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**Committee of Permanent Representatives  
to the United Nations Environment Programme  
164th meeting**  
Nairobi, 25 January 2024

## **Draft minutes of the resumed 162nd meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme, held on 31 October 2023**

### **Introduction**

1. The first part of the 162nd meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives was held on 16 June 2023 and was adjourned owing to time constraints. The resumed meeting, which was held in a hybrid format, was opened at 10.30 a.m. on Tuesday, 31 October 2023 by Firas Khouri, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP.
2. The meeting was attended by 38 participants representing 37 members and 1 observer mission.

### **Agenda item 6**

#### **Financial outlook and funding challenges for UNEP – follow-up to the ninth annual subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives**

3. Resuming consideration of the item, Elizabeth Maruma Mrema repeated the statement she had given at the first part of the 162nd meeting (UNEP/CPR/163/2, paras. 61 and 62).
4. At the resumed 162nd meeting, the representative of the secretariat recalled the points made by Sonja Leighton-Kone, Director, Corporate Services Division, at the first part of the 162nd meeting (UNEP/CPR/163/2, paras. 63 and 64). She noted that specific objectives to address the funding challenges faced by UNEP had been identified on the basis of the guidance and recommendations provided by Member States.
5. The first objective was to increase core funding and the secretariat therefore proposed further promoting the importance of the Environment Fund as the main fund of UNEP, advocating for the voluntary indicative scale of contributions to be the main tool used for calculating the level of funding from each Member State, responding to any concerns from Member States regarding funding, and reminding Member States to submit their contributions, including by providing information on the potential negative effects of funding gaps on specific areas of UNEP work. The secretariat also proposed exploring the possibility of seeking further support from the United Nations regular budget. Thanks were due to the 44 Member States that had contributed at or above their full share of contributions in 2022, and it was noted that these included small island developing States, least developed countries and States from all geographical regions, and that the percentage of full-share contributions had exceeded 50 per cent for the first time in 2022. In particular, it was important to recognize the top 15 Member States providing core funding to the Environment Fund, namely, Belgium, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Kingdom of the

Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

6. The second objective was to increase the flexibility of earmarked funding, including by providing more information on, and building wider interest in, the thematic funds. To that end, the secretariat had finalized the governance structure for the funds and was working on an operational manual and on information and communication materials that would explain the role of the funds within the overall funding architecture of UNEP. The secretariat was also developing a comprehensive strategy for engagement with the philanthropic sector, including foundations and high-net-worth individuals. Thanks were due to the Member States that had already provided a total of \$20 million for the funds.

7. The third objective was to demonstrate and communicate the idea of UNEP as a “partner of choice” by increasing the visibility of the work of UNEP within the United Nations system and on the ground, at the country level. The secretariat was improving its communication regarding results achieved within the United Nations system, for example through the Environment Management Group and the High-level Committee on Programmes, where UNEP was able to influence the strategies and policies of other United Nations bodies, and through country teams. The secretariat also planned to demonstrate the value of core funding by showcasing the ways in which the Environment Fund helped to leverage results. Furthermore, it planned to improve communication regarding the mandate and role of UNEP, including with regard to environmental science and policy and the promotion of South-South and triangular cooperation.

8. The fourth objective was to recognize publicly those Member States that contributed over a certain threshold to the Environment Fund. The recognition could include giving such States “a seat at the table”, for example in steering committees, and drawing attention to the contributions made, in particular large, full-share or multi-year contributions, in a variety of UNEP communication instruments, including in major publications. Efforts would also be made to increase the visibility of contributions of earmarked and flexible funding, including to the thematic funds.

9. The fifth and final objective was to continue the dialogue regarding funding at the global, regional and national levels, including through the Committee of Permanent Representatives, briefings for regional groups, participation in meetings of ministers and other high-level officials in the regions, strengthened liaison with permanent representatives in Nairobi, and through an informal network of Member States focused on increasing the provision of funding. The secretariat had already provided briefings for the regions of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Furthermore, a standing agenda item regarding funding had been proposed for the annual subcommittee meeting.

10. The secretariat sought further guidance from the Committee regarding the proposals made and any additional recommendations.

11. In the ensuing discussion, all the representatives who spoke expressed their appreciation to the secretariat for the comprehensive update provided. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed support for the proposals of the secretariat set out in the report.

12. Several representatives provided information on funding provided by their Governments. The representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands announced that her Government was increasing its core funding for the period 2023–2025 by €1.5 million annually to total €9.5 million annually.

13. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, recalled the critical importance of the Environment Fund, which remained the backbone of the work of UNEP, and expressed their support for a focus on ensuring that core funding was sufficient and predictable. Many representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noting the need to widen the donor base, called on all Member States to contribute their fair share, on the basis of the voluntary indicative scale of contributions, including by increasing their non-earmarked contributions. One representative, underlining the voluntary nature of such contributions, encouraged the secretariat to continue considering ways of encouraging all Member States to contribute within their capabilities and in a variety of ways to supporting the work and core mandates of UNEP. Another representative called on the secretariat to provide more information on the assessment of the impact of the Environment Fund.

14. A number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, underlined the need for Member States to provide funding that was as flexible as possible to allow UNEP to fulfil its medium-term strategy and programme of work. One representative expressed support for the thematic funds as a new, flexible funding modality, as long as those funds did not

compete with core funding. Another representative asked for information from the secretariat regarding any impact on the Environment Fund since the establishment of the thematic funds. One representative expressed the hope that the thematic funds would help UNEP to attract more private donations.

15. Regarding communication, one representative encouraged UNEP to engage with Member States at the global, regional and national levels in order to build trust and encourage the flow of voluntary contributions. Another representative expressed support for more regular discussions regarding budget to take place during the meetings of the Committee and for the financial prospects of UNEP to be a standing agenda item for the annual subcommittee meeting.

16. With regard to recognizing funding partners, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, requested more information on upcoming opportunities for providing such visibility. A number of representatives urged against exploring possibilities for providing a “seat at the table” in return for funding, with one noting that it would not be appropriate for a United Nations body to do so, and another seeking further clarification regarding the exact proposal being made by the secretariat. One representative encouraged UNEP to continue its practice of expressing its thanks through social networks for specific contributions and another, welcoming the proposal that more visibility would be provided to countries that provided core funding to UNEP, asked the secretariat to provide more information in that regard. One representative encouraged UNEP to work in synergy with other United Nations entities with regard to mobilizing and securing funding resources. A number of representatives underlined the importance of capturing and recognizing not only financial but also in-kind contributions. Furthermore, one representative, noting that in-kind contributions could help free up funds for other uses, said that her country would continue to support the junior professional officer programme. One representative requested clarification from the secretariat as to whether any of the suggestions provided at the annual subcommittee meeting regarding funding partners had been explored further by UNEP.

17. Regarding the continuation of the dialogue on funding, one representative said that he looked forward to regular updates from the secretariat regarding progress in attracting funding from the private sector, including the development of a comprehensive strategy to engage with the philanthropic sector and with foundations. A number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, encouraged UNEP to consider entering into partnerships with relevant international financial institutions that represented bodies with significant resources that UNEP may be able to leverage. In that regard, one representative noted that strategic thinking would be required in project design to include ways in which international financial institutions or other United Nations bodies or actors could build on the enabling work of UNEP. She also recommended the enhanced use of pooled funds and joint programmes with other United Nations bodies in order to leverage the comparative advantages and funding of the United Nations system for the benefit of UNEP. One representative expressed support for widening the fund base to include non-traditional funding sources, such as financial institution partners and microfinance associations, and another suggested that information be presented by the secretariat and discussions take place at a future meeting of the subcommittee on new non-traditional funding partners, the results achieved with core funding and information on the work that could not be achieved due to the funding gap in the Environment Fund.

18. A number of representatives underlined the importance of strengthening dialogue with donors, with one proposing a focus on communicating what was at stake if funding gaps were not closed. One representative also noted that any new ways of attracting additional financial resources to UNEP should not carry any additional administrative burden or divert funding from the Environment Fund. One representative requested information on the plans for establishing a group of friends of UNEP on funding challenges, which had been proposed at the most recent annual subcommittee meeting.

19. The representative of the secretariat expressed her gratitude for the announcement of pledges of support for UNEP. Furthermore, responding to the comments made, she said that there had been no evidence that core funding had been adversely affected by the establishment of the thematic funds. The secretariat would continue to work on improving the information provided on results achieved by UNEP and on strengthening communication overall, as well as on learning from other United Nations entities. She said that a comprehensive update on the implementation of the recommendations would be provided at the next annual subcommittee meeting. Regarding the “seat at the table”, she clarified that, as partners that provided funding for a specific purpose currently were given a seat in the relevant steering committee, it had been proposed that similar opportunities should be available to those who provided core funding, in order to provide an incentive for such funding. Regarding exploring support from non-traditional funding partners, she recognized the need for engagement both at the regional level and at the individual partner level in that regard. She said that the secretariat would provide more information at the annual subcommittee meeting regarding plans to increase the

visibility of funding partners but she also encouraged funding partners to work directly with the secretariat on relevant ideas. She also said that the secretariat was considering ways of improving recognition of in-kind contributions, including by attributing a monetary value to such contributions. The secretariat also planned to present in a visual way the additional resources that were being leveraged by the Environment Fund. She recognized overall that the secretariat needed to improve on “telling the story” as to how funding was contributing to the work of UNEP.

20. Another representative of the secretariat said that the secretariat was currently considering whether it was appropriate to work with international financial institutions and, if so, how to work with them in a more structured and systematic manner. He noted that the provision of contributions to the thematic funds was not limited to Member States, and contributions could also be made, for example, by partners from the philanthropic and private sectors. An update on the proposed establishment of a group of friends of UNEP on funding challenges would be provided at the upcoming annual subcommittee meeting.

## Agenda item 7

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

21. Introducing the revised proposal on the implementation of paragraph 41 (j) of the Chair’s summary of the ninth annual subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (UNEP/CPR/162/7/Rev.1), the representative of the secretariat recalled that the purpose of the proposal was to explore how to build on the outcome of the review of the Committee, which had been endorsed in decision 5/4 of the Environment Assembly, and the discussions at the ninth annual subcommittee meeting in order to further improve the efficiency and practices of the Committee. The draft guidance, which covered in particular the strategic planning of Committee meetings, the meeting agenda, meeting documents and summaries, and the decision-making process, had been revised in the light of suggestions made at the 160th and 161st meetings of the Committee and at the subcommittee meeting held on 5 October 2023. The revisions were intended to provide clarity on the role of subcommittee meetings and on the way in which the agendas of those meetings were determined, to ensure that the implementation of Environment Assembly resolutions was covered in the proposed agenda of Committee meetings and to best capture possible recommendations and decisions in the Chair’s summary and minutes of Committee meetings.

22. The first element of the guidance provided for improving the road map for meetings by including tentative dates for the presentation of the annual programme performance report and for dedicated briefings on project portfolios and related programmes. Committee meetings could be supplemented by secretariat briefings as appropriate and the Bureau of the Committee was invited to regularly review the dates and draft agendas of the meetings, as reflected in the road map. Member States would be able to propose additional agenda items for subcommittee meetings, either through their regional Bureau member or by approaching the secretariat directly.

23. The second element of the guidance was intended to clarify that the main objectives of the subcommittee meetings were to prepare for the quarterly Committee meetings and to keep Member States informed about important developments relating to multilateral environmental agreements and other relevant environment-related intergovernmental processes and trends. It also allowed for the subcommittee to prepare draft decisions and recommendations to be included in its report for consideration by the Committee at its quarterly meetings.

24. The third element of the guidance contained recommendations for the standing agenda of the quarterly Committee meetings, including ensuring a balance between presenting significant developments and updates on the implementation of the UNEP programme of work and budget, relevant Environment Assembly resolutions and decisions, evaluation reports and audits, and preparations for upcoming sessions of the Environment Assembly. Agenda items could be added as needed, with the focus of each item explained in the annotated agenda.

25. The remaining elements of the guidance were intended to clarify the time frame for the provision of the agenda and other documents for subcommittee, Committee and Bureau meetings, and provide for ways in which the Committee could consider and adopt draft decisions and recommendations, as well as improving the meeting summaries of subcommittee and Committee meetings to better reflect those decisions and recommendations.

26. In the ensuing discussion, all the representatives who spoke expressed support for the revised proposal, which, they said, would strengthen the work of the Committee. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed support in particular for the proposal that

subcommittee meetings be planned more strategically to allow for substantive discussions and the preparation of recommendations and decisions to be forwarded to the Committee at its quarterly meetings. She also noted that further discussion and updates on the guidance may be required in the future. One representative proposed the inclusion of an additional permanent item on the agenda of the quarterly Committee meetings regarding the implementation status of Committee recommendations and of subcommittee recommendations that had been approved by the Committee. She also encouraged ongoing cooperation between the UNEP Regional Office for Africa and the Group of African States in Nairobi, and looked forward to regular meetings with and briefings provided by the various departments of UNEP in order to close expectation gaps and discuss limitations. One representative noted that the implementation of the proposed guidelines would also support the continuity of work when there was a change in permanent representative for any given Member State. He said that clarity regarding the purpose and scope of Committee and subcommittee meetings was paramount. It was also important for all briefings organized by the secretariat for Member States to be linked clearly to the programme of work and budget, to the mid-term strategy and to the relevant resolution, to specify the division of the secretariat responsible for that area of work, and to stipulate the purpose and intended outcomes of the briefing. It would also be beneficial for one subcommittee meeting to focus on progress in the implementation of Environment Assembly resolutions, including examples at the regional or national levels and information on challenges encountered. He also said that, although the reports of the Executive Director were always very rich in substance, incorporating a wide range of information, it would be more helpful if they focused on a specific theme.

27. Thanking representatives for their comments, the representative of the secretariat said that, as the working method of all intergovernmental bodies remained a work in progress, the implementation of the recommendations would be subject to a stocktake in a few months' time in order to assess whether any further improvements could be made.

28. The Committee agreed to endorse the guidance on the organization of its work, as set out in document UNEP/CPR/162/7/Rev.1.

## **Agenda item 9**

### **Other matters**

29. The Co-Chairs of the Nairobi group of friends to combat marine litter and plastic pollution invited all Member States to two online events that were intended to serve as a platform that bridged the gap between the proponents of innovative solutions, stakeholders who were well-versed in the current landscape of plastics, and policymakers, as well as to secure a robust outcome from the process of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

30. The representative of the State of Palestine, recalling the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment enshrined in General Assembly resolution 76/300 and Human Rights Council resolution 48/13, drew the attention of Member States to the systematic destruction of the Gaza Strip by Israel, which, according to reliable sources, had reached an average of 33 metric tons of explosives dropped on each square kilometre of the Gaza Strip. Such actions also violated Environment Assembly resolution 2/15 on the protection of the environment in areas affected by armed conflict and principle 23 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, namely that the environment and natural resources of people under oppression, domination and occupation should be protected. The attacks on the Gaza Strip had profoundly affected the well-being of the population and the environment owing to the destruction of hospitals and clinics, and of water, sanitation, hygiene and medical waste infrastructure. By cutting off the supply of vital services and utilities to the Gaza Strip, Israel was also affecting the work of sewage water pumps and wastewater treatment plants, thereby threatening the Gaza Strip with environmental disaster and preventing the collection of solid waste and the operation of desalination plants, and leaving the population vulnerable to health risks, including disease. Furthermore, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch had drawn attention to the strong possibility that Israeli forces had used white phosphorus artillery shells in densely populated civilian areas in the Gaza Strip. White phosphorus, an internationally prohibited weapon, burned at extremely high temperatures when exposed to air and could continue to burn inside the flesh, causing horrific pain and life-changing injuries, and could not be extinguished with water. The use of such a weapon would constitute a devastating violation of the lives of Palestinian civilians and have significant long-term effects on the environment. He therefore requested that the Committee take note of the current situation in the Gaza Strip, which would need to be addressed within the scope of the mandate of UNEP in the near future.

31. The representative of Israel recalled that, on 7 October 2023, members of the terrorist organization Hamas had murdered, mutilated, raped and kidnapped 240 Israelis while at the same time launching more than 5,000 rockets into Israel. Some 90 per cent of the disconnected power lines in the Gaza Strip had been cut by the rockets of Hamas itself and the organization was also responsible for stealing supplies and stalling their entry into the area from Egypt. After Israel had withdrawn from the Gaza Strip in 2005, the local population had chosen to be led by Hamas, which in turn had murdered officials of the Palestinian Authority, used hospitals as a front to hide its activities, and diverted water and electricity to its own terrorist operation. In the future, Hamas would only be a footnote in history and that would be a significant contribution to a better environment.

32. The representative of the State of Palestine said that he had listened carefully to the representative of Israel but that what had been said constituted a political speech with no reference to issues that fell within the remit of UNEP.

## **Agenda item 10**

### **Closure of the meeting**

33. The meeting was declared closed at 12.15 p.m. on Tuesday, 31 October 2023.

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