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Statement delivered by Ambassador Valentin Zellweger, Permanent Representative of Switzerland

Mr. Chair

Allow me to start by congratulating you on your appointment as Chair of this Committee. I would also like to congratulate the new Vice-Chair of the Bureau, the Permanent Representative of Slovakia and the new Rapporteur, the delegate from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on their appointments.

It is the first time that this Committee meets after UNEA. UNEA has been a huge success. Hardly anybody in this room would have dared to dream that so many important outcomes were possible! The key to success was the overwhelming political will to advance the international environmental agenda after two years of COVID and virtual meetings, the many substantive draft resolutions that Members States had put forward, including my delegation, the good preparation of logistics and content by the Secretariat and the good preparatory work of this Committee. This Committee has an important role to generate political support and ownership through the preparatory process and to get to a clear understanding on the issues that are being put on the agenda of the UNEA. It was also evident that negotiations can be conducted successfully, when Capitals engage, if there are deadlines and time pressure and above all, if there is political will to conclude. My delegation looks forward to discussing the lessons learned of UNEA later today.

Follow-up activities on UNEA resolutions have started, notably on the Science Policy panel, plastic pollution and the environmental aspects of minerals and metal management. On the Science Policy panel, a key factor for success will be the close collaboration with WHO, IOMC partner organizations and Chemicals and Waste conventions, in particular the Secretariat of the Basel-Rotterdam-Stockholm conventions. We call upon UNEP to reach out to the relevant actors and to encourage and enable their active participation.

On plastic pollution, my delegation expresses its gratitude to the Government of Senegal for hosting the meeting of the OEWG to prepare for the intergovernmental negotiating committee on plastic pollution and UNEP for organizing this meeting under a lot of time pressure. Switzerland is very committed to this process and provides financial support. Switzerland is also honoured to represent WEOG in the Bureau of this OEWG.

The mandate we have given to ourselves is ambitious and we have no time to lose to address plastic pollution globally. In Dakar, we need to ensure we set up an enabling environment to allow for successful negotiations.

On environmental aspects of minerals and metal management, we look forward to engage with all Member States to develop proposals to enhance the environmental sustainability of minerals along their full life-cycle, as mandated by UNEA. For that, it will be important to build on existing activities and initiatives, and identify opportunities for further international cooperation that adds value. We are grateful to UNEP for facilitating the process of intergovernmental consultations and the global intergovernmental meeting as requested by UNEA.

We also look forward to the Stockholm+50 meeting, which takes place next week. After the successful commemoration of UNEP@50 here in Nairobi in March, Stockholm+50 provides another great opportunity to strengthen multilateralism and support enhanced actions from all stakeholders to tackle the three planetary crisis (climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution). We hope that the Chair's summary will provide guidance and a roadmap for the international community. We are very grateful to the Governments of Sweden and Kenya for the organization of UNEP@50 and Stockholm+50.

Madame Executive Director,

Thank you very much for your briefing on UNEP's activities in the first quarter of this year. While an important priority lies on the implementation of UNEA resolutions, UNEP also focuses on the implementation of its Mid-Term Strategy. I would like to echo previous speakers and encourage UNEP to put its expertise at the disposal of the UN Country Team and the Government of Ukraine, to assess the environmental impact of the Russian aggression in Ukraine and to promote means and activities to remedy negative environmental consequences. I encourage UNEP to closely co-ordinate its activities with the UN Country Team. Switzerland reopened its Embassy in Kiev a couple of days ago and is fully committed to support the reconstruction of Ukraine, while the aggression is ongoing in the country. On 4 and 5 July, my Government will organize the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Switzerland.

Finally, Madame Executive Director, I would like to commend you on your tireless efforts to promote gender parity and geographical diversity in UNEP. The statistics in the quarterly report speak a clear language. We welcome the degree of detailed information provided and encourage you and UNEP's management to continue this path.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.