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

**Committee of Permanent Representatives to the
United Nations Environment Programme
161st meeting
Nairobi, 9 March 2023**

**Draft minutes of the 160th meeting of the Committee of
Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment
Programme, held on 8 December 2022 and 12 January 2023**

Agenda item 1

Opening of the meeting

1. The meeting was held in a hybrid format on 8 December 2022 and 12 January 2023.
2. The meeting was opened at 3.15 p.m. on Thursday, 8 December 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.
3. The meeting was attended by 76 participants representing 76 members and 2 observer missions.
4. The Chair welcomed the following new members to the Committee: Bacha Debele Buta (Ethiopia), Arnaud Suquet (France), Sebastian Growth (Germany), Namgya C. Khampa (India), Roberto Natali (Italy), Luis Chuquihuara Chil (Peru), and Jacek Bazanski (Poland).
5. He then bade farewell to the following departing members: Ivan Feys (Belgium), Monica De Greiff Lindo (Colombia), Khaled Elabyard (Egypt), Meles Alem Tikea (Ethiopia), Annett Günther (Germany), Virander Kumar Paul (India), Alberto Pieri (Italy), Silvia Elena Alfaro Espinosa (Peru), and Marek Rohr-Garztecki (Poland).

Agenda item 2

Adoption of the agenda

6. The agenda was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda and the annotated provisional agenda (UNEP/CPR/160/1 and UNEP/CPR/160/1/Add.1, respectively).

Agenda item 3

**Adoption of the draft minutes of the 159th meeting of the Committee of Permanent
Representatives**

7. The Committee adopted the minutes of its 159th meeting, held in a hybrid format on 29 September 2022, on the basis of the draft minutes of the meeting (UNEP/CPR/160/2).

Agenda item 4

Adoption of the Chair's summary of the ninth annual subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

8. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to the Chair's summary of the ninth annual subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP (UNEP/CPR/ASC/9/7/Rev.2), held in a hybrid format from 24 to 28 October 2022. Participants who had attended the meeting had been consulted on the content of the summary and the initial draft had been revised several times.
9. The Committee adopted the summary.

Agenda item 5

Report of the Executive Director

10. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to the report entitled "Quarterly Report to the 160th Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives: July–September 2022", noting that it provided an update on significant developments during the third quarter of 2022 of relevance to UNEP. Owing to a technical problem, the Executive Director of UNEP, Inger Andersen, was unable to join the meeting online. The acting Deputy Executive Director, Sonja Leighton-Kone, would therefore deliver the Executive Director's oral report on her behalf.
11. Delivering the Executive Director's oral report, Ms. Leighton-Kone said that intense negotiations were under way at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to achieve an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework. Unity, flexibility and compromise were needed to achieve a groundbreaking agreement to halt and reverse the degradation of the natural world and ensure a more sustainable world for future generations.
12. Several key meetings had been held in 2022, making it an extremely important year for environmental multilateralism. The UNEP team had played an active role at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, where it had led expert discussions on methane, coral, peat-lands and climate technology, and underscored the urgency of the climate crisis. The outcome document of that meeting had retained key elements of the Glasgow Climate Pact and called for accelerated, clean and just transitions to renewable energy and reform of the multilateral development banks. A landmark decision had been made to create a loss and damage fund, which had been unimaginable only months previously and was a historic victory. However, countries with the largest economies had not taken enough steps to significantly cut emissions and decarbonize, and little progress had been made toward delivering the promised \$100 billion per year in climate finance for developing countries. Furthermore, developed countries had failed to implement other key aspects of the Glasgow Climate Pact, such as increasing adaptation finance to \$40 billion per year.
13. Negotiations had begun at the first meeting of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, in Punta del Este, Uruguay, following an agreement reached by Member States at the resumed fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme. Attendance by a large number of delegates and stakeholders had raised expectations of an ambitious and comprehensive agreement. The committee had requested the secretariat to prepare a document outlining potential paths towards an international legally binding instrument that addressed the full life cycle of plastics for consideration at the committee's second meeting.
14. At the nineteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, representatives of more than 160 countries had adopted proposals to regulate international trade in more than 500 new species, agreed to relax trade restrictions on certain species to reflect successes in their conservation and considered the role that the Convention might play in reducing the risk of zoonotic diseases in the light of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The high level of engagement demonstrated the Convention's continued importance in safeguarding the planet's wealth of species and ensuring that international trade in wildlife was sustainable, legal and traceable.

15. Ms. Andersen had recently joined the Deputy President of Kenya, Rigathi Gachagua, and the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Kenya to launch a flash appeal to respond to the terrible drought in the country, which was expected to affect more than 4 million people by 2023 and was a powerful reminder of the devastating impact of climate change on ecosystems and people's livelihoods. UNEP would continue to work with the Government of Kenya and other United Nations partners to support those affected by climate change.
16. Discussions outlining the UNEP flagship environmental assessment, the Global Environmental Outlook, had sought to identify solutions to the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution and waste. At the regional and country levels, UNEP, together with various banking institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean, had launched the Climate Financial Risk Centre in the region to support central banks and financial regulators in identifying, managing and disclosing climate-related financial risks.
17. With regard to financing, income in the Environment Fund stood at 78 per cent of the approved budget, or \$78 million, and was expected to reach \$81 million before the end of 2022. While it had increased compared to the previous year, the figure would have been higher had it not been for unfavourable exchange rate variations for contributions made in currencies other than United States dollars. She expressed gratitude to the 74 Member States that had contributed and the 13 Member States that had resumed their contributions in 2022. It reflected the growing willingness of Member States to support the work of UNEP in addressing the triple planetary crisis.
18. As for geographical diversity, UNEP continued to strengthen and implement its four-point plan as set out in Environment Assembly resolution 5/26, in line with its long-term goal to ensure a diverse workforce that reflected the international character of the organization. There had been a welcome rise in the number of candidates selected from underrepresented regional groups. A dedicated outreach plan had been launched in cooperation with various divisions, regional offices, working groups and external institutions to reach and attract talented candidates. A recent event had been aimed specifically at students attending academic institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean.
19. UNEP had recently announced the winners of the 2022 Champions of the Earth awards, including a wildlife biologist from India, a non-profit organization involved in the clean-up following the explosion in Beirut in 2020, a women's rights activist from Cameroon, a wildlife conservationist from Peru and a world-renowned economist who had led a landmark report to illustrate the devastating impact of economic growth on the natural world. A record 2,000 nominations had been received.
20. In closing, she thanked Member States for their efforts in such a complex year for environmental governance. Multilateral meetings and events, including the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly, the event commemorating 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 entitled "Stockholm+50: a healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity" had demonstrated that it was possible to find common ground on solutions to environmental issues. The task ahead was to further develop those solutions to protect people and the planet.
21. In the ensuing discussion, all those who took the floor thanked the Executive Director for her oral briefing and quarterly report, commending her for playing a leading role in the various international environment-related events that had taken place during 2022. One representative expressed disappointment that the Executive Director had again failed to attend the present meeting in person owing to other commitments, namely attending the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal, Canada. Every effort should be made to avoid scheduling conflicts in the future.
22. Regarding the quarterly report, one representative noted that the section on programme of work implementation made no mention of resolutions adopted at the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly. The importance of evidence-based reporting on the implementation of resolutions could not be understated. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that she would appreciate further information about the opportunities, challenges and lessons learned related to the actions outlined in the report. She welcomed the adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations of a resolution on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and highlighted the need to advance a common understanding on how to integrate perspectives on human rights with the environmental aspects of sustainable development.

23. Several representatives welcomed the fruitful discussions held during the first meeting of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. One representative said that the meeting had provided the secretariat with several commitments to be included in a future binding agreement and had laid the groundwork for the second meeting, to be held in Paris. There was an increasing desire for an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution among Member States and other stakeholders, including the private sector, non-governmental organizations and the scientific community. One representative said that financing to allow delegates from developing countries to attend the meeting should be built into the budget. One representative, describing the financial resources allocated by his country to combat plastic pollution, called on other Member States to contribute.
24. A number of representatives described environmental initiatives in their countries.
25. On biodiversity, one representative said that the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity presented a crucial opportunity to secure investment for conservation. While consensus had yet to be reached on much of the text of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, she was confident that the parties would be able to find common ground. Another representative said that his country would work to ensure that the goals outlined in the new framework were ambitious and measurable, and supported the use of data collection tools to enhance cooperation between parties to the various biodiversity-related conventions as part of the preparatory process for the development of the framework.
26. One representative said that recent reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change had highlighted the gravity of the climate crisis and the need for immediate and sustained political will, decisive action and effective cooperation. Science had shown that the window for action on climate change was closing fast. The establishment of a loss and damage fund to assist developing countries that were particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change had been a key outcome of twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change.
27. The representative of Belarus said that the construction by Poland of a fence along his country's border, which crossed a nature reserve, contravened various international agreements and had caused serious harm to biodiversity and the ecosystem in the surrounding area. He called on UNEP to convene a group of international experts to assess the damage caused by the fence and he looked forward to further dialogue on the matter.
28. Several representatives condemned in the strongest possible terms the unprovoked and unjustified act of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which violated international law and the Charter of the United Nations, undermined international security and stability, and exacerbated various environment-related challenges. They thanked UNEP for its efforts in monitoring the environmental impact of the war.
29. Exercising his right of reply, the representative of the Russian Federation objected to the politicization of UNEP meetings with discussions related to geopolitics and armed conflicts. The United States of America and its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies had no right to criticize his country's actions given the extensive list of unjustified and unprovoked acts of aggression by that Organization in many countries.
30. Exercising his right of reply to the statement by the Russian Federation, the representative of Ukraine said that he had not politicized the current meeting or intended to do so, but the propaganda and lies spread by the Russian Federation required a response. For the previous 10 months, the Kremlin regime had razed hundreds of Ukrainian towns and villages to the ground, polluted rivers, destroyed ecosystems and threatened the entire global community with nuclear weapons.
31. Exercising his right of reply to the statement by the Russian Federation, the representative of the United States of America said that delegations had every right to discuss the environmental damage resulting from the unprovoked, premeditated and unjustified war in Ukraine, since it fell within the mandate of UNEP as part of its work on disasters and conflicts. Opposition by Russia to the appointment of regional group candidates in Nairobi, purely for political ends, was a prime example of politicization.
32. The representative of the Russian Federation replied that his delegation had not politicized the current meeting. He denied all the allegations made against his country and urged delegates to concentrate on the substantive issues before the Committee, of which there were many.

33. The representative of Ukraine said that the Russian Federation delegation's intention was to justify the Kremlin's political agenda rather than to discuss ways of saving the planet. If the Russian delegation continued to politicize UNEP meetings, he would have no choice but to speak about the crimes and atrocities committed by its soldiers in Ukraine, which had been well documented by various entities within the United Nations system.
34. In the light of technical problems that had prevented many representatives participating online from being able to take the floor, the meeting was adjourned at 3.55 p.m. on Thursday, 8 December 2022, to be resumed at a later date.
35. Subsequently, at the resumed meeting, on 12 January 2023, Ms. Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP, in her oral briefing, said that significant progress had been made under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, with agreements to provide additional financing for developing countries, ensure a fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources, reduce the overall risk from pesticides and highly hazardous chemicals by at least half, address harmful subsidies and scale up incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, with quantified targets. Appropriate action was required on the part of all stakeholders – Member States, businesses, Indigenous communities and local communities alike – to deliver on the framework by 2030. Over the coming years, UNEP needed to ensure that, through its programme of work, it supported Member States' priorities in the implementation of the framework and the achievement of its goals.
36. In 2021, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination had endorsed a common approach to biodiversity, which was critical for the implementation of the biodiversity framework, across the entire United Nations system. UNEP would engage with United Nations country teams and develop strategic alliances with other United Nations entities to support States in delivering on their biodiversity commitments.
37. In closing, she expressed her appreciation to the acting Deputy Executive Director, Ms. Leighton-Kone, for her outstanding service and diligent work in the role. She then welcomed Elizabeth Mrema, who would assume her post as Deputy Executive Director in February 2023.
38. In the ensuing discussion, many representatives thanked the Executive Director for her briefing and applauded significant achievements in a range of areas, including promoting biodiversity and combating plastic pollution, throughout 2022. Several representatives highlighted the need to step up action in 2023 and beyond to tackle critical issues facing the world, particularly climate change.
39. In relation to the quarterly report, one representative, welcoming the webinar on sustainable finance for United Nations resident coordinator offices and country teams, asked for the material and outcomes to be more widely shared to help inform policy on sustainable finance. He said that he would appreciate an update on the status of the Systematic Observations Financing Facility and the proposed financial target, and sought clarification regarding the reasoning behind the establishment of the thematic funds for climate, nature and pollution. He asked whether the Youth and Education Alliance summit would be a recurring item on the UNEP agenda and said that, if so, it would be useful to have a more comprehensive update on the summit in future reports.
40. On UNEP staffing, one representative asked what was considered to be an adequate balance between staff from different regions and countries, and whether there were any quotas to ensure representation from all regions. A representative of major groups and stakeholders, commending UNEP for its initiative to attract young people into entry-level professional positions, said that the requisite resources, support and capacity-building must be provided to train the next generation of UNEP staff. One representative, emphasizing the importance of regional groups in facilitating communication between national governments and UNEP, expressed the hope that the vacancy for a regional director for Europe would be filled in the near future.
41. A number of representatives welcomed the adoption of a landmark agreement to guide global action on nature by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its fifteenth meeting, defining a clear approach to deal with biodiversity loss with measurable and quantifiable targets. One representative said that the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, a grouping of 116 countries, had recently begun implementation of measures to protect 30 per cent of land and marine areas around the world by 2030.
42. With regard to finance, one representative said that his Government had pledged to double its annual contribution to support biodiversity. Another representative said that the Bridgetown Initiative had been launched to reform the system for financing developing countries' response to climate change.

43. On plastics, one representative welcomed the outcome of the first meeting of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, and called for an agreement that would cover the entire life cycle of plastics and reduce, eliminate and prohibit microplastics and single-use plastics.
44. A representative of major groups and stakeholders said that more support was required to address issues related to electronic waste. He also urged action to guarantee the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment in line with General Assembly resolution 76/300.
45. One representative recalled that the dispute regarding the construction by Poland of a fence along its border with Belarus had been ongoing for several years. He said that UNEP should coordinate its response with that of the Council of Europe under the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats.
46. Responding to the comments, the Executive Director thanked representatives for their statements. Regarding the quarterly report, the request for a more in-depth reflection on opportunities, challenges and lessons learned related to the actions outlined in the report would be taken into consideration. She stressed, however, that the report was intended to provide a three-month overview and did not provide sufficient room for an extensive evaluation. UNEP had followed up on the issue concerning the border fence with the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Belarus and the Belarusian authorities, which had expressed a willingness to participate in an informal meeting with experts. Resolutions of the Environment Assembly would all be available on the Environment Assembly's Monitoring and Reporting Portal and the UNEP Open Data website. Training courses on using the portal would take place online on 26 January and in person on 7 February 2023.
47. The Youth and Education Alliance summit had brought together senior staff in higher education and leaders of youth movements to support climate action within universities. UNEP was in discussions with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on how to promote climate education in schools and was currently working on a green jobs for youth pact in cooperation with entities such as the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). There were no specific targets for the representation of certain nationalities or regions among UNEP staff, but action was being taken to address obvious gaps.

Agenda item 6

Implementation of paragraph 41 (j) of the Chair's summary of the ninth annual subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

48. At the resumed meeting, introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to the background note, prepared by the secretariat, outlining proposals pertaining to paragraph 41 (j) of the Chair's summary of the ninth annual subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (UNEP/CPR/160/6). The secretariat's proposals had been considered at the meeting of the Bureau on 5 December 2022 and had been broadly welcomed. However, several Bureau members had not had the opportunity to discuss the proposals with their regional groups, and some questions and concerns had been raised relating to the standing agenda, the time frame for the preparation of documents and the decision-making powers of the Committee.
49. Presenting the background note, Ulf Bjornholm, Deputy Secretary of the Secretariat of Governing Bodies and Stakeholders, said that the note contained five proposed recommendations to improve the identification, formulation and recording of decisions and conclusions from Committee meetings in line with paragraph 10 of the final outcome of the consensual process for review by the Committee of Permanent Representatives. The recommendations had been discussed at the ninth annual subcommittee meeting in October 2022, as reflected in paragraphs 40 and 41 of the Chair's summary of that meeting.
50. In accordance with the first recommendation, the secretariat, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, had prepared a road map of quarterly Committee meetings and subcommittee meetings, together with the tentative agendas, covering the period from January 2023 to February 2024. The secretariat had broken with past practice by scheduling the tenth annual subcommittee meeting for November instead of October to give Member States more time to prepare draft resolutions for the following session of the Environment Assembly.
51. In relation to the second recommendation, which set out a proposed standing agenda for all Committee meetings, the secretariat had taken note of the Bureau's concern that there was no standing agenda item related to the Committee's oversight and review function. The secretariat was of the view that the performance of that function could be accommodated under agenda items 3, report of the

Executive Director, and 6, any other business. An update on relevant UNEP evaluation reports and audits would be included under agenda item 6, rather than a separate standing agenda item, given that there would occasionally be no such reports or audits to discuss. Standing agenda item 4, on preparations for upcoming United Nations Environment Assembly sessions, could be expanded to include follow-up on previous Assembly sessions, in view of the Committee's oversight mandate.

52. The third, fourth and fifth proposals contained recommendations to prepare annotated agendas and background documents well in advance of quarterly Committee and subcommittee meetings, and to clearly outline agreed recommendations and decisions in the minutes of Committee meetings. Finally, the background note set out a draft decision for consideration by the Committee.

53. In the ensuing discussion, many representatives, including two speaking on behalf of groups of countries, thanked the secretariat for preparing the background note and for its efforts to improve working methods at UNEP. Several representatives welcomed the recommendations to ensure that agendas and other key documents were available well in advance of the relevant meetings. One representative asked why United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) meetings had been included in the road map, since that organization was separate from UNEP.

54. Regarding the second recommendation, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, proposed that an update on the UNEP flagship reports could be included as a separate item on the agenda. A number of representatives failed to see the need for a standing agenda item on preparations for upcoming Environment Assembly sessions, which took place once every two years, and supported expanding the item to include follow-up on Assembly sessions. All those who took the floor voiced their opposition to the inclusion of an update on relevant UNEP evaluation reports and audits under agenda item 6, which, they said, should be reserved solely for matters that did not fall under any other agenda item. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that a separate agenda item should be created for matters related to the Committee's oversight function. The consideration of evaluation reports and audits would fall under that item. When there were no reports or audits to consider, the item could simply be skipped. One representative proposed that such an agenda item could be divided into two parts, namely briefings related to the programme of work and the implementation of resolutions, on the one hand, and the consideration of evaluation reports and audits, on the other. Another representative said that, while he did not object to the use of a standing agenda, it should be tailored to the requirements of each specific meeting.

55. In relation to the third recommendation, one representative suggested that the annotated agenda for quarterly Committee meetings should be made available 28 days before the meeting, instead of 21 days, to make it consistent with the fourth recommendation. Another representative proposed amending recommendation 3 to require the annotated agenda to be made available at least 10 business days, rather than calendar days, before subcommittee meetings.

56. With regard to the fourth recommendation, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, emphasized that the process of developing recommendations and decisions for consideration by the Committee needed to be led by Member States. A number of representatives said that decisions and recommendations should be drafted prior to Committee meetings by the Bureau, in consultation with the regional groups and with the support of the secretariat.

57. Turning to recommendation 5, a number of representatives said that any decisions to be considered should be contained in an annex to the report of the meeting at which the wording of the decision had been agreed upon. Many representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, stressed that Member States should have the final say on the wording of all decisions.

58. Responding to the comments, Mr. Bjornholm said that the secretariat considered it useful to include UN-Habitat meetings in the road map. He took note of the prevailing view among Member States that a separate agenda item should be devoted to matters related to the Committee's oversight and review functions, that updates on relevant UNEP evaluation reports and audits should not be placed under agenda item 6, and that the agenda item on preparations for Environment Assembly sessions should be expanded to include follow-up. Since flagship reports were generally considered at Committee meetings on an ad hoc basis, it was not appropriate to have a standing agenda item allocated to them.

59. Following the discussion, the Committee took note of the secretariat's recommendations, which would be amended taking into account the concerns expressed. The Chair said that the recommendations would be discussed again at the 161st meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives following consultations with all the regional groups.

Agenda item 7

Report of the subcommittee

60. The Committee took note of the document entitled “Chair’s report of the subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives” (UNEP/CPR/160/7).

Agenda item 8

Other matters

61. Introducing the item, the Chair said that Shivona Tavares-Walsh, Chief of the Division of Conference Services at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, had been invited to give a briefing on the technical issue experienced at the Committee meeting on 8 December 2022 and the remedial measures taken to avoid similar issues in the future.

62. In her briefing, Ms. Tavares-Walsh thanked Member States for their support of the project to renovate and expand the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. The General Assembly had adopted a resolution authorizing the commencement of the design phase of the project and, in 2023, had allocated \$6.2 million to fund the project team and hire the design, programme management and risk management consulting firms.

63. She apologized on behalf of the United Nations Office at Nairobi for the unprecedented technical failure during the previous Committee meeting. The set-up had been tested beforehand in line with the standard operating procedure and all the systems had been functioning normally. However, the system feeding in the remote audio had malfunctioned and the technicians on duty had attempted to restore normal operation without success. By the time replacement hardware had been installed, set up and tested, the meeting had been adjourned. By way of mitigating measures, new equipment had been installed, advance tests had been conducted in line with standard procedure, the protocols to follow in the event of any issues were being revised, and a list was being drawn up of pieces of conferencing equipment that would need to be replaced within the next five years.

64. While several United Nations offices continued to allow hybrid and online meetings for the time being, a transition to solely in-person meetings was expected. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions had observed that it was for the General Assembly to decide the legal and technical parameters for the continuation of hybrid meetings. At present, no funding was allocated for meetings to be held in virtual or hybrid modes or for the technical support that they required.

65. In the ensuing discussion, a number of representatives sought clarification regarding whether UNEP meetings would continue to be held in a hybrid format. They said that they were under the impression that the current situation was the “new normal” and that, in any case, the hybrid format had been used even before the pandemic. Indeed, a number of Member States did not have delegations in Nairobi and relied on online participation. The Executive Director said that, for that very reason, she expected UNEP meetings to continue to be held in hybrid mode in the post-COVID-19 period.

66. Responding to the comments, Ms. Tavares-Walsh encouraged Member States to advocate for the possibility to hold hybrid and online meetings, with full technical and financial support, in the General Assembly.

67. Turning to the matter of the Environment Assembly contribution to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the Chair reminded Member States that the deadline for providing input was 13 January 2022. A first draft of the contribution would be prepared by the secretariat by 25 January, with a view to circulating a revised draft by 10 February for discussion at the subcommittee meeting on 16 February. The Bureau would review the final draft at its meeting on 22 February, which would be followed by a silence procedure from 27 February to 1 March. The annual meeting of the high-level political forum was scheduled for July 2023.

Agenda item 9

Closure of the meeting

68. The meeting was declared closed at 4.30 p.m. on Thursday, 12 January 2023.