

Statement to be delivered on behalf of the African Group by H.E. Mr. Chol Ajongo, South Sudan Ambassador and Permanent Representative to UNEP during 162nd UNEP CPR Meeting held on 16th June 2023

i. I am honored to present this statement on behalf of the African Group.

ii. This being the last meeting to be presided over by you Mr. Chair, the group wishes to thank you and the outgoing CPR Bureau members, for the able and excellent manner in which you have handled business of the Bureau during the duration of your tenure.

Mr. Chair,

iii. The African group underscores the importance of ensuring participation in intergovernmental processes in a manner that respects human dignity. It is for this reason that the Group wants to repeat its complete displeasure regarding the racist remarks made by the ambassador of Romania towards the African Group on 26th April 2023.

iv. Beyond these outrageous and unacceptable remarks, the Group is extremely concerned by the attitude of some colleagues who participated in the meeting. It seems like they were amused and were laughing. If I may paraphrase Martin Luther King, in the end, we will remember not the words of those who hurt us, but the silence, or rather the laughter of those who were in attendance.

v. The Group has made very clear its position on the matter and shared the same with concerned parties including the Chair of UNEP CPR. The

Group is aware of various international media reports indicating some actions that have been undertaken, but it is yet to receive any official communication from concerned parties on what is actually going on. The Group did however receive two sets of apologies from the Romanian Embassy in Nairobi.

Mr. Chair, that said, allow me to share the Group's general thoughts regarding the 162nd Meeting of the CPR.

- vi. The Group thanks the Executive Director, Ms. Inger Andersen and her team for the excellent work in producing the First Quarterly Report which is informative and useful for oversight purposes. The Group further thanks the Secretariat for the progress achieved in the implementation of resolutions, decisions, the medium-term strategy and the programme of work for the biennium, in a manner that strives to adhere to important principles of international cooperation.
- vii. On the draft Executive Directors Report for the First Quarter of 2023, the Group wants to repeat its gratitude for the production of the report, informed by work that was undertaken in the period under consideration.
- viii. Regarding elections for Officers of the Bureau for the period 2023-2025, the Group would like to first sincerely thank Algeria, through H.E. Mrs. Selma Malika Haddadi, former Ambassador to Kenya and Permanent Representative to UNEP, for ably representing the African region as Vice Chair in the outgoing Bureau. The group recalls, with appreciation, the leadership provided by Ambassador Haddadi in Chairing meetings dealing with preparations for commemoration of UNEP @50.

ix. Secondly, the Group thanks and looks forward to the role to be played by Egypt. It is for this reason that the Group is proud to have nominated H.E. Mr. Wael Nasr Attia, Ambassador of Egypt to Kenya and Permanent Representative of Egypt to UNEP, for the position of Vice Chair representing the African Group.

x. As regards financial outlook and funding challenges for UNEP, the Group would like to thank all member states that continue to honour their obligations, year in year out. The group would like to stress that this is a clear testimony to the importance that the membership attaches to effective, multilateral actions to tackle environmental challenges. It is important for UNEP to have stable, predictive and sustainable funding. Therefore, the group thanks the Secretariat and believes that the five suggested strategies to address funding challenges and opportunities with the proposed actions, merit consideration and require encouragement and support from all members. The Group believes that the main proposals are bold, encompassing, including continuing dialogue with member states on funding, such as 'Friends of UNEP' network.

xi. Meanwhile, by the time the 163 CPR Meeting is held, the African Group will have concluded its 19th Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), to take place from 14-18 August 2023, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. During this important gathering of the African group, focus amongst others will be on the preparations for the Sixth Session of UNEA, taking place under the presidency of H.E Leila BENALI, Minister of Energy transition and Sustainable development of the Kingdom of Morocco.

xii.As I conclude, I would like to express the African Group's keenness to actively engage with all stakeholders in the agenda items for this meeting.

xiii.I thank you, Mr. Chair.