting that future sessions of the Environment Assembly would present an opportunity to undertake work on a wider range of issues. He also urged the withdrawal of certain draft resolutions, including on sustainable nitrogen management, animal welfare, circular economy and sustainable lake management. Several representatives underscored the need to work effectively within the limited time remaining, with one encouraging all delegations to take part in question-and-answer sessions, and another noting that, despite the time and pandemic-related constraints, it should be possible, in a spirit of give and take, to ensure that no interested party was alienated and to find workable solutions that were satisfactory to as many parties as possible.

30. A number of representatives said that care should be taken in drafting texts to ensure the use of multilaterally agreed concepts, such as the term “ecosystem-based approaches”. Responding to a comment by one representative that the term “nature-based solutions” had not been multilaterally agreed, another representative stressed that there was ample evidence that nature-based solutions and policies could contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation, sustainable land management and poverty eradication, among other things, and encouraged the Committee to recognize the need to adopt a resolution to enable the official use of the term, which had been in use for many years. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, underscored the need for a breakthrough on nature-based solutions, a concept that had been the subject of a commitment by the political leaders of 93 countries from all the regions of the world during the United Nations Summit on Biodiversity, which had been held on the margins of the opening of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly in 2020. While nature-based solutions alone could not address the triple planetary crises, they could help to address a wide range of issues, from protecting shores from erosion to replenishing groundwater resources and improving urban life. Such solutions were cost-effective and should be equally accessible to all, complementing other measures. Adopting a resolution on nature-based solutions would be key to achieving a common understanding of the term and to increasing their uptake.

31. Responding to the comments, the Executive Director expressed appreciation for the active engagement of all. Regarding the use of the term “nature-based solutions”, she said that while it remained the subject of some debate, it was used widely, including in the United Nations. She noted that the use of that term was but a small part of attempts to address a much bigger and broader issue.

**(d) Update on the preparations for multi-stakeholder events of the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly, including leadership and multi-stakeholder dialogues, side events and the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum**

32. The Executive Director drew attention to two concept notes that had been issued on the high-level leadership dialogues under the theme of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly. A dialogue specific to the multilateral environmental agreements would be held on 1 March, and it was to be hoped that there would be strong participation from Heads of State and the heads of the multilateral agreements. The theme of the multi-stakeholder dialogue, “Building back greener in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic”, had been proposed by stakeholders. The concept notes provided an overview of the form and structure for the participation of Member States and stakeholders and of the expected outcomes of the session. A total of 22 official side events had been endorsed by the joint bureaux and the Committee, the majority of which would be conducted online to maximize participation. Four events would be organized in hybrid format to facilitate the participation of those attending the Assembly in person.

33. In the ensuing discussion, one representative requested an updated list of civil society and stakeholder entities that had been accredited to UNEP and a list of those registered to participate in the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly and in UNEP@50. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed support for robust stakeholder participation and welcomed the organization of the multi-stakeholder dialogues, which would stimulate inclusive discussion on the theme of the Assembly, the impacts of COVID-19 and the common will to build back better. She noted, however, that the concept notes had been issued too late to enable her to provide more substantive feedback. In the future, information should be provided well in advance of the session at which they were to be considered in order to enable adequate preparation. One representative sought clarification of why the dialogue on sustainable food systems was focused on agriculture when food systems were complex and involved many more related activities.

34. One representative, speaking on behalf of the children and youth major group, said that approximately 100 youth representatives would attend the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly and UNEP@50, 40 of whom would be fully funded by UNEP. He expressed gratitude to Member States and to the secretariat for the funding provided. The youth environment assembly would take place in a hybrid format on 19 and 20 February and from 25 to 27 February 2022. On 25 and 26 February, the youth environment assembly would hold the first part of the Stockholm+50 youth event and share ideas for enhanced youth and multi-stakeholder engagement. He requested that the secretariat facilitate the presentation of the outcomes of the youth environment assembly to the Environment Assembly at its resumed fifth session and at UNEP@50, in particular during the dialogues for both events, and that a youth speaker be authorized to address the events. Representatives of the children and youth major group would welcome the opportunity to speak with Committee members, in particular during the resumed fifth meeting of the Open-ended Committee.

35. Responding to the comments, the Executive Director expressed appreciation for the input on and apologized for the delay in issuing the concept notes. Regarding the focus on agriculture in the context of the food sustainability dialogue, the decision to emphasize agriculture had been based on the *Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*, which had revealed that the continuous lateral expansion of agricultural production was simply not viable. It was important to understand and appreciate the findings of the assessment report. Humanity must adapt in order to produce enough food for the world and provide economic growth and jobs while securing the environment and biodiversity. Regarding the number of accredited stakeholders, an updated list was being prepared and would be issued in due course.

36. The Chair said that Member States would be able to submit comments in writing to the secretariat on the concept notes until 3 February.

**(e) Update on budget, logistics and COVID-19 protocols**

37. The Executive Director expressed her appreciation to the Government of Kenya and to the United Nations Office at Nairobi for the work done to prepare for a successful resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly and a successful UNEP@50. Although attendance at the events would be limited, resulting in a smaller footprint, the additional costs associated with pandemic safety measures had led to increased costs. She expressed deep appreciation to the Member States that had contributed generous support to ensure the participation of representatives from developing countries and for overall funding. Additional funding had also been drawn from the regular budget of UNEP. The budget requirements for the resumed fifth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives and the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly stood at \$2.8 million. That estimate included conference services, travel, funding for participants, communication, logistical and operational requirements, including information technology (IT) support and interpretation, and rapid tests and safety measures for COVID-19. A significant shortfall of approximately \$1 million had been remedied through the use of the funds received from the sources mentioned and from the Environment Fund and other sources. That would result in less funding available for regular activities, but the planned events could not have been held without ensuring that lateral flow tests were available and other pandemic safety measures were in place. Contributions were still being accepted for the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly; it would be preferable if such contributions were not earmarked.

38. With regard to the budget for UNEP@50, it stood at \$1.5 million, which would provide for conference services, the daily subsistence allowance for sponsored participants, logistical requirements, IT services, interpretation and COVID-19 safety measures. A shortfall had remained of \$612,000, which had been secured from the resources of UNEP and from voluntary contributions of \$548,000, for which she expressed deep gratitude. Contributions were still being accepted for UNEP@50, although she requested that they not be tied to sponsored travel, for which UNEP had already received generous contributions.

39. The minimum safety measures for in-person participation were based on social distancing, wearing a mask covering the mouth and nose, full vaccination and sanitizing. Any accredited delegate could participate online and all would have the right to intervene. Vaccination regimes of the national authorities of all delegations would be accepted. Higher participation thresholds had been authorized for Member States whose participants included ministers and Heads of State. UNEP very much looked forward to welcoming as many participants as possible to Nairobi during both events.

40. The representative of Kenya said that COVID-19 logistics and protocols were still being developed, in close collaboration with UNEP, and requested patience from Member States in the light of the constantly evolving situation. If participants tested positive for COVID-19 upon entry to Kenya, they would be required to quarantine in their hotels, but would still be able to participate in all the events being held online or in a hybrid format. She called for contributions to be made for the costs that had yet to be covered and said that further information would be relayed as soon as possible.

41. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Sweden said that the Swedish Government had pledged a contribution of 5 million Swedish kronor to support the participation of representatives from developing countries in the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly, UNEP@50 and upcoming meetings related to the process to draft a global, legally binding agreement on plastic pollution.

42. One representative sought clarification regarding the number of delegates eligible for sponsorship where the head of delegation was participating remotely.

43. Responding to comments, the representative of the secretariat said that if the head of a delegation were attending online, and that person were registered as such in the accreditation letter, a flexible approach had been taken whereby two more delegates would be sponsored to participate in the meeting in person.

## **Agenda item 5**

### **Preparations for the special session on the commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme**

44. Introducing the item, the Chair said that much headway had been made in preparing for the special session.

45. Ms. Selma Haddadi, Vice-Chair of the Bureau of the Committee and coordinator of the preparations for UNEP@50, provided a briefing on the theme of the special session, pre-session documents, invitations to the special session and the organization of the leadership dialogues and multi-stakeholder dialogue. After consultations held in an informal contact group and additional consultation with various delegations, the subcommittee had endorsed the theme “Strengthening UNEP for the implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. The subcommittee had also reached agreement on a proposed provisional agenda for the UNEP@50 special session. The proposed provisional and annotated agendas had been translated in the six official languages of the United Nations and uploaded to the meeting portal (UNEP/EA.SS.1/1 and UNEP/EA.SS.1/1/Add.1). The report of the Executive Director on the science-policy interface, entitled “Reflecting on the past and imagining the future: a contribution to the dialogue on the science-policy interface”, had also been made available on the meeting portal in the six official languages. In keeping with the requests of Member States to promote high-level participation in the special session, on 16 December, the Executive Director had sent invitations to the special session to Heads of State and Government and to ministers for foreign affairs. The secretariat had sent invitations to the President of the General Assembly, the President of the Economic and Social Council, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, the principals of the regional economic commissions and the heads of the secretariats of the multilateral environmental agreements. Invitations had also been sent to the African Union Commission, the League of Arab States, the World Bank, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the International Monetary Fund, the African Development Bank, the Global Environment Facility, the Global Conservation Fund, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, the East African Community and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, among others. The President of the General Assembly, Mr. Abdulla Shahid of Maldives, had confirmed his participation in the special session. The President of Kenya had invited Heads of State and of Government both to the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly and to the special session.

46. Turning to the high-level leadership dialogues, she said that several rounds of exchanges had been held during subcommittee meetings, which had guided the drafting of the revised version of the concept note made available on 27 January. The concept note described the various roles, including of ministers, rapporteurs, guests and moderators; registration information for participants would be circulated shortly. Regarding the multi-stakeholder dialogue, the secretariat had circulated the concept note for that dialogue on 19 January, requesting that ministers and heads of delegations indicate their interest in participating before 10 February.

47. She recommended that the Committee approve the proposed theme, the provisional agenda, and the respective concept notes for the leadership dialogues and the multi-stakeholder dialogues.

48. In the ensuing discussion, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed appreciation for the work of the co-facilitators during the consultations on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 73/333. Endorsing the theme of UNEP@50, she said that the event presented an opportunity to strengthen international environmental governance by improving UNEP capacity to assist Member States in implementing their environmental commitments and by making the Programme more geographically representative, both in the staffing of the secretariat and in the participation of academia from the global South in scientific processes.

49. Following the discussion, the Committee agreed to approve the draft agenda for the special session of UNEP@50, the theme for UNEP@50, “Strengthening UNEP for the implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, and the draft concept notes for the two leadership dialogues.



## **Agenda item 6**

### **Contribution to the high-level political forum on sustainable development**

50. Introducing the item, the Chair recalled that the annual meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development would be held in New York from 5 to 7 July and from 11 to 15 July 2022. The deadline for the submission of contributions to the forum was 1 March. She proposed that the meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives recommend to the Environment Assembly at its resumed fifth session that consideration of its contribution to the high-level political forum be deferred until after the resumed fifth session and the special session for UNEP@50.

51. In the ensuing discussion, one representative supported the proposal, but suggested that the secretariat verify with colleagues in New York the proposed deadline to ensure that the contribution of the Environment Assembly at its fifth session would be received in time to be considered by the high-level political forum. Recalling that the contribution of the Environment Assembly at its fourth session had arrived far too late in New York to have any impact on the high-level political forum process at that time, he suggested that the proposed ministerial declaration of the fifth session could perhaps serve as a contribution. A number of representatives said that substantive consultations were required within the Committee to ensure the appropriate added value to the contribution and to avoid prejudging the outcomes of the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly.

52. One representative said that building back better would entail achieving ambitious environmental goals; encouraging the transition to greener energy; increasing the percentage of protected areas; protecting land, water and air from pollutants; tackling plastic pollution; and deepening knowledge of the interlinkages between biodiversity, food and health to prevent the emergence of new zoonotic diseases. The contribution to the high-level political forum should include a call for all countries to meet their funding commitments to the multilateral environmental agreements.

53. Responding to the comments, the representative of the secretariat said that there was a strict deadline for contributions to the high-level political forum and that a request for an extension of the deadline for the presentation of the contribution of the Environment Assembly might not be granted. The challenge of planning the contribution of the Environment Assembly to the high-level political forum at the same time as important Assembly events were being held was a recurring problem that Member States, the Bureau of the Committee and the Bureau of the Environment Assembly should consider with a view to seeking a long-term solution.

54. The Chair said that discussions were under way to determine whether the proposed ministerial declaration could be used as the basis for the contribution of the Environment Assembly to the high-level political forum. The secretariat would consult with the President of the fifth session of the Assembly and present the conclusions of those consultations to the Open-ended Committee at its resumed fifth meeting.

## **Agenda item 7**

### **Report of the subcommittee**

55. The Committee took note of the document entitled “Chair’s report of the subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives” (UNEP/CPR/157/4).

## **Agenda item 8**

### **Other matters**

56. No other matters were raised.

## **Agenda item 9**

### **Closure of the meeting**

57. The meeting was declared closed at 4.10 p.m. on Tuesday, 1 February 2022.