



**UNITED
NATIONS**

UNEP/CPR/164/4



**United Nations
Environment
Programme**

Distr.: General
27 December 2023

English only

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

Draft minutes of the 163rd meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme, held on 31 October 2023

Agenda item 1

Opening of the meeting by the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

1. The meeting was opened at 12.15 p.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.
3. The Chair welcomed the following new members to the Committee: Günther Zimmer (Austria), Maksim Supanenko (Belarus), Bojan Vujić (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Pedro León Cortés Ruíz (Colombia), Eugenia Ponce de Leon (Colombia), Nicol Adamcová (Czechia), Stephan Schönemann (Denmark), Rina Yessenia Lozano Gallegos (El Salvador), Mahlaba Almon Mamba (Eswatini), Temesgen Getachew Checkol (Ethiopia), Ondrej Simek (European Union), Martin Röw (Germany), Ntsiuoa Sekete (Lesotho), Ibrahim M.A. Saed (Libya), Emad A. B. Aboubaker (Libya), Duncan Saunder Mwapasa (Malawi), Dharmraj Busgeeth (Mauritius), Ibrar Hussain Khan (Pakistan), Mohammed Bin Mutair Al-Enazi (Qatar), Martin Ngoga (Rwanda), Ranjeet Singh (Singapore), Anita Pipan (Slovenia), Miguel Soler Gomis (Spain), Natalia Suárez de Puga Canosa (Spain), Karin Snellman (Sweden), Steve Tharakan (Switzerland), Salim Ibrahim Al Naqbi (United Arab Emirates), Benard Yohana Kibesse (United Republic of Tanzania), and Alfred Musemuna (Zambia).
4. He then bade farewell to the following departing members: Billel Hassani (Algeria), Michael Kassal (Austria), Roman Kozyr (Belarus), Nermina Kapetanovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Sergio Salazar Alzate (Colombia), Martin Klepetko (Czechia), Ole Thonke (Denmark), Egriselda Aracely González López (El Salvador), Carlton M. Dlamini (Eswatini), Katrin Hagemann (European Union), Rózsa József (Hungary), Fionnuala Quinlan (Ireland), Nyolosi Mphale (Lesotho), Fathalla A. Aljadey (Libya), Abdurahman A.A. Alemari (Libya), Kenneth Sanga (Malawi), Mahendr Dosieah (Mauritius), Erasmo Roberto Martinez Martinez (Mexico), Saqlain Syedah (Pakistan), Maria João Cocco da Fonseca (Portugal), Dragoş Viorel Radu Țigău (Romania), Hazri Hassan (Singapore), Frida Jangsten (Sweden), Manuela Leimgruber (Switzerland), Patrick Egloff (Switzerland), Hatem Landoulsi (Tunisia), Mohamed Salim Hafsi (Tunisia), John Stephen Simbachawene (United Republic of Tanzania), Shawqi Abdulghani Noman (Yemen), and Willard Kapambwe Nduna (Zambia).

Agenda item 2

Adoption of the agenda

5. The agenda was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/CPR/163/1).

Agenda item 3

Report of the Executive Director

6. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to the report entitled “Quarterly report to the 163rd meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives: April–June 2023”.
7. In her oral briefing, the Executive Director of UNEP, Inger Andersen, noted the continuing relevance of the Charter of the United Nations, which was rooted in the spirit of determination to heal divisions and build peace, at a time when innocent people were paying the price of conflict, both through the direct harm caused to them and through the destruction of the environment and environmental infrastructure, and the price of the harm that humankind was causing to the planet. Current trends in extreme weather events underscored the need for a significant increase in efforts to tackle the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste, and she noted that recent steps forward in that regard had brought some hope that the issue could be tackled effectively.
8. In September 2023, the landmark Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste had been adopted by the International Conference on Chemicals Management at its fifth session, which had been hosted by Germany. The Framework contained 28 targets and was aimed at the prevention of illegal trade and trafficking of chemicals and waste; the phaseout, by 2035, of highly hazardous pesticides in agriculture, through a transition to safer and more sustainable chemical alternatives; and the responsible management of chemicals in sectors such as industry, agriculture and health care. An increase in financing had been requested from the Global Environment Facility and, although the Framework was voluntary, all Member States were called upon to contribute to the extent possible, in order to ensure the sound management of chemicals and waste.
9. On the sidelines of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, the task force on nature-related financial disclosures, co-chaired by the Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, had released its recommendations for businesses and financial institutions on reporting and acting on nature-related dependencies, impacts, risks and opportunities, enabling the integration of nature into the decision-making of such institutions. The high-level meeting of the seventy-eighth session had seen Member States renewing their commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, including through mobilization related to 12 high-impact initiatives at the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, and a shift from pledges to credible actions, policies and plans at the Climate Ambition Summit. Participants had also supported efforts led by the United Nations to establish global voluntary principles on critical energy transition minerals.
10. Turning to the leadership shown by Member States, she said that UNEP had been honoured to be one of the partners supporting Kenya when it had co-hosted the Africa Climate Summit 2023 in September 2023 with the African Union. In addition, at the summit on science, technology and innovation of the Group of 77 and China, which had been held in Havana in September 2023, developing countries had made clear that they were prioritizing an approach to development that would ensure a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. It was important to note that science, technology and innovation could indeed help developing nations to leapfrog to a greener, safer and more equitable future. The Group of 20, under the presidency of India, had promised to accelerate actions to address environmental crises and challenges. Saudi Arabia would host World Environment Day 2024, on the theme of land restoration, desertification and drought resilience, as well as hosting the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and the Republic of Korea would host World Environment Day 2025, on the theme of ending plastic pollution globally, as well as hosting the fifth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.
11. UNEP continued to strengthen the role of Nairobi as a hub for uniting actions across the three elements of the triple planetary crisis, with the Thirty-Fifth Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the resumed second part of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the

fifth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, all having been held at UNEP headquarters in 2023. During the Thirty-Fifth Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol, the largest ever replenishment of the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol – \$965 million – had been agreed, which would support action on phasing out hydrochlorofluorocarbons and phasing down hydrofluorocarbons.

12. She noted that in her report to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its sixth session, which would be held in Nairobi in early 2024, she would propose ways in which the Assembly might initiate effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral action across all three elements of the triple planetary crisis in certain key horizon areas. Thanking the European Commission and Hungary for their generous contributions for the sixth session, she recalled that the funding gap for the session was currently \$1,163,000 and she invited Governments to consider making a financial contribution, in accordance with their specific circumstances and capacity, to ensure an inclusive, participatory and successful session.

13. Turning to UNEP publications, she drew attention to the *Global Climate Litigation Report: 2023 Status Review*, which concluded that climate litigation was becoming an integral part of securing climate action and climate justice, and she noted that the report had been commented on and cited widely in the media. *Africa Environment Outlook for Business: Our Environment Our Wealth* had been launched on the sidelines of the nineteenth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment and included a range of success stories of green ventures, as well as data on the potential for growth across various sectors. The *Rapid Environmental Assessment of Kakhovka Dam Breach; Ukraine, 2023* underscored the urgent need for remediation and restoration actions for both the flooded land downstream and the desiccated wetlands upstream following the dam breach. In response to a request from Member States, a series of climate change reports, on the adaptation, emissions and production gaps, was due to be published ahead of the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and a briefing on the reports would take place during the annual subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives in November 2023. Furthermore, with regard to the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, she noted that it was vital that the countries that had the required means to increase ambition related to mitigation and adaptation did so at that session. One of the main areas of focus for the session would be sustainable cooling, and a global cooling pledge was being developed to allow for increased access to cooling without a corresponding increase in emissions. The work would be supported by a cooling stocktake report, due to be published by the UNEP-led Cool Coalition, outlining three priority action areas for reducing emissions in the sector.

14. With regard to the organization of UNEP, she said that a task force, chaired by the Deputy Executive Director in her role as acting Director of the Corporate Services Division, was developing a new Climate Division, which was due to begin operation in early 2024 and for which a director was currently being sought. UNEP remained committed to promoting geographical diversity and inclusion in staff recruitment and, as at 30 September, 71 per cent of external candidates selected for Professional positions in 2023 were from underrepresented regions. In addition, the assessment process for the first cohort of the young talent pipeline had recently been completed and the successful candidates would be announced before the end of 2023. Furthermore, she noted that the UNEP Chief of Human Resources had travelled with her and subsequently with the Deputy Executive Director to four countries in Eastern Europe between June and October 2023 in order to establish new alliances and partnerships with strategic partners to position UNEP as an employer of choice in that region. Finally, she said that the Policy and Programme Division, under the able leadership of Tim Kasten, had been improving its delivery model in order to strengthen efforts to serve Member States at the country level. It was with regret that she announced the imminent retirement of Mr. Kasten.

15. In the ensuing discussion, all the representatives who spoke, including several speaking on behalf of groups of countries, expressed their appreciation to the Executive Director for her comprehensive quarterly report.

16. A number of representatives speaking on behalf of groups of countries, drew attention to the successful hosting of World Environment Day 2023 by Côte d'Ivoire, in partnership with the Kingdom of the Netherlands, under the theme of beating plastic pollution. In that regard, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, urged all Member States to engage constructively at the upcoming third session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. A number of representatives drew attention to the tireless work of the African group of negotiators to develop a common vision for the region with regard to plastic pollution, and the need

for a global shift to a circular economy and for recognition of the socioeconomic impact of the control of plastic pollution on vulnerable and marginalized groups, in particular waste pickers. One representative also noted the need to address concerns regarding transition within the plastics industry, and another underlined the need for the legally binding instrument to set standards for plastic polymers, removing those which were harmful to human health, and to establish a framework for traceability, monitoring and evaluation of plastics. Furthermore, a number of representatives drew attention to the need for establishing the necessary financial mechanisms for the implementation of the new instrument. Finally, one representative stressed that the process at the third session should be guided by the views expressed by Member States at previous sessions of the intergovernmental negotiating committee, so that the resulting instrument would address the concerns of all Member States, thereby guaranteeing the universality of adherence and application of the instrument.

17. Many representatives underscored the importance of UNEP work on issues related to the marine environment and the blue economy, and one representative expressed his country's interest in finding out how it could work with the Committee and the Environment Assembly to scale up the Lamu blue carbon initiative. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, also warmly welcomed the 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, which would address existing inequalities in access and benefit-sharing from marine genetic resources, their derivatives and associated digital sequence information. A number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, drew attention to the offer made by Chile to host the secretariat of the agreement, with one representative noting that it would allow for the global governance mechanism for the agreement to be in a developing country and for the strengthening of capacity and technology transfer throughout the global South.

18. The representatives of Costa Rica and France drew attention to the fact that they would co-host the third United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, in 2025. Furthermore, one representative underlined the importance of the protection of the marine environment, given that 50 per cent of marine ecosystems had disappeared in the last 50 years, as had 20 per cent of mangroves, and called for UNEP support in increasing the speed at which oceans were being protected, in developing maritime economy and in strengthening ocean-related science and culture. He also said that the five priorities for protecting the marine environment should be the protection of marine biodiversity, which could be achieved through the regional seas programme; the protection of the seabed; the fight against plastic pollution; the fight against illicit fishing; and the decarbonization of maritime transport. Another representative recalled that 90 per cent of national adaptation plans and nationally determined contributions under the Framework Convention on Climate Change included a prominent water-related component, which showed increasing acknowledgement and understanding of the critical role of water in mitigation and adaptation efforts. In that regard, further discussion was required regarding addressing loss and damage caused by water-related climate events in vulnerable countries.

19. Several representatives, including a number speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the intergovernmental consultations on nature-based solutions, which had been co-chaired by Costa Rica and Nigeria. The representatives drew attention to the support provided for that process by the UNEP Ecosystems Division. The consultations had shown the relevance of nature-based solutions for sustainable development and it was to be hoped that such solutions would be implemented more widely in the future, with one representative calling for them to be mainstreamed throughout UNEP work. Another representative, however, requested more focus on the elaboration of the standards and criteria required both to implement and evaluate nature-based solutions, and on engaging local communities and exploring sources of sustainable investment in nature-based solutions, in line with Environment Assembly resolution 5/5.

20. A number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed their appreciation for UNEP work on sustainable consumption and production, in particular in relation to strengthening discussion on the topic within the United Nations system, including through the nexus dialogue of the Environment Management Group on the matter that had been organized by UNEP. Moreover, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, encouraged UNEP to increase its efforts related to the efficient use of resources and the achievement a circular economy, and to the implementation of United Nations reforms and the mainstreaming of environmental concerns within United Nations country teams.

21. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noted that the global intergovernmental meeting on minerals and metals, held in Geneva in September 2023, had identified the need for greater collaboration between the global North and the global South, in particular regarding the provision of means of implementation to achieve best practices and to fulfil the

recommendations of Environment Assembly resolutions 4/19 on mineral resource governance and 5/12 on environmental aspects of minerals and metals management.

22. A number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, commended UNEP for its continued and swiftly provided support for countries affected by natural disasters and by conflicts, as assessing environmental damage during conflicts was vital both in order to protect civilians from immediate harmful effects and to fully understand the long-term environmental and economic consequences. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed the view that the work being carried out by UNEP in Ukraine would help to create an effective mechanism for assessing environmental damage, which often had cross-border impacts, that could then be used in other conflicts. Furthermore, she noted that the quick mobilization of environmental experts to areas affected by natural disasters was vital in facilitating a faster and more informed recovery, and therefore encouraged UNEP to continue engaging as appropriate in recovery work in the Syrian Arab Republic and other areas affected by disasters. One representative encouraged UNEP to give due consideration to the effects of white phosphorus weapons that were being used in the Middle East, both in terms of the environmental impact and the impact on the health of human beings and wildlife.

23. With regard to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, one representative drew attention to the reports produced by UNEP to outline the implications of the goals and targets of the Framework, and another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the continued work of the UNEP Law Division building on the so-called “Bern process” on cooperation and coordination among parties of the biodiversity-related conventions under the Convention on Biological Diversity in relation to the Framework in order to promote synergies while also respecting the mandates of the various biodiversity-related conventions, thereby ensuring the provision of means of implementation for developing countries. In relation to funding for the Framework, one representative said that even if the newly established Global Biodiversity Framework Fund under the Global Environment Facility met its informal targets, that would still be far from the \$200 billion required annually and served as a reminder of the need to uphold commitments regarding means of implementation and that the provision of adequate, predictable and easily accessible financial and technological resources were an indispensable component of international agreements, in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

24. Regarding UNEP partnerships, one representative strongly encouraged UNEP to apply the lessons learned from the recently concluded Poverty-Environment Action for the Sustainable Development Goals, run jointly with the United Nations Development Programme, to future initiatives. Another representative expressed appreciation of UNEP work in its role as one of the contributors to the Systematic Observations Financing Facility. One representative requested an update on UNEP engagement with United Nations country teams, including on the effectiveness of such engagement. Another representative called for more coordination between the secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements and the UNEP secretariat in order to ensure synergy and make the most effective use of financial resources. Turning to the report itself, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the new practice of providing a list containing the details of the organizations newly accredited to UNEP and its governing bodies. Finally, one representative requested a briefing at a subcommittee meeting on the UNEP strategy for engaging with young people in the development of its programmes and on the organizations that contribute to education on environmental matters in collaboration with other United Nations bodies.

25. Turning to regional achievements, a number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, drew attention to the Buenos Aires Declaration, which had been adopted at the extraordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement) and which included the launch of a voluntary fund for promoting access to information, public participation and justice in environmental matters. Furthermore, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, drew attention to the outcomes of the twenty-third meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, which had been held in Panama City in October 2023, namely the San Jose Declaration and six substantive decisions, on pollution, sustainable consumption and production and circular economy, climate change, biodiversity, gender and the environment, and environmental education.

26. One representative recalled that the presidential declaration of the fourth meeting of presidents of States parties to the Amazon Cooperation Treaty, held in August 2023 in Brazil, had established a new agenda of cooperation to promote sustainable development in the Amazon that included the protection of the biome and of the river basin, as well as social inclusion, and the

promotion of science, technology, innovation and local economies, including the participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. The joint statement “United for our forests”, made by States parties to the Amazon Cooperation Treaty together with the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Indonesia, had reaffirmed the commitment of those countries to forest preservation, reducing the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, conserving and valuing biodiversity, and pursuing a just ecological transition. In that regard, she noted that deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon had been reduced by 48 per cent in the first eight months of 2023.

27. One representative expressed his appreciation for UNEP work in the African region in particular, as the region was one of those most affected by climate change and related crises, with dire consequences for livelihoods and food security. He drew attention to the support provided by UNEP through the flood water diversion projects in the Sudan, ecosystem-based adaptation in South Sudan, and the development of a national adaptation plan for Uganda, as well as to the importance of the consideration of key environmental challenges to sustainable development at the third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, to be held in Kigali in June 2024. Furthermore, he urged UNEP to continue providing support to Member States to strengthen national environmental governance, guided by scientific assessment and innovative approaches. Another representative expressed her gratitude to UNEP for the support provided to the Africa Climate Summit and several other representatives also drew attention to the success of the meetings held in Africa on ways of enhancing links at the national level between achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and meeting the objectives of multilateral environmental agreements. One representative encouraged UNEP to build on that success by also holding such meetings in other regions. The representative of Belgium announced that her country was making funding available for a junior professional officer position in the UNEP Regional Office for Africa.

28. Regarding the preparation of the seventh edition of the Global Environment Outlook report, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed efforts to incorporate social and economic impacts, as well as to integrate Indigenous and local knowledge, in the publication, and suggested that the practice in that regard of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and the Convention on Biological Diversity should be used as a model. In addition, she suggested that text boxes be included containing examples of traditional knowledge provided by Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

29. In relation to organizational matters, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, acknowledged UNEP efforts to increase its transparency and accountability and encouraged UNEP to continue making such efforts. A number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, acknowledged the efforts of the Deputy Executive Director and the high-level task force in providing guidance for the revision of the UNEP gender policy and strategy, which they said was essential for achieving gender parity in UNEP. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, recognizing that progress had been made towards equitable geographical representation among UNEP staff, requested information on the remaining barriers to increasing the number of staff from underrepresented regions. Another representative, while welcoming the progress made in that regard, which was in line with Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations and Environment Assembly resolution 5/13, recalled that it was also stated in Article 101 that the paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service would be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. He also requested a formal briefing on the proposal to create a new division in UNEP to focus on climate matters, including information on the impact on governance and associated proposed costs and potential efficiencies generated.

30. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed UNEP efforts in developing a global data strategy, as mandated under Environment Assembly resolution 4/23, and suggested that a briefing be provided to the subcommittee in that regard so that the subcommittee could provide further guidance.

31. Regarding funding and the programme of work, one representative asked whether the fact that a smaller number of countries than usual had pledged contributions to the Environment Fund in 2023 was a cause for concern. Another representative called for further discussions at Committee or subcommittee meetings regarding ways to broaden the funding base and implement the funding-related suggestions made at the 162nd meeting of the Committee. He also noted that there was a possible lack of synchronization between the UNEP programme of work and budget and the Environment Assembly cycle and said that he would welcome further consideration of the matter. One representative suggested linking the activities mentioned in the report to the targets and indicators of the programme of work in order to provide a better understanding as to how the activities were contributing to its implementation.

32. 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 looked forward to hearing guidance from Member States in relation to mining and minerals, in particular critical minerals.
33. She said that UNEP would be happy to provide regional briefings on its data strategy, a briefing for the subcommittee on the role of youth and to provide an update on UNEP engagement with United Nations country teams. In that regard, she noted that all the focal points of the United Nations country teams had been invited to attend five days of training at UNEP headquarters in November 2023.
34. Regarding the challenges identified in terms of recruitment from underrepresented regions, she said that UNEP was not as well-known in some regions, and that potential candidates might simply not be looking at the UNEP website, where vacancies were posted, and might not be familiar with what it would be like to live and work in Nairobi. To rectify the situation, proactive outreach was being carried out to reach new communities, with the UNEP Chief of Human Resources organizing for staff members to explain on social media sites how they came to work for UNEP and what their work entailed, and senior members of the secretariat visiting universities when on mission to talk to young people about opportunities at UNEP. She noted that change in geographical representation could only happen slowly, as it was dependent on vacancies being available, and she confirmed that, in line with Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations, UNEP ensured that the strongest candidates were recruited.
35. Thanking Finland for its generous contributions to the work of UNEP, she said that one reason for the lower number of countries making financial contributions was likely to be the current cost-of-living crisis. The situation was being monitored but was not currently a significant cause for concern. She also drew attention to a paper that had been published in 2021 on ways to broaden funding and to the report on funding that she would deliver to the Environment Assembly at its sixth session.
36. Regarding synchronization between the programme of work and the Environment Assembly session cycle, she noted that a document on options for the timing of future Environment Assembly sessions and related consequences for the medium-term strategies and programmes of work and budget was due to be discussed at the tenth annual subcommittee meeting in November 2023.
37. She thanked Brazil for the leadership it was showing in reducing and halting deforestation and also drew attention to the Summit of the Three Basins, held in Brazzaville in October 2023, which had brought together participants from countries in the Amazon, Congo and Borneo-Mekong basins, which constituted most of the tropical forest in the world. She also thanked Belgium for its funding of the Junior Professional Officer position in Africa. She noted the excellent work being done by the Director of the Regional Office for Africa and drew attention to the two new positions at the P-4 level that had been added to support work in the region.
38. Regarding the new division in UNEP that would focus on climate matters, she said that its establishment had been an administrative decision, as the other related divisions of industry and economy and of ecosystems had become too large, requiring a new division to provide the necessary oversight. A briefing would be given on the matter in the near future, including with regard to governance and cost implications.
39. She expressed the hope that participants at the third United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, in 2025, would consider the harmonization of the regional seas conventions with the 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.
40. Finally, she recalled that UNEP would always carry out a full assessment of the impacts of conflict on a Member State upon request by the Member State, if the assessment fell within the mandate of UNEP.

Agenda item 4

Update on the preparations for the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

41. The Executive Director recalled that, at a retreat held in July 2023, the bureaux of the Environment Assembly and of the Committee of Permanent Representatives had approved the structure, associated guidance and key documents for the sixth session of the Environment Assembly

and had decided that the session would be held fully in person, with all video messages received from heads of State or Government played during the high-level segment and any other video messages received being posted on the session's website and not reflected in the report of the session. A supplementary item on cooperation with multilateral environmental agreements had been included on the provisional agenda and a Multilateral Environmental Agreements Day would be held on 28 February 2024, consisting of a formal opening segment and two high-level dialogues.

42. The Deputy Executive Director recalled that the Executive Director had sent out invitations to all ministers of the environment in September 2023 and had also encouraged them to attend the Multilateral Environmental Agreements Day. Ministerial forums to prepare for the sixth session, including discussions on possible draft proposals, had been held in the regions of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as for the Arab States. The secretariat had attended all the forums in order to present briefings on the status of preparations for the session and provide guidelines for the submission of draft resolutions and decisions. An advance version of the Executive Director's report to the Assembly had already been circulated and a briefing session for Member States would be held in early November in a hybrid format. The total estimated budget for holding the sixth session of the Environment Assembly was approximately \$4 million and there was currently a funding gap of some \$1.2 million. She expressed gratitude to the European Commission and the Government of Hungary for their contributions and encouraged all Member States in a position to do so to provide financial support in order to close the funding gap for the session.

43. A representative of the secretariat recalled that, in line with Environment Assembly decision 5/4, the sixth session of the Environment Assembly would be held from 26 February to 1 March 2024 and would be preceded by the sixth meeting of the open-ended committee of permanent representatives, from 19 to 23 February. The theme for the sixth session of the Environment Assembly was "Effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution" and the session was expected to have between 5,000 and 6,000 participants.

44. Regarding the draft ministerial declaration for the session, she recalled that the road map for consultations had been circulated by the President of the Environment Assembly in April 2023 and a zero draft, based on the written inputs of Member States, observers and other stakeholders, had been circulated on 5 May 2023. Two rounds of informal consultations had already been held and the second draft had been circulated on 31 October, in preparation for a third round of consultations, which would be held in a hybrid format on 8 November and involve consideration of the draft declaration on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis. The President would continue to hold the pen and there would be no line-by-line negotiations.

45. The provisional agenda for the sixth session, which had been endorsed by the bureaux of the Environment Assembly and of the Committee, included 15 standard items, as approved in decision 5/4, and the supplementary item on cooperation with multilateral environmental agreements, which had been proposed in the outcome document of the stocktaking meeting for the process of review by the Committee of Permanent Representatives of the Environment Assembly and its subsidiary bodies, and subsequently endorsed by the Environment Assembly at its resumed fifth session. The draft ministerial declaration and draft resolutions and decisions would be considered under agenda item 5, on international environmental policy and governance issues, and then adopted, where appropriate, under agenda item 12, on the adoption of the resolutions, decisions and outcome document of the session.

46. Turning to the structure of the session, she said that the session would open at 10 a.m. on Monday, 26 February 2024. After the adoption of the agenda and consideration of organizational matters, the Committee of the Whole would be established and would meet from Monday to Wednesday to conclude negotiations on all pending draft resolutions and decisions. Following the Multilateral Environmental Agreements Day on Wednesday, the high-level segment would begin on Thursday morning, with national statements following the opening of that segment. On Thursday afternoon, the first leadership dialogue followed by a multi-stakeholder dialogue would be held in parallel with the delivery of further national statements. On Friday morning, the second and third leadership dialogues would be held in parallel with the delivery of further national statements. At the closing plenary on Friday afternoon, summaries of all the dialogues would be presented and the adoption of the resolutions, decisions and ministerial declaration was envisaged. Thereafter, the Environment Assembly would elect its Bureau for the seventh session and adopt the report of the sixth session. The session would then be closed. Side events would be held over the lunch period and in the evenings, regional and political group meetings would be held from 9 to 10 a.m. each day and the Environment Assembly Bureau would meet each day from 8 to 9 a.m.

47. The sixth session would be held fully in person, with plenary meetings of the Assembly and of the proposed sessional committee of the whole streamed live on United Nations Web TV in all six official languages of the United Nations. Informal consultations and negotiations would be held in a hybrid format, with both in-person and online participation, in English only. The meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives would also be held in a hybrid format.
48. With regard to consideration of the agenda item on cooperation with multilateral environmental agreements, she drew attention to the concept note on the matter that had been approved by the Bureau of the Environment Assembly and made available on the meeting portal. One objective of the agenda item was to strengthen the engagement of multilateral environmental agreements at the sixth session in order to promote coherence between Environment Assembly resolutions and the decisions of the governing bodies of multilateral environmental agreements, while fully respecting the autonomy of those multilateral environmental agreements and without introducing any additional requirements for the parties to those agreements. The other objective was to support the Environment Assembly in enhancing its relationship with multilateral environmental agreements and its contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The expected outcome of the agenda item was a summary of the discussion but could also be a resolution or a decision, and it was also expected that the outcome of the item would be brought to the attention of the governing bodies of the multilateral environmental agreements, as appropriate.
49. The Multilateral Environmental Agreements Day would be formally opened by the President of the Environment Assembly and opening statements would be made by the Executive Director and by a number of presidents of conferences of the parties to multilateral environmental agreements, as well as executive secretaries of such agreements. The high-level dialogues would be on the themes of strengthening the science-policy interface for the effective implementation of environmental commitments and on strengthening cooperation between the Environment Assembly, UNEP and multilateral environmental agreements in order to enhance effective implementation at the national level, including through means of implementation. The concept notes for the dialogues would be prepared by UNEP in consultation with the secretariats of the agreements and would include guiding questions and possible key messages for future action. The dialogues would be open to all the participants in the Environment Assembly.
50. Exhibitions throughout the week of the session would showcase cooperation between UNEP and multilateral environmental agreements, as well as between other entities and the agreements and between the agreements themselves on relevant cross-cutting topics. In addition, side events relating to multilateral environmental agreements would be held between Wednesday and Friday, and calls for expressions of interest had been sent to all the relevant agreement secretariats, with a decision on the number of events that would be held to be made in due course.
51. Regarding statements at the high-level segment, she said that any pre-recorded national statements delivered by Heads of State or Government unable to attend the session in person would be introduced by the President of the Assembly or the presiding officer. The list of speakers would be established on a first-come, first-served basis, while following established protocol that Heads of State would speak first, followed by vice-presidents, heads of government, deputy prime ministers, ministers and other national representatives. If time permitted, statements by observers would then follow. The time limit, under established practice, would be five minutes for group statements and three minutes for individual statements, and inscription on the list of speakers would begin in January 2024, through the e-delegate portal.
52. The themes for the three leadership dialogues were all designed to address climate, nature, and pollution and waste action but through three different sets of solutions, namely science, data and digital; financial; and solutions related to governance and advocacy, although the focus of the final set was currently being reconsidered by the secretariat. A concept note for each dialogue containing guiding questions would be provided to Member States in advance and the dialogues would be open to all registered participants, held in person but also webcast, with interpretation available for all official United Nations languages. Each dialogue would be opened by the President of the Environment Assembly and, following a brief statement from the Executive Director, two keynote speakers would introduce the themes before a professional moderator conducted the interactive discussion, aiming to accommodate as many speakers as possible. Geographical and gender balance would be considered in the selection of the keynote speakers and there would be no pre-established list of speakers for the subsequent discussion, which was intended to allow for statements of a maximum length of two minutes each from 15 Member States, 3 intergovernmental and United Nations system organizations and 3 non-governmental organizations at each dialogue.

Efforts would be made to give priority to any Head of State or Government wishing to speak and to intersperse the statements from Member States with those from organizations.

53. Turning to stakeholder engagement, she noted that the children and youth major group would hold a Youth Environment Assembly on 17 and 18 February 2024 and that the twentieth Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum would be held on 24 and 25 February, with the multi-stakeholder dialogue being held on the Thursday afternoon of the session.

54. The main sponsor of a draft resolution or decision should submit the text of that draft resolution or decision in a Microsoft Word document through a note verbale, indicating the main and any additional sponsors and including a concept note setting out the rationale for the submission, and, to the extent possible, any possible financial implications and the main stakeholders responsible for implementation, if adopted. The note verbale should also outline the relationship of the submission with the theme of the sixth session, the UNEP programme of work, the Sustainable Development Goals, emerging global issues that might have an impact on the environment, previous Environment Assembly resolutions, and other initiatives or decisions in other United Nations forums. All drafts and concept notes, together with relevant background information, would be made available on the password-protected UNEP resolutions portal and the secretariat would also post a technical note for each draft resolution and decision containing the requested mandates for UNEP as set out in the draft resolution or decision, the relationship of the draft resolution or decision to the UNEP medium-term strategy and programme of work and existing Environment Assembly resolutions, an initial legal assessment and a preliminary assessment of the budget implications of implementing the resolution or decision.

55. She recalled that half a day of the upcoming annual subcommittee meeting had been set aside for preparations for the sixth session of the Environment Assembly, including an opportunity for Member States to announce their intention to submit draft resolutions or decisions, which would then allow Member States to engage with each other to foster collaboration, co-sponsorship and consolidation of proposals, as well as to avoid duplication of work. The preferred deadline for the submission of draft proposals was 11 December and the recommended final deadline was 18 December 2023, after which the joint bureaux would identify co-facilitators, determine the possible clustering of draft resolutions and decisions, and propose a schedule of subcommittee meetings for the consultations. During the intersessional period, the co-facilitators would convene open, inclusive and transparent informal consultations in person and online. Final negotiations on all draft resolutions and decisions would take place during the meeting of the open-ended committee of permanent representatives. The draft resolutions and decisions on which negotiations in the open-ended committee meeting were successfully concluded would be transmitted to the Environment Assembly at its sixth session for adoption and those that required further negotiation would be allocated to the sessional committee of the whole.

56. Regarding side events, she noted that provision had been made for 16 in-person and 16 online side events, and that the final list would be provided to the joint bureaux for endorsement at their meeting on 20 December 2023. The selection criteria used for the side events included the alignment of the theme with that of the sixth session, whether or not the side event was organized by Member States in partnership either with other Member States or relevant stakeholders, and to what extent the side event helped to raise the profile of the Environment Assembly and included a geographical and gender balance in its panel discussion.

57. Other events related to the Environment Assembly that were due to be held immediately before or during the session included the thirty-first meeting of the International Resource Panel, from 19 to 23 February; the Climate and Clean Air Conference, from 21 to 23 February; the Cities and Regions Summit, on 23 February; a meeting of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, on 24 February; the Science-Policy-Business Forum, from 25 to 27 February; and a high-level session of the Quadripartite Executive Annual Meeting on 29 February.

58. She presented a map showing how the United Nations campus would be used during the sixth session, including provision of a “dialogue hill”, exhibition space, delegates’ lounge and dedicated media zone. The dedicated website for the sixth session had been streamlined and an app for the session would soon be launched. The secretariat would also engage in outreach through social media and was planning to launch an Environment Assembly newsletter. She provided information on logistics for the meeting, including on registration, travel support and credentials, noting that an advance scanned copy of credentials signed by the Head of State or Government or by the Minister for Foreign Affairs should be sent to the email address provided and the original hard copy should be submitted to the UNEP Law Division.

59. In conclusion, she recalled that the funding for the Environment Assembly sessions came from three sources, namely the United Nations regular budget, UNEP itself and contributions from Member States, and it was intended that each source would provide a third of the total funding required. She reiterated the call for Member States to make a financial contribution, to the extent possible, in order to close the remaining funding gap for the session and thereby ensure that the participation of delegates from developing countries was fully funded.
60. In the ensuing discussion, all the representatives who spoke expressed their gratitude for the useful and comprehensive briefing.
61. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed in particular the decision to provide webcasting at the sixth session, as that would enable capitals to follow the discussions.
62. A number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, requested that UNEP and Member States in a position to do so make every effort to ensure the participation of at least two funded delegates from each developing country, thereby ensuring equitable and inclusive participation at the Assembly session. One representative, recalling that his country channelled nearly all of its funding through the Environment Fund, noted that the representative of the secretariat had stated that the majority of the funding required for travel support would come from extrabudgetary contributions. He therefore requested additional information regarding the decision-making process relating to the parts of the Environment Assembly session that would be funded from the core budget and asked whether the core budget could be used for travel support.
63. A number of representatives speaking on behalf of groups of countries, thanked the President of the Environment Assembly for the early launch and excellent conduct of the consultations on the ministerial declaration, with one representative underlining her support for the President holding the pen for the declaration. Another representative sought clarification on the process for drafting the ministerial declaration.
64. Regarding logistics for draft resolutions and decisions, several representatives, including a number speaking on behalf of groups of countries, encouraged all Member States to follow the guidelines proposed by the joint bureaux, which were based on Environment Assembly decision 5/4, and submit draft resolutions and decisions as early as possible, in order to allow other Member States sufficient time to prepare for related negotiations. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, advocated for informal consultations to take place as soon as possible and for only a small number of draft resolutions and decisions to be submitted, noting that they should be substantive in nature and allow for UNEP work to be focused on urgent environmental issues that were not covered elsewhere. In addition, another representative, also speaking on behalf of a group of countries, encouraged Member States to make the most of the time allocated at the annual subcommittee meeting by submitting concept notes for any proposed draft resolutions or decisions, and further requested that a question-and-answer session be included in the meeting, in order to help participants to understand the purpose of the proposed resolutions and decisions and to allow proponents to use feedback to revise their proposals as appropriate. Furthermore, one representative expressed the view that rule 44 of the rules of procedure of the Environment Assembly, which allowed for the introduction of draft resolutions as late as the day preceding a meeting, should only be used in unforeseen circumstances.
65. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, commended the efforts of the secretariat to reduce the negative environmental impact of holding the Environment Assembly session and requested further information in that regard, in particular in relation to the efforts to achieve carbon neutrality for the session.
66. Turning to multilateral environmental agreements, one representative underlined the importance of ensuring that the concept note for the two high-level dialogues was made available in good time, in order to allow sufficient time for Member States and other stakeholders to prepare. He announced that his country was currently preparing a draft resolution on enhancing cooperation and collaboration between the Environment Assembly, UNEP and multilateral environmental agreements, and was therefore especially interested in the high-level dialogue on that topic. He also recalled that the consideration of the supplementary agenda item remained a process led by Member States and should therefore be open, inclusive and participatory, including in determining the list of panellists and introductory speakers for the high-level dialogues. Furthermore, he expressed his support for the fact that invitations had been extended to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and to the five biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements whose secretariats were not administered

by UNEP. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that it was important that the dialogues should be truly interactive; prepared speeches should therefore be avoided and discussion encouraged.

67. One representative asked for an explanation for restricting access to the draft resolution portal by making the site password-protected.

68. The representative of the European Union announced that the European Commission intended to continue its tradition of holding a ministerial breakfast during the Assembly.

69. The representative of Kenya said that her country, as the host country for the Environment Assembly session, remained committed to delivering a successful session, including by working closely with the relevant authorities to make all the necessary preparations, and would keep the Committee updated on the matter.

70. Regarding credentials, one representative noted that there was no requirement in rules 16 or 17 of the rules of procedure of the Environment Assembly that credentials should be signed by a Head of State or Government, or by a minister for foreign affairs.

71. Responding to the remarks regarding the budget, the Deputy Executive Director said that the funding provided by UNEP was allocated to the cost of hosting the session itself, namely the communications technology and conference services. The funding for supporting the travel costs of representatives from developing countries had been taken from extrabudgetary resources, namely contributions from Member States in a position to provide such resources, since the first session of the Assembly. Furthermore, she said that clarification regarding credentials would be provided by the legal team in due course.

72. In her response to the comments made, a representative of the secretariat thanked the representatives for their comments. Regarding the leadership and high-level dialogues, she said that every effort was being made to make the related concept notes available by early January 2024, in order to allow Member States sufficient time for preparation. The proposed list of panellists and keynote speakers, for which technical expertise and the need for geographical and gender balance would be taken into consideration, would be provided to, and finalized by, the bureaux. The intention was for the outcome of the dialogues to be used to guide the secretariat in implementing the medium-term strategy and programme of work of UNEP.

73. With regard to the resolutions portal, she noted that, although it would be password-protected, any accredited participant of the Assembly would be able to create an account and the process was straightforward, with help available from the secretariat if required. Password protection for the portal had previously been requested by Member States.

74. She confirmed that, in line with previous practice, the President of the Environment Assembly would hold the pen for the ministerial declaration, with each revised draft being based on comments and input provided by Member States. No line-by-line negotiation of the text would take place.

75. Regarding the environmental impact of holding the sixth session, a representative of the secretariat said that the secretariat was currently consulting various partners on ways of making the session more sustainable, including using paper badges and electric buses, considering branding and procurement alternatives, implementing energy and waste measures relating to travel, offsetting all supported travel and asking other participants to provide travel information on a voluntary basis, and sharing tips with all participants on how they could contribute to a more sustainable session.

Agenda item 5

Report of the subcommittee

76. The Committee took note of the document entitled “Report of the Subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives” (UNEP/CPR/163/5).

Agenda item 6

Other matters

77. A representative of the secretariat said that, in an effort to align practices and platforms across the United Nations, a United Nations Journal for Nairobi had been launched in August 2023, modelled on the United Nations Journal issued daily at the Headquarters in New York. It was intended to provide a comprehensive listing of the meetings taking place at the United Nations Office at Nairobi on a given day. The first phase had been completed and currently the Journal for Nairobi,

which was available at <https://journal.un.org>, listed meetings of the UNEP governing bodies, other intergovernmental meetings organized by UNEP and meetings under multilateral environmental agreements. Each meeting entry showed the date, time, location and format of the meeting, as well as additional information, which could include links to the documents for the meeting or to the dedicated website for the meeting. The Journal was available both online and as a document that could be downloaded, and could also be accessed through an app. Furthermore, she noted that the Journal was not intended to be a replacement for the road map of governing bodies but to serve as an additional tool, and could also be used in the future by Member States to advertise side events, for example.

Agenda item 7

Closure of the meeting

78. The meeting was declared closed at 5.05 p.m. on Tuesday, 31 October 2023.
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