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

**Committee of Permanent Representatives to the
United Nations Environment Programme
159th meeting**
Nairobi (online), 8 December 2022

**Draft minutes of the 159th meeting of the Committee of
Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment
Programme, held on 29 September 2022**

Agenda item 1

Opening of the meeting

1. The meeting, which was held in Nairobi in a hybrid format, was opened at 10.15 a.m.* on Thursday, 29 September 2022, by Mr. Pirkka Tapiola, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP.
2. The meeting was attended by 81 participants representing 78 members and 3 observer missions.
3. The Chair welcomed the following new members to the Committee: Ms. Katariina Oivo (Finland); Mr. Martin Röw (Germany); Mr. Porfirio Martínez Morales (Mexico); Mr. Yusuf Yunusa (Nigeria); Mr. Said Mohammed Said Al Amri and Mr. Khalid Mohammed Ali Al Khatri; Ms. Marie Charlotte G. Tang (Philippines); Ms. Maria João Cocco da Fonseca (Portugal); Mr. Mzwandile Jiphethu (South Africa); Mr. Subutay Yüksel (Türkiye); and Mr. James Mosher (United States of America).
4. He then bade farewell to the following departing members: Mr. Osama Ebeid (Egypt); Ms. Essi Raitala (Finland); Ms. Janina Gauder (Germany); Mr. Lino Leopold Santacruz (Mexico); Mr. Saif Omran Marrash Al Amri and Mr. Ayoub Abdullah Mubarak Al-Adawi (Oman); Mr. Ahmet Cemil Miroglu (Türkiye); and Mr. Daniel J. Carl (United States).

Agenda item 2

Adoption of the agenda

5. The agenda was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/CPR/159/1).

* All time references are to East Africa time (UTC+3).

Agenda item 3

Adoption of the draft minutes of the 158th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

6. The Committee adopted the minutes of its 158th meeting, held in a hybrid format on 26 May 2022, on the basis of the draft minutes of the meeting (UNEP/CPR/159/2).

Agenda item 4

Report of the Executive Director

7. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to the report entitled “Quarterly report to the 159th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives: April–June 2022”, noting that it provided an update on significant developments during the second quarter of 2022 of relevance to UNEP. Owing to an extreme weather event that had affected her travel, the Executive Director of UNEP, Ms. Inger Andersen, would only be able to join the meeting virtually and for part of the discussion. The acting Deputy Executive Secretary would therefore answer some queries on her behalf.
8. In her oral briefing, Ms. Andersen said that 2022 was proving to be a year of extreme hardship, in terms of heatwaves, wildfires and droughts; floods, such as that in Pakistan which had affected 33 million people; rising food and fuel prices; debt distress; and conflict – in Ukraine and other parts of the world.
9. She recalled that, at the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, in September 2022, and against a backdrop of extreme geopolitical divisions, there had been a strong call to re-establish international solidarity and transform education; the first ever financial pledge of support had been made for developing countries that had experienced losses caused by climate disruptions; specific solutions had been proposed to implement the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for a Just Transition, which aimed to create 400 million new jobs; world leaders had recommitted to the final set of negotiations on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework; and high ambition had been expressed for the upcoming global negotiations to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.
10. She drew attention to the resumed eighteenth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, held in Dakar in September 2022, which had focused on the issues of loss and damage. The Conference had called upon developed countries to fulfil their financial commitments, as well as calling for an ambitious new goal for 2025 to be set at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on loss and damage and a just transition financing framework to support developing countries. Furthermore, she welcomed the commitment of African countries to eliminating the open dumping and burning of waste, which was a significant step towards protecting the health and well-being of the people of Africa.
11. She expressed regret that, by the deadline of 23 September 2022, only 23 of the countries that had signed the Glasgow Climate Pact had submitted updated climate plans to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The prediction, in the *Emissions Gap Report 2021*, of a temperature rise of 2.7°C and the current devastation witnessed in Pakistan on a planet currently 1.1°C warmer than pre-industrial levels highlighted the urgent need for action. She therefore urged Member States to strengthen their 2030 climate pledges at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, where not only loss and damage compensation but also climate financing would be a major focus, both areas previously highlighted by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.
12. Over 50 proposals for changes in the level of trade regulation for various animals and plants species would be considered by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna at its nineteenth meeting, to be held in Panama City in November 2022, and she urged Member States to reinforce the safeguards of the Convention. At the resumed fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in December 2022, compromise and commitment would be required to finalize the ambitious agreement that would address the drivers of biodiversity loss, namely overexploitation, pollution, fragmentation and unsustainable agricultural practices, and ensure the necessary funding.
13. Following a successful face-to-face first part of the fourth meeting of the intersessional process considering the Strategic Approach and sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, held

in Bucharest from 29 August to 2 September 2022, a new framework for the intersessional process was due to be adopted at the second part of the meeting, which would be held in early 2023.

14. Preparations were also under way for the first session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, due to take place in Punta del Este, Uruguay, from 28 November to 2 December 2022, with a pre-session multi-stakeholder forum planned for the generation of a wide range of contributions. She had joined the representatives of Norway and Rwanda at the launch, on the margins of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, of the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution, which would play an important role in the negotiation process and would actively support the universal ratification of the instrument.

15. Although work was proceeding on the implementation of all the resolutions of the Environment Assembly, with detailed information on progress in that regard available on the Environment Assembly monitoring and reporting portal, the necessary resources to implement all the resolutions fully were not currently in place. Where work on the implementation of resolutions was covered by the existing programme of work, Environment Fund resources could be used. Otherwise, seed funding from the Environment Fund or extrabudgetary resources, including contributions from some countries, were being used where possible and she called on any country in a position to do so to consider making such a contribution.

16. She expressed her thanks to the Governments of Kenya and Sweden for leading the international event held in Stockholm to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment entitled “Stockholm +50: a healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity”. The meeting had been attended by more than 5,000 people, including Heads of State, the Secretary-General, ministers, scientists, and representatives from Indigenous and youth groups, civil society and United Nations entities. There had been consensus among participants in the event that the triple planetary crisis was threatening the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The meeting had been characterized by deep engagement with youth groups; frank exchanges on the need to rebuild trust; and a clear call for urgent action, which had culminated in 10 recommendations for accelerating action towards a healthy planet for the prosperity of all, which UNEP would work to implement with the help of Member States and other United Nations entities.

17. Turning to other UNEP achievements, she announced that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s Development Assistance Committee had again given UNEP official development assistance a co-efficiency rating of 100 per cent, a rating that was expected to stand for at least five years.

18. Looking ahead, participants in the ninth annual subcommittee meeting, due to be held from 24 to 28 October 2022, would consider, among other things, the United Nations system-wide reform process; the implementation of the programme of work and budget in the regions; progress in implementing the outcomes of the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly; delivery of the UNEP medium-term strategy; operational efficiency and effectiveness; and the proposed theme for the sixth session of the Environment Assembly. The subcommittee would also consider in detail the financial outlook and funding needs of UNEP.

19. UNEP was continuing to support remote environmental impact monitoring initiatives in Ukraine and was currently developing a detailed proposal to accelerate assessment work in response to the request from the Government of Ukraine for both short-term and longer-term support, including assessment support such as methodologies; technical support, including satellite imagery analysis, information systems and laboratory analysis; and broader governance capacity development.

20. Although the world was at “a minute to midnight” in terms of many planetary emergencies, she expressed confidence that it was still possible to change course and said that, by mobilizing with tremendous urgency, climate disaster could be averted.

21. In the ensuing discussion, many representatives, including several speaking on behalf of groups of countries, thanked the Executive Director and the secretariat for the comprehensive quarterly report and welcomed the significant developments described therein. Several representatives speaking on behalf of a group of countries noted that the quarterly reports allowed for a realistic measurement of the performance of UNEP and supported the Committee in fulfilling its oversight role. A number of representatives, including several speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noting that the quarterly report had only been made available nine days before the current meeting, highlighted the importance of meeting documentation, in particular the quarterly reports, being sent to members well in advance to allow sufficient time for the content to be considered fully. One representative

noted that, notwithstanding his delegation's request, a list of UNEP reports had not been made available to Member States for the current meeting. He also noted that there was a mistake in the report listing his country as one of the highest contributors to the Environment Fund, despite the fact that its contribution had not yet been paid.

22. Some representatives called for full resumption of in-person meetings within UNEP, noting that meetings at United Nations Headquarters in New York had now returned to that format. Furthermore, one representative said that the absence of the Executive Director from part of the current meeting was regrettable and he expressed the hope that scheduling in the future would ensure that the Executive Director would be able to continue the long-standing tradition of participating fully and in person in all Committee meetings.

23. Several representatives, including a number speaking on behalf of groups of countries, while welcoming the updates to be provided on specific resolutions at the current meeting and the progress made in the implementation of Environment Assembly resolution 5/14 on ending plastic pollution in particular, urged the secretariat to provide updates on progress achieved on all the resolutions adopted at the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly and to ensure a balanced approach to the implementation of all. In that regard, several representatives, including a number speaking on behalf of groups of countries, expressed support for an implementation matrix that would enable Member States to track more easily the progress on each resolution, while one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, encouraged the secretariat to provide timely updates on the monitoring and reporting portal. Furthermore, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, underlined the importance of continued tracking of resolutions from previous Environment Assembly sessions that were still to be fully implemented.

24. One representative welcomed the fact that UNEP had reported data for all the Sustainable Development Goal indicators and that the consideration of poverty had been included in the initiatives implemented by UNEP, but cautioned against the adoption of concepts such as "true value accounting" that had been consistently rejected by other organizations. He noted that the quarterly report referred to the concept of "circular economy", whereas Environment Assembly resolution 5/11 referred to "circular economy approaches", which reflected more accurately the fact that Goal 12 did not recognize any single model for the concept and allowed for approaches such as that of a bioeconomy.

25. One representative requested additional information on the scope of the *Green Customs Guide to Multilateral Environmental Agreements*, in particular regarding the promotion of "sustainable trade", and noted that trade issues were within the scope only of the World Trade Organization.

26. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the proposed process to appoint co-chairs to lead the intergovernmental consultations on nature-based solutions and on nitrogen management, and looked forward to the consultations with regional and political groups, as such an approach was a significant step towards the inclusiveness and transparency that should be key to the implementation process of all resolutions. She welcomed in particular the candidacy of Giovanna Valverde Stark (Costa Rica) to co-chair, on behalf of developing countries, the intergovernmental consultations on nature-based solutions.

27. One representative welcomed the success of the meeting of the ad hoc open-ended working group to prepare for the work of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, and the appointment of Ms. Jyoti Mathur-Filipp as the Executive Secretary of the negotiating committee. He underlined the importance of regular updates from the secretariat and cooperation with Member States and other relevant stakeholders on Environment Assembly resolutions 5/14 on plastic pollution and 5/8 on a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution. Both issues were highly important to his Government, which would continue to provide support for them politically and financially on the basis of reasonable and balanced budgets.

28. One representative encouraged more Member States to join the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution and expressed his conviction that the negotiations to achieve a global legally binding agreement on plastic pollution were on track to conclude by the end of 2024. He also welcomed the many initiatives of other Member States to combat plastic pollution. Another representative requested that UNEP organize briefings on the meetings of the intergovernmental negotiating committee on plastic pollution to allow Member States that were not able to send a representative to the meetings to remain abreast of the discussions, thereby facilitating future ownership of the process and the subsequent adoption of the instrument.

29. One representative drew attention to the significance of the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 76/300 on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, which had originally been proposed by a small group of Member States including his own. He thanked the secretariat, and the Executive Director in particular, for the commitment shown to achieving the adoption of the resolution. Furthermore, he expressed the hope that the election in June 2022 of a Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders by the State Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters would serve as inspiration at the global level.

30. Turning to financial matters, several representatives, including a number speaking on behalf of groups of countries, took note of the financial statements of UNEP and encouraged Member States, in particular developed countries, to contribute financially to UNEP, including to ensure the implementation of all the outcomes of the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, recalled the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, noting that Member States were expected to do everything within their ability to achieve full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A number of representatives described the financial support of their Member States to UNEP, encouraging others to provide funding in a similarly minimally earmarked way, so that UNEP could apply its own allocation procedure for the many medium-term strategy activities that remained unfunded. One representative suggested discussing the thematic funds at the upcoming ninth annual subcommittee meeting, noting that there had been an increase in the number of specific funds being established, which ran contrary to the desire for UNEP to have more flexibility in fund allocation through the thematic funds.

31. One representative reiterated the need for new, alternative financial sources for developing countries in particular, such as carbon markets and ecosystem services, that would alleviate their debt and control the climate crisis, reverse the loss of biodiversity and prevent the loss of strategic forests and ecosystems, such as the Amazon Basin.

32. Turning to other elements covered by the quarterly report, several representatives, each of whom spoke on behalf of a group of countries, while welcoming UNEP efforts to achieve digital transformation, noted that substantial digital divides and data inequalities still existed within and among countries and regions, and that developing countries in particular would require capacity-building, technology transfer, and financing to ensure access to, and implementation of, information and communication technologies.

33. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the continuing efforts of UNEP towards achieving gender parity and equitable geographical representation among secretariat staff, with one representative suggesting replacing the term “regional representation” with “regional diversity” in future reports, to avoid the possible misinterpretation that members of the secretariat in some way represented their own region or country. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, highlighted the need for a clear road map for achieving the principle of equitable geographical distribution, under Environment Assembly resolution 5/13. One representative called for better representation of the Latin American and Caribbean region in particular and several others expressed their concern at the lack of progress in enhancing the representation of developing countries, in particular at the senior and policymaking levels.

34. One representative reiterated his country’s request for additional and more detailed information in writing on the activities carried out by the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean for the periods covered by both the current and the previous quarterly reports. Another representative, drawing attention to paragraph 88 (g) of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), “The future we want”, called upon UNEP to consider strengthening its regional presence by having more field offices and staff in the countries of the Congo basin. He also highlighted the importance of Environment Assembly resolution 5/1 on the animal welfare–environment–sustainable development nexus and the urgent need for UNEP to lead the production of a report on the topic, as referred to in paragraph 1 of the resolution. The vital importance of animal health had been highlighted by the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

35. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, requested that substantive briefings be held, outside the existing structure of governing body meetings, to provide Member States with a better understanding of the work of each UNEP division, including the identification of the resolutions that fell under their respective mandates. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noting the significant developments in her region presented

in the report, encouraged a regular dialogue between the members and the Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean.

36. One representative suggested that the secretariat provide briefings to the Committee on relevant activities carried out by other multilateral environmental entities in order to raise awareness of progress in specific areas and increase the engagement of the Committee. In addition, another representative requested that regular, detailed briefings be provided by the UNEP Regional Office for Africa and underlined the need for UNEP to lead on better coordination and interaction between the Regional Office and the African Union Commission, in particular regarding the environment-related aspects of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

37. One representative expressed gratitude for the useful orientation session for newcomers hosted by UNEP on its work and mandate, which had proved to be an excellent opportunity for information-sharing.

38. Turning to recent major UNEP events, several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, congratulated the secretariat and the host countries of Kenya and Sweden for the success of the international Stockholm+50 event, recalling the clear message emanating from that meeting that the world was still facing a triple planetary crisis and that an urgent, system-wide transformation of the global economy and way of life was required to address the crisis and to return the environment to health, with each country needing to contribute to that change. One representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries highlighted the inclusive nature of the international event, in particular the ambitious and active participation of young people. The representative of Sweden expressed appreciation to UNEP for its hard work in ensuring the success of the international event, which had set new standards in inclusive multilateralism and the outcome of which had been 10 recommendations for accelerating action towards a healthy planet for the prosperity of all. She recalled that the tenth recommendation had been to take forward the outcomes of the international event by reinforcing and reenergizing ongoing international environmental processes.

39. A number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, drew attention to the fruitful outcomes of the 2022 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, which had been held in Lisbon from 27 June to 1 July 2022, the first such conference having been held in 2018. In the resulting Lisbon Declaration, “Our ocean, our future, our responsibility”, Member States had recognized that the ocean was fundamental to life on the planet and to the future of humankind; and the vibrant civil society engagement at the Conference had confirmed the importance of a holistic and science-based dialogue that allowed all stakeholders to contribute actively. The representative of Costa Rica said that his country looked forward to co-hosting the third such conference in France in 2025 and advocating for the protection of 30 per cent of land and oceans globally by 2030.

40. Several representatives described environment-related initiatives by their own and other countries at the national, regional and global levels.

41. One representative, recalling that the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa had been held in May 2022, drew attention to the newly established intergovernmental working group on drought that aimed to support a shift from reactive to proactive drought management. He cautioned that an overly narrow focus on the “triple planetary crisis” could divert much-needed attention away from other important environmental matters, such as desertification and drought, and obscure the need for sustainable socioeconomic development before environmental sustainability could be achieved.

42. Several representatives thanked the Executive Director for highlighting in her report the key commitments made by the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment at its resumed eighteenth session, in September 2022, while one drew attention to the reference in the report to the adoption by the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change of the African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022–2032), which set out the three-tiered climate change negotiating structure of the African Union, comprising the technical African Group of Negotiators, the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment and the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change.

43. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed UNEP activities such as the Montevideo Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law, which paved the way for further support to developing countries in designing their national policies and enforcing environmental law, and took note of the largest replenishment of the Global

Environment Facility (GEF) to date, which would enable UNEP to deliver on its medium-term strategy and make tangible progress in addressing the triple planetary crisis.

44. One representative noted with alarm that, at a time when all countries should be focused on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, certain countries were replacing sources of energy such as natural gas with more polluting sources, such as coal, or using environmentally dangerous methods, such as fracking. He expressed the hope that such considerations would be included in reports produced by UNEP, such as the *Emissions Gap Report* and the *Adaptation Gap Report*.

45. The representative of Belarus, supported by another representative, reiterated his concern regarding the construction by Poland of a fence along its border with Belarus and through the Belavezhskaya Puscha, a World Heritage site of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which, he said, violated a number of bilateral and international agreements. The recommendation from UNEP, received in response to the concerns raised by Belarus, to work with the United Nations resident coordinator, had not yet proved fruitful. He requested that UNEP take practical steps as soon as possible to address the issue. Belarus stood ready to host a UNEP mission on the ground and demonstrate the damage caused both to the environment and to biodiversity by the fence.

46. The representative of the United States said that, as the environmental destruction in Ukraine had worsened as a direct result of the unprovoked war being waged by the Russian Federation in the country, the presence of UNEP on the ground in Ukraine helped to monitor and assess the wide extent of environmental damage. He recalled that the mandate of UNEP to assist Ukraine was well defined and he expected UNEP to continue to dedicate ample resources to the high priority issue and to continue to update Member States on its work in that regard.

47. Exercising his right of reply to the statement by the representative of the United States, the representative of the Russian Federation expressed regret at the false accusations made against his country, stressing that the politicization of the work of UNEP was unacceptable. He noted that the United States did not seem to be concerned by the environmental damage it had caused in the past by unprovoked acts of aggression against sovereign States.

48. The representative of Ukraine expressed gratitude to the members of the UNEP team for their assistance to his Government and for their active involvement in restoring the environment affected by the unprovoked and unjustified illegal invasion by the Russian Federation.

49. Exercising his right of reply to the statement by the representative of Ukraine, the representative of the Russian Federation urged all representatives to avoid making politicized statements during meetings, stating that such statements served neither to fulfil the purpose of UNEP nor to preserve nature.

50. Exercising his right of reply to the statement by the Russian Federation, the representative of Ukraine noted that he had not politicized the situation, having simply used the wording adopted by the General Assembly at its eleventh emergency special session.

51. Responding to initial comments, the Executive Director apologized for the late issuance of documents for the current meeting, including the quarterly report, noting that the secretariat would make every effort to ensure that documentation was provided in a timely manner for future meetings. She also underlined that, in the view of the secretariat, there was no hierarchy of resolutions. The secretariat understood that all the resolutions were critical to all Member States, having been adopted by the universal membership governing body of UNEP. An update on the status of implementation of all the resolutions, including a timeline, was being prepared for the upcoming ninth annual subcommittee meeting. She noted that the choice of specific resolutions for which updates had been provided at the current meeting had been based purely on administrative factors. She noted that the secretariat could always provide information to individual Member States on specific resolutions upon request.

52. She expressed her deep appreciation to Norway for the significant increase in its funding of UNEP, for its four-year funding agreement and for being the first donor to the three new thematic funds. She echoed the call of many representatives for all Member States in a position to do so to contribute financially to UNEP and thanked in particular the developing countries that had already done so.

53. The acting Deputy Executive Secretary thanked representatives for their engagement and for their comments, suggestions and guidance. Responding to the remaining comments, she said that an action plan was currently being implemented regarding regional representation and an update on the matter would be provided at the ninth annual subcommittee meeting. She took note of the call for

informal meetings to be held for members and drew attention to an informal session being held by the Division of Conference Services on 12 October 2022 on topics including financial management, conduct and discipline policies and its environment management strategy.

54. With regard to the concern raised by the representative of Belarus, she said that a United Nations system-wide approach was being taken to the issue; the engagement of the United Nations resident coordinator and country team was key to delivering a robust solution. Regarding the request for a list of publications, she noted that such a list had been produced as an annex to the quarterly report, but that unfortunately the link to the list was not currently working. A functioning link would be circulated to all members as soon as the issue had been resolved. Regarding the financial reporting in the quarterly report, she noted that the figures provided were generally based both on actual amounts received and on confirmed pledges. The secretariat would engage in bilateral consultations to resolve specific queries.

55. On the topic of regional offices, she said that, given the current funding base of UNEP, it was unrealistic to expect the future expansion of regional or country-based offices. Nevertheless, the secretariat was making every effort to engage through country teams and through its regional offices to provide the necessary support to Member States. Furthermore, the work of the regional offices would be showcased at the upcoming ninth annual subcommittee meeting.

56. Regarding the importance of animal welfare, she noted that the issue was covered, and would continue to be covered, under the work of UNEP using the “One Health” approach.

57. With regard to the request for briefings on the work of the multilateral environmental agreements, she highlighted that, although such sessions were already held periodically, such as the session scheduled for December 2022 on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the secretariat would warmly welcome suggestions for additional future sessions.

58. In response to a query regarding coordination with the African Union Commission, she said that the Regional Office for Africa was working actively on building a partnership with the Commission.

59. Finally, she welcomed the fact that the Global Development Initiative was providing opportunities for the coordinated and cost-effective development of the tools, delivery of training and awareness-raising to enhance the capacity of customs officers to monitor and facilitate legal trade, and to detect and prevent illegal trade, in environmentally sensitive commodities.

Agenda item 5

Implementation of Environment Assembly resolutions

(a) Resolution 5/2: Sustainable nitrogen management

60. The Chair recalled that the Executive Director had invited expressions of interest from Member States to serve as co-chairs of the working group on nitrogen, to be submitted by 15 September 2022, and had subsequently extended the deadline to 27 September 2022.

61. The following nominations had been received by the extended deadline: Mr. Ali Saad Hamid Ali Abosena (Egypt), Mr. Ved Prakash Mishra and Mr. Satyendra Kumar (India), Mr. Mihai Constantinescu (Romania), Mr. Karuranga Dismas (Rwanda), and Mr. Anil Jasinghe (Sri Lanka).

62. The Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, under the leadership of the President of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly, would hold further consultations on the appointment of the two co-chairs, taking into account the draft terms of reference and the need for geographical balance and gender parity.

63. The representative of the secretariat recalled that nitrogen was vital for plant life, with ecosystems, when left undisturbed, maintaining a natural balance of nutrients, but that the balance was lost when nitrogen accumulated and became a pollutant following its extraction and use in reactive forms such as chemical fertilizers. Approximately 80 per cent of the anthropogenic nitrogen used was lost to the environment, with the subsequent poor air quality and damage to the ozone layer leading to climate change, loss of aquatic and terrestrial biodiversity, toxic tides, lifeless rivers and large marine dead zones. The UNEP medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025 stated that preventing, controlling and managing pollution was central to improving health, human well-being and prosperity for all. Addressing nitrogen waste therefore not only tackled pollution but also helped to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse gases and had economic benefits. Environment Assembly

resolutions 4/14 and 5/2 on sustainable nitrogen management were therefore important contributions to addressing the triple planetary crisis. UNEP work on the matter had been made possible by Member States, in particular through the funding provided by Denmark and Sweden and GEF.

64. Another representative of the secretariat presented the progress on sustainable nitrogen management, mapping the achievements to the relevant provisions of Environment Assembly resolutions 4/14 and 5/2. In line with paragraph (a) of resolution 4/14 and paragraph 3 (b) of resolution 5/2, the UNEP nitrogen working group had established an ad hoc task team to examine possible terms of reference for an inter-convention nitrogen coordination mechanism. The task team had met six times and produced a paper on options for facilitating improved coordination of policies across the nitrogen cycle, which would be now considered by the working group. UNEP would continue to pursue opportunities for improved nitrogen coordination at the national, regional and global levels, including through support of regional initiatives such as the regional nutrient pollution reduction strategy and action plan for the wider Caribbean region, and the draft strategy and action plan on reducing nutrient pollution for the seas of East Asia.

65. In line with paragraph (b) of resolution 4/14, UNEP had collaborated with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on a webinar entitled “Nitrogen challenged in agri-food systems: halve nitrogen waste by 2030”, held in December 2020; a side event on sustainable nitrogen management for sustainable food systems at the pre-summit of the United Nations Food Systems Summit in July 2021; and a brief on agricultural plastics including polymer encapsulated fertilizer issued in December 2021. UNEP had also collaborated with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO on the development of the index for coastal eutrophication potential, in line with indicator 14.1.1 (a) of the Sustainable Development Goals.

66. Under paragraph (c) of resolution 4/14 and 3 (c) of resolution 5/2, the international nitrogen assessment was being developed under the GEF-UNEP project entitled “Towards the establishment of an international nitrogen management system”, implemented by UNEP and executed by the United Kingdom Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and the International Nitrogen Initiative. Furthermore, under paragraph (d) of resolution 4/14, UNEP was currently finalizing a suite of materials on sustainable nitrogen management, including the upcoming #BeatNitrogenPollution campaign and the development of guidelines for sustainable nitrogen management in Romania.

67. Examples of work carried out by UNEP under paragraph (e) of resolution 4/14 were the ecosystem health report card assessments carried out at Chongming Island in China and Pulicat Lagoon in India that were aimed at informing policy and investment planning on optimal management practices for improving the environmental quality of water bodies and the opportunity for further policy mainstreaming; and the Foresight Brief entitled “Sargassum: brown tide or golden jewel?”, which aimed to harmonize the institutional responses to addressing the proliferation of sargassum seaweed in the Central Atlantic Ocean that was severely affecting coastal fisheries and tourism.

68. In line with paragraph 3 (d) of resolution 5/2, the Executive Director had, on 30 August 2022, called for Member States to nominate national focal points to join the working group on nitrogen and 64 nominations had been received.

69. In resolution 4/14, the Environment Assembly had noted that the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management, which had been launched by the Commission on Sustainable Development (superseded by the high-level political forum on sustainable development), in May 2009, served as a science support system for policy development across the nitrogen cycle. The members of the steering committee of the Partnership, which had supported much of the work of UNEP on nitrogen, represented Governments, academia, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and United Nations bodies, and the mandate of the Partnership was to act as a platform for those sectors to forge a common agenda, mainstreaming best practices and integrated assessments, so that policymaking and investments were effectively “nutrient-proofed”.

70. The international nitrogen assessment, which was due to be submitted for internal review and finalization in March 2023 and launched before the sixth session of the Environment Assembly, in February 2024, would consist of five parts covering a definition of the global nitrogen challenge, foundations for assessing the nitrogen cycle, a global integrated assessment across the nitrogen cycle, the nitrogen-related challenges and opportunities for key world regions, and a consideration of future challenges. A summary for policymakers and a 30-page synthesis report would accompany the assessment. Key messages that were emerging from the assessment included the need for a process to link communities across nitrogen-related issues to ensure the harmonization of indicators, metrics and approaches and therefore enable more effective integration of benefits; an examination of the relationship with the Sustainable Development Goals, and quantification of possible future scenarios;

development of a financial case to show why action on nitrogen was needed; a refinement of overall nitrogen flows and their impacts on multiple environmental issues, further highlighting the need for a joined-up approach across the nitrogen cycle; the estimation that the world was losing more than \$100 billion per year in wasted nitrogen resources; an examination of solutions, including at the regional level; and the need to move to a nitrogen circular economy, including an examination of barriers, policy options and opportunities for such an economy.

71. Next steps for the implementation of resolutions 4/14 and 5/2 included inviting Member States to share information on their national action plans for sustainable nitrogen management; providing support, upon request and subject to the availability of resources, to develop those plans further; and a stocktake in the third quarter of 2023 of the actions of Member States to reduce nitrogen waste significantly. A report was also due to be submitted to the Environment Assembly at its sixth session on the progress in the implementation of resolutions 4/14 and 5/2.

72. One representative expressed her strong support for the work undertaken to date, stressed the importance of an integrated approach to addressing pollution issues and expressed the hope that the working group would be established as soon as possible. Another representative, thanking the secretariat for the informative update, noted that any consideration of a coordination mechanism among various conventions and agreements would require consultations with the governing bodies of those instruments.

(b) Resolution 5/3: Future of the Global Environment Outlook

73. Introducing the presentation on the resolution, the representative of the secretariat thanked Member States for their support and efforts in nominating experts for the Global Environment Outlook process, which had begun in mid-September 2022.

74. Another representative of the secretariat presented an update on the Global Environment Outlook process. Nominations had been requested in June for the intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder advisory group and later for participants of the first two meetings of the process. A draft procedures document, developed in collaboration with the Chair of the steering committee on the future of the Global Environment Outlook and already approved on a preliminary basis, was due to be sent to all meeting participants in early October 2022 for final adoption. Furthermore, a meeting to review the draft scoping document, which was currently undergoing an online peer review, would take place in October 2022. He underlined that a range of expertise and a diversity in gender and geographical representation had been key to the composition of the intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder advisory group, which comprised 35 members, with 5 experts from each of the five regions and 10 experts representing eight major groups and stakeholders.

75. In the ensuing discussion, several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, thanked the secretariat for the useful update and welcomed the progress to date on the Global Environment Outlook process, with one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, highlighting the efficient and inclusive nature of the process. One representative requested a future detailed update that described the functions of the intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder advisory group, the multidisciplinary expert scientific advisory group, and the ad hoc open-ended meetings.

76. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noted that the Global Environment Outlook process was one of the most important activities of UNEP, given the importance for policymaking of scientific activities and data. Another representative, having been nominated to the intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder advisory group, said that he looked forward to bringing a human rights perspective to the work of the group.

77. One representative said that the Global Environment Outlook process, although useful, was complicated. It had therefore been challenging for national experts to provide the required information for the recent questionnaire within the short time frame allowed. He looked forward to the support due to be provided on the questionnaire by webinar.

78. One representative, noting that some countries had alternate members for the intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder advisory group, enquired as to whether all the countries represented within the group were able to nominate an alternate member, as it would be useful to be able to do so. Another representative requested an update from the secretariat on data management, in particular regarding how various UNEP initiatives, such as the World Environment Situation Room, could contribute to the Global Environment Outlook process.

79. One representative underlined the need for open channels of communication between the intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder advisory and multidisciplinary expert scientific advisory

groups and Member States not represented on those bodies, to ensure the active engagement of national experts. He also welcomed the fact that the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities was being included in the Global Environment Outlook process. Another representative requested further information from the secretariat on the next steps for the intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder advisory group.

80. In response to the comments made, the representative of the secretariat noted that the scoping meeting due to be held in October 2022 would be critical in defining the work of the experts for the next two years and was also intended to inform future deliberations on policy. The Global Environment Outlook process was undergoing a digital transformation, of which the electronic questionnaires were a key component. The representative of the secretariat acknowledged that the electronic questionnaires often required in-depth answers. He said that if providing the relevant information by questionnaire was challenging even after the input from the related webinar, policy questions could also be raised in person at the scoping meeting in October 2022. Regarding the importance of the human rights perspective, he expressed the hope that the role of the intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder advisory group, namely to ensure that the seventh Global Environment Outlook was relevant for policymakers, would indeed lead to the analysis of the socioeconomic impact of transformations covered in the sixth Global Environment Outlook and other related assessments.

81. He confirmed that there would be a coordination group for the intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder advisory group, the multidisciplinary expert scientific advisory group and the ad hoc open-ended meetings, and further details would be provided in the document on procedures that would soon be made available. There was also a need for communication between the groups and regional focal points to ensure that regional perspectives were duly considered. He also confirmed that all Member States which were represented on the intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder advisory group or the multidisciplinary expert scientific advisory group were able to propose an alternate member, while noting that the alternate member should follow the process, understand the views that had already been presented and provide continuity in discussions.

82. The digital transformation of the Global Environment Outlook process would certainly contain a strong data management component, as the aim was for it eventually to be presented in a digital format that would allow policymakers, for example, to select and manipulate information relevant to their context using graphs and maps. Regarding the next steps for the intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder advisory group, he noted that an informal virtual meeting would be held in early October to start the nomination process for the multidisciplinary expert scientific advisory group, the first face-to-face meeting of the group would be held on Friday, 21 October 2022, and the programme of work would then be discussed at the ninth annual subcommittee meeting.

(c) Resolution 5/5: Nature-based solutions for supporting sustainable development

83. The Chair recalled that the Executive Director, in a letter addressed to ministers of the environment and dated 31 August 2022, had set out the revised process for the appointment of the two co-chairs of the intergovernmental consultations, to be coordinated by the Chair of the Committee under the leadership of the President of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly, and taking into account the draft terms of reference, and the need for geographical balance and gender parity. She had invited the submission of nominations by 15 September 2022, a deadline which had subsequently been extended to 27 September 2022.

84. The following nominations had been received by the deadline: Mr. Mohammed Solaiman Haider (Bangladesh), Ms. Giovanna Valverde Stark (Costa Rica), and Ms. Kazin Zaunberger, who was a German national and whose nomination had been submitted by Czechia, the country currently holding the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and was supported by all 27 member States of the European Union.

85. The representative of the secretariat recalled that nature-based solutions were a strong way of connecting the nature, climate and sustainable development agendas, and that the definition of nature-based solutions in the resolution allowed for the strengthening of multilateralism and re-embracing of global solidarity to find new ways to work together for the common good, and was in harmony with the concept of ecosystem-based approaches. Nature-based solutions were therefore placed firmly in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the resolution emphasized the importance of social and environmental safeguards to ensure that nature-based solutions lived up to the bold promise of delivering multiple benefits to society without causing harm to the environment or future generations.

86. She recalled the three aims of the intergovernmental consultations to further support the implementation of nature-based solutions, as set out in paragraph 5 of the resolution. She stated that the role of the co-chairs would be to convene and lead the intergovernmental consultations, with the support of the secretariat, to determine the most appropriate modality for the consultation process, ensure the broadest possible ownership and participation by all interested Member States and stakeholders, ensure that the consultations successfully addressed the relevant tasks set out in the resolution and were completed within an agreed time frame, and address any challenges and opportunities that arose during the consultation process.

87. The proposed time frame, which was subject to the availability of funding, included the production, by February 2023, of three background papers on best practices in nature-based solutions; existing criteria, standards and guidelines; and sources of finance to enable developing countries to implement nature-based solutions. Regional consultations would then be held in the first half of 2023, followed by global consultations in the second half of the year. Work would then begin on a report to be submitted to the Environment Assembly at its sixth session. It was worth noting, however, that none of the required funding of between \$1.5 million and \$2 million had yet been confirmed, although funding opportunities were currently being explored, and any interested Member States were invited to contact the office of the Director of the Ecosystems Division.

88. One representative expressed his support for the candidate from Costa Rica as co-chair, as Ms. Valverde Stark had extensive experience in measures to mitigate the impacts of the triple planetary crisis. He also asked when Member States would be informed of the flagship initiatives selected for the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

89. Another representative noted the critical importance of the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples with regard to nature-based solutions and of exploring opportunities for scaling up the investment in nature-based solutions from all sources.

90. Responding to the question on flagship initiatives, the representative of the secretariat said that over 100 Government-supported nominations had been received and that 10 had been selected and would be announced before the end of 2022.

91. In response to a request from one representative for clarification regarding the nominations for co-chairs, the Chair stated that the nomination of Ms. Zaunberger had been coordinated by Czechia and made by 27 sovereign States which were all members of the European Union, and not by the European Commission itself. If the candidate were appointed, she would not be representing the European Commission but acting as co-chair in the interests of all Member States. The representative, thanking the Chair for the clarification, nevertheless said that the form of the nomination was a worrying precedent and that he looked forward to exploring the issue further during the consultation process.

Agenda item 6

Report of the subcommittee

92. The Committee took note of a document entitled “Chair’s report of the Subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives” (UNEP/CPR/159/7).

Agenda item 7

Other matters

93. No other matters were raised.

Agenda item 8

Closing of the meeting

94. The meeting was declared closed at 5.30 p.m. on Thursday, 29 September 2022.
