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**Committee of Permanent Representatives to the
United Nations Environment Programme
162nd meeting**
Nairobi, 16 June 2023

Draft minutes of the 161st meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme, held on 9 March 2023

Agenda item 1

Opening of the meeting

1. The meeting, which was held in Nairobi in a hybrid format, was opened at 10 a.m. on Thursday, 9 March 2023, by 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 75 participants representing 73 members and 2 observer missions.
3. A minute of silence was observed in memory of those who had perished in the crash of Ethiopian Airlines flight ET 302 on 10 March 2019, many of whom had been on their way to Nairobi to attend the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, including 21 members of staff from 11 different United Nations organizations.
4. The Chair welcomed the following new members to the Committee: Nermina Kapetanović (Bosnia and Herzegovina); Sophie Mautle (Botswana); Myriam Aman Wedraogo/Soulama (Burkina Faso); Savvas Vladimirov (Cyprus); Cristian Espinosa Cañizares (Ecuador); El Hadj Nounké Kaba (Guinea); Rohit Vadhwana (India); Nader Radi Abd-Alkarem Al-Tarawneh (Jordan); Ruzaimi bin Mohamad (Malaysia); Frédérique Vidal (Monaco); Anzul Jhan (Sri Lanka); and Kamal Gubara (Sudan).
5. He then bade farewell to the following departing members: Lucija Ljubic (Bosnia and Herzegovina); Osenotse Arnold Seeketso (Botswana); Madina Ganou Diaby Kassamba (Burkina Faso); Emilio Izquierdo (Ecuador); Gaoussou Toure (Guinea); Ashish Sinha (India); and Abdullah Obaidat (Jordan).

Agenda item 2

Adoption of the agenda

6. The agenda was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/CPR/161/1).

Agenda item 3

Adoption of the draft minutes of the 160th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

7. The Committee adopted the minutes of its 160th meeting, held in a hybrid format on 8 December 2022 and 12 January 2023, on the basis of the draft minutes of the meeting (UNEP/CPR/161/2).

Agenda item 4

Report of the Executive Director

8. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to the report entitled “Quarterly report to the 161st meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives: October–December 2022”, noting that it provided an update on significant developments during the fourth quarter of 2022 of relevance to UNEP. He also welcomed the fact that several informal meetings had recently been held between the Executive Director and the regional and political groups, which served as an excellent way to ensure an open dialogue between the leadership of UNEP and Member States.

9. In her oral briefing, the Executive Director of UNEP, Inger Andersen, welcomed the new Deputy Executive Director, Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, to her first meeting of the Committee. She extended her deepest condolences to the people of the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye who had suffered one of the largest natural disasters of recent time when a devastating earthquake had struck in February 2023. The Secretary-General had issued a \$400 million humanitarian appeal for the Syrian Arab Republic and a flash appeal of \$1 billion for Türkiye. The entire United Nations system stood in solidarity with those affected.

10. Despite the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the challenging global geopolitical situation and natural disasters, 2022 had seen several significant environmental achievements and that trend was continuing in 2023, with the achievement, after nearly two decades of work, of the draft agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction that the Secretary-General had highlighted as crucial for addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. UNEP was committed to supporting Member States in implementing the historic agreement through the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements, regional seas conventions and regional offices, and its programme of work.

11. The urgent need to deliver on environmental multilateralism by rapidly reducing greenhouse gas emissions and building resilience to climate change had been highlighted by events such as tropical cyclone Freddy, which had hit Madagascar, Mozambique and other surrounding countries earlier in March 2023. The impacts of the unprecedented floods in Pakistan in 2022 served as a reminder that the poorest continued to suffer from climate inaction, as many villages and farms remained under water eight months after the flooding. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) had reported that almost 4 million children globally lived near contaminated and stagnant flood waters, which posed risks to their well-being and survival.

12. The first UNEP spotlight publication of 2023, *Bracing for Superbugs: Strengthening environmental action in the One Health response to antimicrobial resistance*, had been launched at the sixth meeting of the One Health Global Leaders Group on Antimicrobial Resistance, held in Bridgetown in February 2023, at which the need to monitor carefully the emerging health impacts of environmental degradation had been the key message. Antimicrobial resistance was as much an issue of justice as of health, as it affected the poorest communities the most and often first, and so the issue needed to be near the top of the global agenda in order to help create a fairer, safer world. The publication made a strong, science-based case for tackling antimicrobial resistance by preventing environmental pollution, in particular by pharmaceuticals, in the agricultural, animal and health-care sectors.

13. The focus of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Doha in March 2023, had been on finding ways to help the least developed countries break free from the vicious cycles that made development difficult. The medium-term strategy of UNEP reflected the Programme’s commitment to focusing on the needs of the least developed and landlocked developing countries, and of small island developing States. At the Conference, she had highlighted three actions that UNEP was taking in support of the least developed countries and landlocked developing countries, with other United Nations organizations and partners: an environmentally and socially responsible approach to critical minerals for the much-needed clean energy transition, supporting the

implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to enhance resilience; and advancing sustainable waste management through life cycle approaches.

14. She thanked the regional and political groups for the excellent discussions, questions raised and requests made at the various meetings she had held with them in March to discuss environmental priorities for 2023 and beyond and preparations for the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme. One recurrent theme of the discussions had been the need to continue strengthening Nairobi as the global environmental hub and it was encouraging therefore that Nairobi was the base for the secretariat of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, the Quadripartite Partnership for One Health and the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and that more and more meetings were being held in Nairobi.

15. Member States had raised the need to create awareness of the Environment Assembly in their regions and countries; to increase the focus on the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals; and to better explore findings from key UNEP publications and their implications for individual countries and regions. In the spirit of continuous improvement, the secretariat was planning to brief Member States on the key findings from UNEP spotlight and institutional series reports, such as the emissions and adaptation gap reports, shortly after their official launch, and on other reports, where possible, by request.

16. An expert panel convened by UNEP had found that a large-scale deployment of solar radiation modification, intended to potentially cool the planet by reflecting sunlight back into space, was not currently warranted and would indeed be unwise. The potential risks and impacts of the technology were not yet fully understood and were compounded by complex issues of ethics and governance, and inequity. It was to be hoped that the findings of the expert panel would inform how the United Nations organization and its Member States could develop a deeper understanding of the environmental and social implications of the technologies to ensure sound decision-making.

17. A call for expressions of interest was due to be issued for countries to host World Environment Day in 2024 or 2025, an annual event that had become one of the largest and most influential global platforms for environmental outreach after first being held in 1973. The event was being hosted in 2023 by Côte d'Ivoire, in partnership with the Kingdom of the Netherlands, in Abidjan, and would serve as a powerful call for solutions to plastic pollution, in particular in the wake of the second meeting of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, being held in Paris in May and early June.

18. She highlighted the many key environment-related events taking place in 2023, all of which could and should be used to strengthen environmental governance, strengthen UNEP and bend the implementation curve upwards.

19. In closing, she drew attention to the *Annual Report 2022*, which was now available online and, as an annual snapshot of key results, served as a useful reminder of the significant achievements of the year and of the work that lay ahead.

20. In the ensuing discussion, many representatives, including several speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the new Deputy Executive Director and congratulated her on her appointment, congratulated the Executive Director on her re-election and thanked the Executive Director for the informative quarterly report, with several representatives highlighting the accessible format of the report.

21. Several representatives thanked specific UNEP staff members for their efforts and welcomed new appointees to positions in UNEP. One representative highlighted the importance of the regional offices in facilitating and coordinating activities between UNEP and Member States.

22. Many representatives, including several speaking on behalf of groups of countries, said that the establishment of the loss and damage fund at the United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2022, had been a significant achievement and called on all States parties to the Convention to develop an effective and sustainable mechanism devoted to the rapid implementation of the fund to ensure global environmental protection. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, called upon those countries that were primarily responsible for warming the planet to immediately mobilize substantial new and additional resources to pay for climate-related damage in vulnerable countries, while another highlighted the need to pay particular attention to women, youth and children, as those groups were disproportionately affected by loss and damage, and a third recalled that Africa was responsible for less than 4 per cent of global

greenhouse gas emissions but suffered disproportionately from loss and damage. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, requested detailed information on the implementation of the fund in future quarterly reports. Some representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noted the reference in the report to the consultative meeting convened by the members of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment during the United Nations Climate Change Conference that had consolidated a common African negotiating position on issues such as adaptation, finance and loss and damage, and requested the Executive Director to engage more with those members and for UNEP to provide relevant scientific and technical support to enable the implementation of Environmental Assembly resolutions in African States. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, highlighted the progress made on adaptation at the Climate Change Conference and another commended the Executive Director for her efforts to secure financing from philanthropists and international financial institutions for the Early Warnings for All initiative, which had been launched at the Conference.

23. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, highlighted the achievement of the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its fifteenth meeting, held in Montreal, Canada, in December 2022. One representative requested an update on the implementation of the three programmes, namely conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity, that UNEP was developing to support the implementation of the Framework, and details regarding their impact in countries suffering from biodiversity loss. It was vital that the implementation of the Framework and the climate agreement be undertaken in a systematic manner. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, requested feedback from UNEP on how it planned to bridge the work streams dedicated to each and harmonize them. Some representatives noted that their countries were proud to have joined the Sustainable Critical Minerals Alliance, which had been established in the margins of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, and reiterated their commitment to promoting environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive and responsible mining and recycling processes, as well as responsible critical mineral supply chains, both domestically and internationally.

24. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed gratitude for the funding of two representatives from the African region to attend the upcoming second meeting of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, to be held in Paris in May, noting that it was vital for developing countries to participate at the political and technical levels. They encouraged the secretariat to ensure adequate funding to enable the participation of two representatives from each developing country, and African countries in particular, at all remaining meetings of the Committee. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that he would welcome the opportunity to organize plastics advocacy training at the regional level before the second meeting of the intergovernmental negotiating committee so that negotiators from his region could make informed decisions and offer a regional perspective on plastics at the meeting. Another representative highlighted the need for the involvement of experts at the second meeting to guide the discussion through scientific and socioeconomic panels, for example. A third representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, highlighted the need for the work of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to be based on the long-standing work practices that had proved effective in the past. One representative highlighted the work of the Group of Friends to Combat Marine Plastic Pollution, which was aimed at maintaining the political momentum of the plastic pollution agenda, and thanked the secretariat and the Executive Director for their support in that regard.

25. Several representatives, taking note of the terms of reference for the technical advisory group – an internal structure within UNEP under the guidance of the Executive Director – which was assuming important responsibilities for the process on establishing a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution, said that some of the tasks allocated to the group went beyond those that the ad hoc open-ended working group had mandated to the secretariat of the science-policy panel in preparation for its second session. They therefore suggested that the concept note and the terms of reference be opened for comments from Member States and that the rules and membership of the technical advisory group be discussed at the next meeting of the Bureau of the ad hoc open-ended working group on a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution.

26. A number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, took note of the reference in the quarterly report to the sixth Africa Animal Welfare Conference, held in Gaborone in October and November 2022, on the theme of animals, people and the environment in a rapidly changing twenty-first century. They thanked Botswana, Ghana and other Member States for their proactive work on implementing Environment Assembly resolution 5/1 on the animal welfare–

environment–sustainable development nexus and urged UNEP to ensure the implementation of all Environment Assembly resolutions on an equal footing. In that regard, one representative requested regular updates in future reports on the implementation of all Environment Assembly resolutions.

27. One representative noted that the co-facilitators of Environment Assembly resolution 5/5, on nature-based solutions for supporting sustainable development, were currently meeting regularly to develop a consultation implementation plan for 2023, which would be presented to the Environment Assembly when finalized. She thanked the European Union for approving funds to make the consultations possible and invited other Member States in a position to do so to support the implementation of the resolution. It was to be hoped that the outcomes of Environment Assembly resolution 5/9 on sustainable and resilient infrastructure could be linked to resolution 5/5 and to the proposed resolution on BiodiverCities, to be submitted by Colombia and Costa Rica at the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in Nairobi in June.

28. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noting the announcement of the first six countries to receive support from the Nature for Health initiative, a multi-partner trust fund that had been established to implement Environment Assembly resolution 5/6 on biodiversity and health, requested information on the criteria for choosing those first six countries and the next steps planned for the initiative.

29. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, highlighted the work of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, which was vital for collaboration in the region, and which had recently discussed a proposal to create a regional oceans commission. Furthermore, the support of UNEP in the development of the regional action plan on air quality 2022–2025 for Latin America and the Caribbean had been greatly appreciated.

30. Several representatives highlighted the significant achievement of the draft agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, as it was clear that the triple planetary crisis affected all areas of the planet, whether under national jurisdiction or not. The representative of Japan said that her Government would donate \$280,000 in 2023 to the Global Partnership on Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter. One representative requested further updates on the UNEP Finance Initiative, in particular in relation to plastic pollution, and on the Finance Leadership Group.

31. One representative welcomed the progress made by the waste, gender and climate change project of the International Environmental Technology Centre, hosted by Japan, and expressed the hope that the important work on the issue would continue, as waste management was a critical issue in the light of the increase in the world population and many of those involved in the informal waste economy were women.

32. One representative welcomed the fact that UNEP would co-lead, with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), the development of a United Nations system-wide common approach to pollution in 2023 and requested the Executive Director to present the results of the important work at an appropriate time in 2024. He also requested an update on the Programme's engagement with United Nations country teams at the next Committee meeting or at a dedicated subcommittee meeting, including information on the involvement of UNEP in the development of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and the Common Country Analysis, and on the impact of the Programme's new delivery model on its engagement with United Nations resident coordinators and country teams.

33. Several representatives, speaking on behalf of groups of countries, welcomed the launch of the first 10 work restoration flagships, with one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, highlighting his region's commitment to protecting biodiversity and noting that 7 out of 10 of the projects were based in, or included, countries in his region. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noting that the projects were examples of long-term ecological restoration and should serve as inspiration for countries to embark on nature restoration projects, requested follow-up information on the initiative from UNEP in the near future.

34. One representative commended UNEP for its promotion of General Assembly resolution 76/300 on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, which had led to the resolution being referred to in various United Nations committees, resolutions and forums.

35. Some representatives, speaking on behalf of groups of countries, expressed their support of the Presidency of Morocco and UNEP in preparation for the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. One representative said that the theme chosen for the session resonated well with the Summit of the Future, due to be held in September 2024, and noted that UNEP should make the most of the opportunity to provide input to the Summit.
36. Many representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, applauded the ongoing efforts of UNEP to achieve full gender parity and urged UNEP to continue working towards equitable geographical distribution. A number of representatives requested information on the strategies being put in place by UNEP in that regard, with one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, highlighting the importance of a fully implemented human resources outreach strategy, in particular in increasing the visibility of UNEP as an employer of choice for young talent from underrepresented Member States and less represented regional groups.
37. One representative noted that the *Adaptation Gap Report 2022* had confirmed that “more UNEP” was needed both in Nairobi and elsewhere, and other representatives highlighted the need to reinforce the mandate of UNEP and the role of Nairobi in environmental multilateralism, as the report had shown that the finance gap in developing countries was currently between 5 and 10 times that of the current finance flows.
38. One representative said that her country had been calling for a long time for more engagement from Nairobi, noting that the disconnect was hindering follow-up and implementation of outcomes and outputs, leading to a danger that platforms would remain mere talking shops. Nairobi-based working groups driven by Member States would help in avoiding that situation, an example being the initiatives associated with the meetings of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, which had proved highly beneficial for the global South in particular.
39. Several representatives, welcoming the fact that in 2022 UNEP had received the highest amount in core contributions for 10 years, called upon the more than 100 Member States that were not currently supporting UNEP financially to do so. One representative requested information on the breakdown of income by fund to the three thematic funds and the relationship between the Environment Fund and those three funds, including the relevant decision-making mechanisms.
40. One representative said that simply referring to the titles of audits and evaluations and providing a hyperlink to the audit report database in the quarterly report was insufficient and a missed opportunity to engage the Committee in the discussions of relevant findings. The presentation of the evaluation office at the annual subcommittee meeting did not receive the attention it deserved, given the many agenda items of that meeting. Although he noted with satisfaction that the recommendations of the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network had been taken on board in the new Evaluation Office Operational Strategy for the period 2022–2025, it was regrettable that the new strategy had not been presented at a subcommittee meeting, which would have allowed representatives to familiarize themselves with the evaluation plans of UNEP. The results of important audits, such as that of the Ecosystem Division, and the annual report on fraud and corruption, should be presented to the Committee at a quarterly meeting, as the key findings and recommendations, as well as the response of the Programme’s management, were of interest.
41. One representative, noting the importance of the Committee’s mandate to provide advice to and prepare for sessions of the Environment Assembly, recalled that the second pillar of the Committee’s mandate was to provide an oversight function on implementation and to organize thematic or programmatic debates. Although there had been attention on following up the resolutions of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly, there had been less attention on the oversight role of the Committee regarding the implementation of the programme of work as a whole, with the current Committee meeting formats seeming to lack a structured and strategic approach to obtaining insight and engaging with the secretariat on the key deliverables of UNEP. One representative offered to facilitate an informal exchange with all relevant Member States and the secretariat to provide a detailed recommendation to the Bureau of the Committee as to how to make the work of the Committee more time-effective, interesting and useful.
42. One representative expressed concern over the intention only to present the programme performance review of UNEP activities in 2022 at the annual subcommittee meeting in November, as the review might not receive the attention it deserved when the focus of the meeting would be the preparations for the sixth session of the Environment Assembly, and he asked the secretariat in that regard to ensure that the review attracted the necessary attention.

43. One representative welcomed the intention of the secretariat to brief the Committee automatically on certain important reports and requested a briefing from the Chief Scientist at a subcommittee meeting regarding the newly published report on solar radiation modification.
44. One representative encouraged the Executive Director to strengthen the narrative of the triple planetary crisis, which was a narrative that seemed to resonate with a growing number of governments, and further implement the work under the medium-term strategy to address the related challenges through the Programme's normative work, including robust science, guidance, standards, impact assessments and facilitating strengthened environmental governance, and by highlighting innovative approaches that could be adopted by Member States and relevant stakeholders to support that work. It was necessary to feed facts and hard data into the decision-making processes more prominently and to break down silos so that innovative and integrated approaches could be developed to address the challenges not only of the triple planetary crisis but of poverty, and to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.
45. Several representatives described environment-related initiatives by their own and other countries at the national, regional and global levels.
46. One representative, noting that the Executive Director was embarking on her second mandated period in the role, asked the Executive Director which two success stories she would like to be able to report back to the Committee in four years' time.
47. The representative of the United States of America, speaking also on behalf of Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland, Türkiye and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, reaffirmed unwavering solidarity with Ukraine and expressed deep concern regarding the adverse impact on the environment of the invasion by the Russian Federation of Ukraine and the ensuing war.
48. The representative of the European Union, speaking also on behalf of the member States of the European Union and Serbia and Ukraine, reaffirmed strong commitment to General Assembly resolution ES-11/6 on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations underlying a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in Ukraine, expressed full solidarity with Ukraine and paid tribute to the courage of the Ukrainian people, drawing attention to the environmental impact of the military aggression by the Russian Federation. UNEP had long possessed a broad mandate to minimize the environmental causes and consequences of disaster and conflict, including transboundary harm to the environment and the related harm to human health and global food security, and had been doing so. The fastest way to end the environmental impact of the war was for the Russian Federation to withdraw all its forces and military equipment from Ukraine and respect the independence of Ukraine and its sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.
49. One representative expressed his dismay that the Executive Director had highlighted the conflict in Ukraine in her introduction in the *Annual Report 2022*, as other conflicts had not been highlighted in such a way in previous reports, and that she had posted an anti-Russian tweet referring to "the war in Ukraine" on the anniversary of the beginning of the special military operation of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, on 23 February. He underscored that the conflict in Ukraine had lasted nine years and had not been instigated by the Russian Federation. He further noted that members of the Secretariat, including at its highest levels, should bear in mind the interests of all States and preserve a position of neutrality in conflict situations and therefore requested that the Executive Director refrain from making any assessments regarding the conflict in the future.
50. One representative recalled that, on 26 September 2022, the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines had been attacked, leading to one of the largest ever emissions of methane, with approximately 230 kilotons of toxic gases being released to the seabed and killing all living creatures within a 4 km radius. He requested that the secretariat produce a detailed analysis of the negative environmental consequences caused by the act of terrorism to be presented it at the next meeting of the Committee, as the impression currently given was that UNEP was ignoring the event and its serious consequences, in particular as it had referred to the emission of methane caused as a "drop in the ocean".
51. Responding to remarks, the Executive Director thanked representatives for their comments and for highlighting the areas of the Programme's work that they found particularly important and beneficial. She noted the appreciation of Member States of the group of African States for the provision of regional training and familiarization before the first meeting of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, and noted the enthusiasm for the support to be continued and extended to other regional groups. Virtual meetings would be held for specific groups before the

second meeting and it was to be hoped that there would be sufficient resources to fund an in-person briefing before the third meeting.

52. She said that the secretariat could certainly provide further briefings on ecosystem restoration and on the three thematic funds. UNEP had successfully adopted a common approach to biodiversity in 2019 and 2020 and so was applying the same approach to pollution, co-leading with FAO and WHO, and would report back, as requested, on the initiative after it concluded in approximately a year's time.

53. On the topic of harmonizing work related to the outcomes of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Sharm el-Sheikh and the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, she said that the executive secretaries of the three Rio conventions, namely the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, had been highlighting since 1992 the indivisibility of the conventions. UNEP was therefore focusing on investments and projects that would provide benefits under more than one of the conventions, in the same way that States did when developing their national action plans and national biodiversity plans, for example.

54. She echoed the thanks to Botswana for holding the sixth Africa Animal Welfare Conference, which had been an important milestone in the implementation of Environment Assembly resolution 5/1 on the animal welfare–environment–sustainable development nexus.

55. Regarding the criteria for choosing the first six countries to benefit from the Nature for Health initiative, she noted that over 50 expressions of interest had been received and a technical advisory group, composed of Member States, had used the three criteria of risk of zoonoses, commitment to a preventative One Health approach and the potential scope for working with the Nature for Health initiative. The intention was to expand the important work of the initiative when funding was available.

56. She thanked Costa Rica for hosting the Bureau of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean in San José, Costa Rica, in October 2022, which had been an important opportunity for ministers to meet in person and acknowledged the strong cohesion evident in the Latin American and Caribbean region regarding environmental matters.

57. She noted that, although the loss and damage process was under the mandate of Member States and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Executive Secretary of the Framework Convention on Climate Change had asked UNEP for assistance, which UNEP was currently in the process of allocating, in preparing a paper on loss and damage. UNEP would also use its scientific and operational experience regarding adaptation to support the Convention.

58. Given that UNEP had achieved gender parity, it was now imperative to enhance the Programme's geographical diversity. Various workshops, outreach activities and research had been conducted on the topic, including talks delivered to students by senior members of the secretariat when travelling, in particular in underrepresented countries. Member States could assist by ensuring that a broader set of applications was received from underrepresented regions for all positions within UNEP. Enhanced geographical diversity was currently a performance assessment criterion for all hiring managers at UNEP and, as well as seeking to enhance geographical diversity in senior positions, UNEP was using funding to focus on mobilizing applicants from underrepresented regions for the cohort being recruited at the most junior level in order to ensure that geographically diverse cohorts were established that would rise up through the system and assist the geographical balance in the long term.

59. It was too soon for the United Nations resident coordinators to be able assess the impact of the new delivery model of the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework but it was to be hoped that it would soon allow the regional representatives to focus less on day-to-day management and engage more with country teams and resident coordinators, in order to assist the resident coordinators in understanding the triple planetary crisis and understanding the impact and influence of strategies to deal with the crisis at the national level.

60. She said that she would ensure that additional information on auditing was provided in her next quarterly report.

61. Regarding the terms of reference for the technical advisory group, she noted that when UNEP had been established, the focus had been on pollution but that the focus had then shifted to climate change and biodiversity, as had the expertise of the staff of the Programme, so there was now a need to rebuild expertise on pollution within the secretariat. She acknowledged, however, that the draft terms of reference had crossed the line into matters that were the prerogative of Member States and so would be redrafted.

62. Regarding the question on two success stories, she expressed the hope that UNEP would have assisted considerably in the roll-out of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the adoption of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, but she underlined the importance of all the resolutions adopted by the Environment Assembly.

63. With regard to the methane emission leak from the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines, she noted that the reference to the largest methane emissions event being “a drop in the ocean” had not been intended to undermine the significance of the event but to highlight the fact that, overall, global methane emissions were a significant challenge, as even such a significant single event had accounted for only 1 per cent of annual global methane emissions. The event would likely be covered in the next *Emissions Gap Report*, which would allow for it to be considered in the global setting pertaining to emissions.

64. Exercising his right of reply to the statements by the representatives of the United States and of the European Union, the representative of the Russian Federation said that those parties had no right to criticize his country’s actions, as they had a history of unjustified military invasions over the last 70 years, which had caused the loss of millions of lives and severe damage to the environment, but that had never been raised as a concern of UNEP. He recalled that the conflict in Ukraine had started nine years ago, when ultranationalists had come to power and, supported by Western powers, had begun a policy of ethnic cleansing against Russians and engaged in indiscriminate shelling in the Donbas region. The fact that neither the United States nor the European Union had raised the issue of the attacks on the Nord Stream pipelines, which had deprived European countries of clean Russian Federation gas, indicated that those countries knew who was behind the attack.

65. The representative of the United States replied by recalling that he had lamented the environmental damage caused by the war that the Russian Federation was waging in Ukraine and had commended efforts made by UNEP to mitigate that damage, within the mandate of UNEP and consistent with its work in other conflicts and disasters. The Russian Federation could not invoke Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, namely the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurred against a State Member of the United Nations, to justify its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, as it had not been attacked in 2022 or in 2014. It could also not invoke collective self-defence in the name of the so-called republics, as its recognition of the republics had been unlawful and had violated Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity, which were fundamental principles on which all States relied. Regarding the attack on the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines, he acknowledged the clear link to the environment and the importance of raising the environmental consequences of the incident in the context of UNEP but said that discussions of culpability were inappropriate as the competent authorities were currently investigating the incidents. The United States had repeatedly voiced its deep concern over the sabotage of the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines and its view that deliberate attacks to critical infrastructure could not be tolerated.

66. The representative of the Russian Federation replied, noting that his country had not started the political discussion at the current meeting, that it was the United States and its allies that were responsible for what was happening in Ukraine, including the environmental damage, by trying to divide Ukrainians depending on whether they spoke Ukrainian or Russian whereas the reality was that ethnic Russians were the majority in Ukraine. All the attempts to divert the attention of Committee members from substantive discussions under the agenda of the meeting would not stop the Russian Federation and the progressive element of the population of Ukraine from bringing an end to the oppressive Kyiv regime.

Agenda item 5

Preparations for the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

67. Introducing the key developments relevant to the preparations for the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly on behalf of the President of the Assembly, Abderrazak Laasel (Morocco) drew attention to the revised draft road map for an inclusive, participatory and transparent consultation process on the draft ministerial declaration of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEP/CPR/161/5), which had been developed by the

Presidency with the assistance of the secretariat and input from the bureaux of the Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives at their joint meeting held on 30 January. He invited Member States to provide views and guidance on the road map and on how to ensure the widest possible ownership of the declaration through an inclusive, participatory and transparent consultation process.

68. All the representatives who spoke, including several speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed their thanks to the Presidency of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly for the detailed information on the consultation process, which was indeed inclusive, participatory and transparent. One representative said that it was particularly useful to know how many drafts of the declaration to expect.

69. Some representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noted that the scheduling of the annual subcommittee meeting at the end of November would lead to a very short intersessional period in which to prepare for the sixth session of the Environment Assembly, in February 2023, which would not allow sufficient time for the presentation and discussion of draft resolutions and the associated workload, in particular for Member States with small delegations. One representative suggested bringing the meeting forward to October.

70. A number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, regretted the absence of scheduled consultations with regional or political groups from the road map, as such consultations would lead to a more constructive and inclusive declaration. One representative recognized with appreciation the offer from the Presidency to hold bilateral and regional consultations in the margins of other meetings and forums, as needed, as such consultations would be vital to ensure the progress of the process.

71. Several representatives requested that, when the draft declaration was being prepared, references should be provided to any wording therein that was taken from a particular resolution or a previous declaration so that the original documents could easily be located.

72. A number of representatives said that the road map represented a reasonable approach that avoided time-consuming negotiation attempts, whereas one representative said that the possibility of having line-by-line negotiations for any specific parts of the text that proved especially difficult should not be excluded, as such a process, if used wisely, could contribute to the transparency and efficiency of the process and avoid the danger of a final version being reopened.

73. One representative sought clarification regarding the role of the Bureau of the Environment Assembly throughout the consultation process and whether, where the road map indicated that the Bureau would be considering the declaration, the Bureau would be representing the regional groups and supervising the implementation of the procedure, whereas the substantive discussions would involve all Member States.

74. Noting that all the comments would be taken on board, Mr. Laasel said that it might be possible to bring forward the consultations from November to October to allow for more intersessional time and the Presidency would ensure that references to language from previous declarations and resolutions would be clearly indicated in the draft declaration. Although there was nothing preventing consultations with regional groups or bilateral discussions on the draft declaration, it was preferable for consultations to be inclusive and transparent, including all Member States. Negotiation line by line would also be considered, if necessary.

75. In response to a question regarding the role of the Bureau, the Chair clarified that the Bureau's role was to provide regional group guidance but that it was then the responsibility of the regional groups to ensure that the guidance was reflected in the declaration itself.

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

76. The Chair recalled that, during the resumed 160th meeting of the Committee, the secretariat had presented proposals on the implementation of the recommendations contained in paragraph 41 (j) of the Chair's summary of the ninth annual subcommittee meeting for consideration by the Committee. Following the discussion held at that meeting, revised proposals had been requested from the secretariat and further guidance sought from the Bureau at its meeting on 14 February so that a decision could be sought at the present meeting.

77. Introducing the revised proposal (UNEP/CPR/161/6), the representative of the secretariat recalled that its purpose was to explore how to build on the outcome of the review of the Committee and the discussions at the ninth annual subcommittee meeting in order to further improve the efficiency and practices of the Committee, in particular regarding the strategic planning of Committee meetings, the meeting agenda, the meeting documents and summaries, and the decision-making process.
78. Recommendation one, on developing a draft road map, had not been revised and the road map was now online and available to all Member States.
79. With regard to recommendation two, the draft standing agenda items for future quarterly Committee meetings had been revised. A new agenda item four, entitled “consideration of the relevant evaluation reports and audits of the United Nations Environment Programme”, had been added and agenda item five had been amended to widen its scope and was now entitled “implementation of the outcomes from the previous session and preparations for the upcoming session of the United Nations Environment Assembly”. Some flexibility would be necessary in the elaboration of the agenda items and the wording was designed only to give an idea of what would be addressed under each one.
80. Recommendation three had been amended, in the light of informal feedback from Member States, to clarify that the reference to revision was a reference to the fact that the agenda or the annotated agenda might be revised and not to the deadlines for issuing documents being subject to revision. Furthermore, recommendations three and four had been amended to clarify that documentation deadlines were defined in terms of working days.
81. Recommendation five had been amended to clarify that initiation and adoption of formal decisions by the Committee rested with Member States.
82. In the light of points that had been made by Member States regarding section 3 of the original proposals, which had included a draft decision on the possible adoption of the proposed recommendations, that section had been deleted in line with the revision of the fifth recommendation to clarify the prerogative of Member States to initiate and adopt Committee decisions.
83. It was to be hoped that the revised recommendations reflected the views previously expressed by the Committee and would be helpful both to Member States and to the secretariat in the common endeavour of improving the efficiency and practices of the Committee, in line with the outcome of the review of the Committee.
84. With regard to the road map and the rationale for holding the annual subcommittee meeting in November rather than October, he noted that the timing of the meeting had been changed after consultations with the Chair and on the basis of lessons learned from the fifth session of the Environment Assembly, as a later meeting would allow for the subcommittee to consider the draft report of the Executive Director to the Environment Assembly at its sixth session. It would also provide the optimum conditions for beginning consultations on draft resolutions because it would provide more time for Member States and groups to announce proposed draft resolutions or to present concept notes at the meeting, as experience had shown that many Member States were not in a position to do so in October, and to receive initial feedback and guidance from other Member States. The meeting could also include consideration of the schedule of consultations for the intersessional period, possible clustering and the appointment of co-facilitators. He recalled that it was the prerogative of the Chair of the Committee, supported by the Bureau and the secretariat, to decide on the dates, noting that there were already many other meetings planned for that period, so it was important to avoid overlap where possible.
85. The Chair stressed that the proposal was not a legally binding document and that the responsibility for implementing the recommendations lay mainly with the Chair of the Committee and the Bureau, supported by the secretariat.
86. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, thanked the secretariat for the preparation of the document, noting that the five recommendations were a good basis for improving the effectiveness of Committee meetings. One representative said that, although having a standing agenda would help to keep Committee meetings focused, it was important that there was flexibility within that agenda, to ensure that meetings did not become predictable and could accommodate emerging issues.

87. Several representatives said that recommendation one as currently drafted focused too narrowly on the road map for meetings. They proposed replacing “draft road map” with “strategic road map”, so that the recommendation would reflect the agreement reached at the previous meeting and call more generally for the Chair and secretariat to develop a more strategic approach to Committee meetings. One representative expressed regret that the tentative agendas in the road map currently presented online were mainly focused on preparatory work for the sixth session of the Environment Assembly, and he encouraged the secretariat to return to the pre-pandemic practice of thematic briefings at subcommittee meetings on different aspects of the programme of work of UNEP, which would allow Member States to become more familiar with UNEP activities and to assume their oversight role in a more informed manner and thus more effectively.

88. Regarding recommendation two, some representatives suggested wording to amend proposed agenda item 5 to ensure that it captured the proposal made during the previous Committee meeting that the oversight function of the Committee, as well as updates on UNEP evaluation reports and audits, should be considered under a dedicated agenda item. Another representative supported the suggestion, as long as the oversight function of the Committee was not then limited to the discussion of evaluation and audit reports but also included briefings on the implementation of the programme of work.

89. Regarding recommendation three, some representatives said that the wording should be “with the understanding that the annotated agenda may be revised as needed” rather than just “with the understanding that it may be revised as needed”, in order to clarify that the “it” did not refer to the date of the meeting. It should also be made clearer in the recommendation that the secretariat, in consultation with the Chair, should make every effort to make the agenda available in good time. Furthermore, the reference to the annotated agenda including information on relevant background documents and focus of the discussion should be amended to state that the annotated agenda would include an overview of the relevant documents to be discussed at the meeting and the key issues and focus for the meeting.

90. Regarding recommendation four, one representative noted that the proposed provision of background documents 7 working days before subcommittee meetings was not sufficient to allow for adequate preparation and this should be increased to 15 working days, in line with the provision for Committee meetings. In addition, another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, highlighted the importance of timely publication of meeting documents.

91. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries highlighted the need for a transparent process to define consensual conclusions or recommendations made at each meeting in order to facilitate follow-up by Member States. For example, the Chair could summarize at the end of each meeting what had been agreed upon to avoid confusion and to reflect the consensus of Member States. One representative suggested textual amendments, including to reflect the fact that the Chair had full authority after a discussion at a Committee meeting to reach a conclusion on that discussion and then request the agreement of the Committee to that conclusion. One representative noted that there had previously been a proposal to include decisions and recommendations from Committee meetings in an annex to the report of the meeting but that it would also be appropriate to include them only in the main body of the report, as long as there was a clear indication of the decisions or recommendations that required specific follow-up from the secretariat or Member States. Furthermore, another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noted that although the Chair’s summary was designed to reflect broadly the views of all participants, it was not a negotiated document and should not be used as a source of consensual conclusions or recommendations. He recalled that decisions and recommendations should be agreed upon according to United Nations rules and procedures. In addition, one representative reiterated that, inasmuch as the outcomes of the Committee meetings would be reached by consensus, decisions remained the preserve of the Member States.

92. Regarding the timing of the annual subcommittee meeting, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noted that, although moving the meeting to November to allow the presentation of the draft report of the Executive Director was welcomed, the main focus of that meeting was the programme performance review. She suggested that the meeting should be scheduled back-to-back with the third meeting of the intergovernmental negotiating committee, as both meetings were due to be held in Nairobi. Some representatives said that holding the meeting in late November would not allow a sufficiently long intersessional period for the preparation of draft resolutions unless there was an understanding that Member States would start registering their interest on certain areas for draft resolutions before the annual subcommittee meeting, so that time could then be allocated at the meeting to develop those ideas further.

93. Thanking representatives for their comments and feedback, which would guide the work of the secretariat, the representatives of the secretariat noted the high level of interest in the programme performance report, the discussions on which were now due to take place annually instead of biannually. They proposed that a separate subcommittee meeting could be held in June or July 2023 to allow adequate discussion of the 2022 report, and that the same report could subsequently also be discussed at the tenth annual subcommittee meeting if required, as that meeting retained the oversight function for the Committee.

94. With regard to recommendation one on the road map, the secretariat would take into account the request for more dedicated thematic briefings at subcommittee meetings and adjust the road map accordingly.

95. Regarding recommendation 2, the secretariat certainly recognized the importance of the oversight function for the Committee and had considered that the quarterly reports of the Executive Director, which included information on the implementation of the programme of work and resolutions, together with the annual consideration of the programme performance report and the proposed standing agenda item on audit and evaluation, provided sufficient opportunity for the Committee to perform its oversight function but would seek to clarify the point further in the revised proposal.

96. For recommendations three and four, the secretariat would make every effort to provide documents for meetings as far as possible in advance but it was not currently feasible to impose even stricter deadlines than those proposed in the current draft of the recommendations.

97. Regarding recommendation five, the secretariat would welcome further guidance from Member States on the reflection of recommendations and conclusions. Three tools available were an oral summary from the Chair at the meeting to include conclusions or recommendations; a clear inclusion of conclusions or recommendations in the minutes of the meeting that would be prepared by the secretariat and cleared by the Rapporteur; and the taking note and endorsement by the Committee of conclusions reflected in the report presented to it by the subcommittee. The wording regarding the fact that the initiation and adoption of formal decisions by the Committee rested with Member States had been added to the proposed recommendation because Member States had previously responded that they did not want to pursue the secretariat's proposal for it to provide draft decisions.

98. In terms of the timing of the annual subcommittee meeting, the secretariat would take into account the guidance provided by Member States at the present meeting. The proposed move to late November had been in part based on the availability of the draft report of the Executive Director and the timing of other intergovernmental meetings in October and November. The meeting was indeed currently scheduled to take place immediately after the third meeting of the of the intergovernmental negotiating committee process. The secretariat would provide guidance and a process for Member States to enable them to start work before the meeting on draft resolution proposals and to allow for the presentation of ideas and concept notes and potentially even the introduction of draft resolutions at the meeting itself. On the basis of the review of the Committee, it had been agreed that at least half a day of the annual subcommittee meeting should be dedicated, in the year before an Environment Assembly session, to identifying suitable issues for draft resolutions and draft decisions, and prior preparation would allow for the most effective use of that time.

99. One representative said that, although that it would be highly beneficial to hold the annual subcommittee meeting later so that the draft report of the Executive Director would be available, it was also important to bear in mind that there should be an opportunity for all Member States to gain a better understanding of the background to proposals for draft resolutions and identify possible areas of concern before revised or final drafts were produced.

100. One representative expressed support for the secretariat's suggestion of a discussion on the programme performance review in a subcommittee meeting in June or July. In relation to the oversight function of the Committee, she said that she was not requesting any additional reports but, for example, more regular briefings in Committee meetings on the implementation of the programme of work, such as through flagship UNEP projects, in order to gain a better understanding of the support being provided by UNEP in the regions.

101. One representative expressed support for the secretariat's suggestion of the conclusions of the subcommittee meetings feeding into the Committee meetings and for the record of discussions on agenda item to reflect any conclusions reached or, if a conclusion was not reached on a certain element, what the next steps would be.

102. Several representatives suggested that, as all the recommendations in the proposal were considered to be beneficial in improving Committee procedures and consensus had almost been reached on them, the secretariat should be tasked with preparing a final revised version to be presented and welcomed formally at a future Committee meeting, as such a process would raise the profile of the recommendations.

103. The Chair therefore requested that the document be revised by the secretariat, on the basis of the feedback received from Member States at the present meeting. The document would then be considered by the Bureau and a final version presented at the next Committee meeting.

Agenda item 7

Contribution of the United Nations Environment Assembly to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

104. The Chair recalled that, following a letter from the President of the Economic and Social Council addressed to the President of the United Nations Environment Assembly requesting inputs to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development at its annual meeting, to be held in July 2023, under the theme “Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels”, the secretariat had sent out a letter, on behalf of the President of the Environment Assembly, encouraging Member States to send their inputs in writing so that the secretariat could develop and distribute a zero draft of the input of the Environment Assembly. After an extension to the initial deadline, at the request of Member States, the secretariat had sent out a zero draft for comments from Member States. A first draft had then been considered during a subcommittee meeting on 16 February, a second draft had subsequently been circulated by the secretariat for comments and a final draft had been approved under a silence procedure. The President of the Environment Assembly would now send a letter to the President of the Economic and Social Council with the final document, which was also available on the meeting portal for the current meeting.

105. The Chair thanked Member States for their valuable contributions and the secretariat for an excellent text.

Agenda item 8

Report of the subcommittee

106. The Committee took note of the document entitled “Chair’s report of the Subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives” (UNEP/CPR/161/8).

Agenda item 9

Other matters

107. The representative of the United Kingdom, speaking also on behalf of Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, Türkiye, the United States, and the European Union, said that it had been regrettable that, at the resumed first session of the ad hoc open-ended working group on a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution, one Member State had departed from the long-standing tradition and established practice of accepting unanimous nominations put forward by regional groups. The requested vote on a candidate that had been unanimously nominated by a regional group undermined the Nairobi spirit of multilateralism that Member States had forged through decades of dedication to compromise. It was important to preserve the long-standing role of regional groups in UNEP processes that had served the system well in the past. Voting in plenary should only be used as a last resort and should be well justified. Constructive collaboration in international environmental diplomacy was the best way to find solutions to joint environmental challenges.

108. The representative of the Russian Federation, in exercise of the right of reply, recalled that, at the fifth session of the Environment Assembly, in 2022, his delegation had supported the election of the representative of Ukraine to the Bureau of the Environment Assembly but that several countries, including the United Kingdom and the United States, had later politicized the session by stating that they would never allow a representative of the Russian Federation to be elected to any governing bodies of environmental conventions, agreements or processes. Given that reciprocity was the basis of multilateral diplomacy, his country had had no choice but to prevent the election of representatives of countries that had adopted such a stance. Once those countries reneged on their unfriendly stance, his

country would once again be able to adopt the Nairobi spirit. He noted that when a representative had objected to the election of one Member State from among the Asia-Pacific States to the Executive Board of UN-Habitat, no issue had been raised; the current objection to the actions of the Russian Federation seemed hypocritical and not an embodiment of the Nairobi spirit.

Agenda item 10

Closure of the meeting

109. The meeting was declared closed at 5.30 p.m. on Thursday, 9 March 2023.
