



Republic of Malawi

**Intervention on behalf of Malawi by Mapopa C. Kaunda,
Deputy Permanent Representative (DPR) to UNEP on Agenda Item 6
during 10th Annual subcommittee meeting held from 20-24
November 2023**

1. Excellency Chair, colleagues good morning.
2. From the outset, my delegation aligns itself with the African Group statement.
3. Let me begin by noting with appreciation, the Secretary General's HLAB Report with a focus on shift Two
4. We note that one of the recommendations talks about science-policy interface. While we appreciate the necessity of the science-policy interface, we would like to state the following.
5. There is no doubt in our mind, based on our experience and reinforced by today's presentations that scientific investigation which identifies real and tangible threats to the environment is the sine qua non for adopting real, meaningful and impactful actions. In other words, science-policy interface is all about evidence-based decision-making.
6. It is evident, however that an effective science-policy interface is challenged by several impediments such as time lags – the time between scientific discovery and action – and also inadequate solutions – such as lack of early warning, foresight, scenario-building, predictive analytics and other integrated assessment models.

7. To these two allow me to dwell on two more, which are of interest to my country; these are challenges to diversity and digitalisation.

8. While we are in full support of the science-policy interface approach within UNEP, what we have always expressed concern about has been the lack of diversity in terms of experts, authors and reviewers. The composition of scientific teams and panels has been skewed towards certain regions or countries as well as one gender. As such scientific assessment is perceived as a preserve of certain regions or countries and a certain gender.

9. In addition to a lack of meaningful geographical and gender balance, diversity in the science-policy interface has been lacking as a result of sidelining indigenous or traditional knowledge systems. This speaks to a stereotyped knowledge generation approach that fails to appreciate that communities have managed their livelihoods lived in harmony with nature for hundreds if not thousands of years

Mr. Chair,

10. Digitalisation has been touted as a key facet in the area of science-policy interface. Digital transformation has been touted as the great accelerator. However, in promoting digitalisation, within the confines of science-policy interface, we should not forget that while there is universality in the membership of UNEP, there is no universality in digital capacity. Since countries have different capacities and levels of digital technology, placing digitalisation at the centre of the science-policy interface risks disadvantaging some, leading to non-inclusive environmental mechanisms.

11. In addition, while digital transformation, is a positive development, it is also undeniable that new digital innovations, especially artificial

intelligence or as is commonly known AI, pose an intrinsic threat to humanity in their potential use including in environmental science. In other words, we would be cautious to adopt such digital transformations, at a time when the world, including the UN Secretary General, is yet to fully grasp the implications of AI. As you may recall the UN SG has recently established an advisory body to examine the risks, opportunities and international governance of AI technologies.

12. It is important to acknowledge that these four areas of time lag, solutions, diversity and digitalisation need reforms in order to have an effective, acceptable and meaningful science-policy interface within environmental protection policies and programmes.

13. It is also important to acknowledge that at the end of the day, science is a necessary but not sufficient tool available for our governments, our leaders and our politicians to decide what is best for the people that are governed. This acknowledgement is critical to reduce expectations.

14. My delegation values and looks forward to further engagement on this issue.

15. I thank you all for your kind attention