



**UNITED
NATIONS**

UNEP/CPR/165/2



**United Nations
Environment
Programme**

UNEP

Distr.: General
15 February 2024
English only

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

**Draft minutes of the 164th meeting of the Committee of
Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment
Programme, held on 25 January 2024**

Agenda item 1

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

1. The meeting was opened at 10.15 a.m. on Thursday, 25 January 2024 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 71 participants representing 48 members and 2 observer missions.

Agenda item 2

**Adoption of the provisional agenda of the 164th meeting of the Committee of
Permanent Representatives**

3. The agenda was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/CPR/164/1).

Agenda item 3

**Adoption of the draft minutes of the 162nd meeting of the Committee of
Permanent Representatives, including its resumed meeting**

4. The Committee adopted the minutes of its 162nd meeting, held on 16 June 2023, on the basis of the draft minutes of the meeting (UNEP/CPR.163/2).
5. The Committee adopted the minutes of its resumed 162nd meeting, held on 31 October 2023, on the basis of the draft minutes of the meeting (UNEP/CPR/164/2).

Agenda item 4

**Adoption of the draft minutes of the 163rd meeting of the Committee of
Permanent Representatives**

6. The Committee adopted the minutes of its 163rd meeting, held on 31 October 2023, on the basis of the draft minutes of the meeting (UNEP/CPR/164/4).

Agenda item 5

Adoption of the Chair's summary of the tenth meeting of the Annual Subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

7. The Committee adopted the Chair's summary of the tenth meeting of the Annual Subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (UNEP/CPR/ASC/10/6).

Agenda item 6

Report of the Executive Director to the 164th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

8. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to the report entitled "Quarterly report to the 164th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives: July–September 2023".
9. In her oral briefing, the Executive Director of UNEP, Inger Andersen, noted that the past year had been very challenging, with conflicts intensifying around the world, along with the impacts of the three environmental planetary crises: climate change; biodiversity loss and desertification; and pollution and waste. To ensure a brighter outlook for 2024, consensus had to be sought through multilateralism, and hard work was needed towards common solutions.
10. UNEP had played a prominent role in the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, including through its reports on the emissions and adaptation gaps, which had informed and driven negotiations. The Cool Coalition, led by UNEP and the presidency of the twenty-eighth session, had also released a key report and had launched the Global Cooling Pledge, which over 60 countries had since joined. UNEP had also been involved in new efforts to track and cut methane emissions and had launched the Net-Zero Export Credit Agencies Alliance.
11. While the outcome document of the twenty-eighth session was not everything that everyone had hoped for, the Executive Director said that the session had provided ground on which to build, for which gratitude was due to the President of the twenty-eighth session. In that regard, the crucial decision to transition away from fossil fuels had been agreed; the loss and damage fund had been put into operation, and while much remained to be done to fully capitalize the fund, that progress constituted an important show of solidarity with vulnerable countries; agreement had been reached on the framework for the global goal on adaptation; commitments had been made on sustainable cooling, reducing methane emissions and tripling energy targets; and breakthroughs had been achieved with regard to nature. The twenty-eighth session had set the stage for the trajectory the world needed on climate change, as well as on nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste.
12. In her report to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its sixth session (UNEP/EA.6/2), the Executive Director had highlighted six areas for multilateral action, including responsible mining and responsible and sustainable minerals and metals use. Metals and minerals would be critical to the energy transition, including to scale up renewable energy and to build electric vehicles. Ensuring that temperatures remained below 2°C above pre-industrial levels by 2050 would require around 3 billion metric tons of minerals and metals, which presented both opportunities and challenges. Developing countries had opportunities to invest in sustainable development; however, environmental integrity, environmental stewardship and environmental sustainability would be needed in order to avoid the colonial patterns of the past, whereby extraction occurred in one place and the benefits accrued elsewhere. Added value needed to be generated for producer countries and communities, and circularity should be built so as to keep metals and minerals in the economy. Pollution and biodiversity loss must be avoided and when mines were abandoned, they must be closed safely and securely, with biodiversity in mind. While it lay beyond the mandate of UNEP, the Executive Director also underlined the importance of ensuring that human rights, dignity and labour rights were protected.
13. She said that she had taken the opportunity to highlight the importance of metals and minerals at the Future Minerals Forum in Saudi Arabia and at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where she had also emphasized the importance of securing a strong, ambitious instrument on plastic pollution in 2024.
14. During her trip to Saudi Arabia, she had witnessed the significant work of a proactive programme of land restoration on desertification, drought and land degradation, the theme of World Environment Day, which the country would host in June 2024.
15. Turning to the sixth session of the Environment Assembly, she said that the road ahead was complex, with an ever-growing environmental "must-do" list. Different bodies and agreements were

working well in many areas, and the Environment Assembly at its sixth session had an important role to play in weaving agreements and promises into a tapestry of action.

16. Part of the push to unite action at the sixth session was the multilateral environmental agreements day. The event would include an opening plenary meeting, to be followed by two high-level dialogues – one on strengthening the science-policy interface; the other on cooperation between UNEP, the Environment Assembly and the multilateral environmental agreements – which were aimed at increasing implementation of the agreements at the national level.

17. At the sixth session, Member States would discuss, and hopefully adopt, resolutions that would drive increased action, and she thanked Member States for their engagement in that regard and, in particular, those that had submitted resolutions in a timely manner. To date, 21 draft resolutions and 2 draft decisions had been submitted for consideration by the Assembly. Thanks were also due to the Chair, Bureau members and representatives for the ongoing consultations on those draft resolutions. It was to be hoped that the resolutions would focus on what was urgent, unexplored and critical in order to achieve progress on sustainable development at the national and global levels. In that way, a road map could be drawn to go further and faster on the environment.

18. Thanking Member States for engaging on her report to the Environment Assembly at its sixth session, she reflected that preparations were progressing well on substantive matters. Funding, however, remained a challenge. She thanked members that had pledged just over \$1 million for the sixth session, and she encouraged Member States to make further contributions to close the remaining gap of around \$700,000.

19. The session was also affected by the unprecedented liquidity challenges facing the United Nations Secretariat. Owing to those challenges, the contribution of approximately \$1 million from the regular budget of the United Nations for the sixth session was at risk of not materializing. The UNEP secretariat had been in dialogue with United Nations Headquarters and the United Nations Office at Nairobi to find solutions.

20. Highlighting the wider implications of the issues affecting the regular budget, the Executive Director said that when Member States failed to pay their contributions, it affected both governance arrangements and the delivery of the programme of work. One consequence was that the United Nations had frozen recruitment for all regular posts, meaning that many UNEP positions would remain vacant and unfilled for the foreseeable future, thereby hindering UNEP work. At 5 per cent of the total, the contribution from the regular budget to UNEP might appear small, but it accounted for the backbone of the organization. It was in the hands of Member States to resolve the issues and ensure that UNEP and other United Nations entities could provide Member States with the support they needed.

21. Noting that not all the financial news was bad, she said that in 2023 the Environment Fund had received \$88.9 million, almost 10 per cent more than in 2022 and the highest total since 2009, without accounting for inflation. The Executive Director thanked the 80 Member States that had shown their trust in UNEP by heeding the call for increased core funding. She recalled that the accounts for 2023 remained open for contributions and invited Member States that had not yet contributed to contribute additional funds, which would help UNEP cross the \$90 million mark and move closer to the approved budget of \$100 million. She recalled that \$100 million had been the budget envisaged for the Environment Fund in 1972, the equivalent of \$733 million per year at present.

22. The Executive Director provided an update on progress in the establishment of a climate change division at UNEP. The goal of the new division, like that of UNEP more widely, was to find smarter ways to collaborate and deliver better oversight of the large UNEP climate portfolio, and to ensure the fiduciary integrity and oversight of UNEP and the joint delivery of climate action. Declaring that UNEP was moving closer to that goal, she thanked Dechen Tsering, Director, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, for agreeing to serve as Acting Director of the new division while the recruitment process continued.

23. Recalling that UNEP had received an official request from the State of Palestine to carry out an assessment of the environmental impacts of the conflict in Gaza, the Executive Director emphasized that UNEP would perform the assessment with diligence and responsibility and in coordination with United Nations colleagues, including those on the ground. Recognizing the mandate of UNEP in that regard, she indicated that such assessments were vital to understanding the present and future impacts of conflict. The goal of such assessments was to track the extent of damage and to inform a science-based approach to recovery and reconstruction, when conditions allowed. Such an approach was aimed at minimizing the long-term impact on the environment and mitigating the harm caused, to the greatest extent possible. But for successful assessment and recovery, it was crucial for

conflicts to end, and the Executive Director echoed the calls of the Secretary-General for an end to hostilities. Stressing that UNEP intended to respond to every Member State that requested its support, the Executive Director noted that UNEP had published an assessment in 2022 on the environmental consequences of the war in Ukraine, as well as multiple similar assessments on previous occasions.

24. Reflecting on the year ahead, the Executive Director said that critical actions would include securing a strong instrument on plastic pollution and finalizing the proposals for the new science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution. In 2024, UNEP would drive action under the multilateral environmental agreements and other processes by backing Member States, working with the rest of the United Nations system and engaging with civil society, businesses and investors, as well as by working at the country level. UNEP would focus on the resolutions of the Environment Assembly and would pursue the programme of work for the biennium 2024–2025, with a focus on targeting the drivers of the three environmental planetary crises. The organization's work would be backed by digital transformation, financial and economic shifts, and a stronger science-policy interface.

25. The responsibility for delivering on existing goals and setting new goals would fall to Member States at the upcoming sixth session of the Environment Assembly. Achieving the goals would require a strong and well-funded UNEP, together with the multilateralist approach demonstrated by the Committee over many years. She concluded by calling for 2024 to be the moment when the world turned a corner and took the road towards a healthy, peaceful and prosperous planet.

26. In the ensuing discussion, many representatives, including a number who spoke on behalf of groups of countries, thanked the Executive Director and the secretariat for the quarterly report, which, they said, touched upon many areas of relevance to Member States. Several representatives commended the secretariat for its work in the period covered by the quarterly report.

27. Some representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, asked the secretariat to provide more information regarding the recent engagement of UNEP at the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly on the transformative potential of digital public infrastructure for advancing the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals. The representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries expressed an interest in learning more about how digital public infrastructure could help in addressing the environmental crisis, and suggested that the tools showcased at the event be shared with the permanent missions in Nairobi.

28. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, voiced their support for the request by the State of Palestine for a report on the environmental damage resulting from the conflict in Gaza. One representative said that, as well as the scale of the damage in Gaza, she was particularly concerned by reports that white phosphorus weapons had been deployed in the territory. She expressed the hope that the outcomes and recommendations of the report would be published prior to the sixth session of the Environment Assembly. Another representative said that peace should be the status quo.

29. Some representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, commended the work of UNEP to support countries affected by natural disasters and conflict. There was an urgent need to document, analyse and better understand the environmental consequences of war, and reliable environmental data was critical to ensuring green and sustainable reconstruction pathways. UNEP was in a unique position to provide the required expertise. Some representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, thanked UNEP for its work on the environmental impacts of the damage to the Kakhovka dam, the effects of which affected more than one country.

30. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the progress achieved by UNEP in the composition of its staff, in terms of gender parity, geographical representation and inclusion. One representative expressed an interest in hearing an assessment of the Young Talent Pipeline. One representative recalled that, as well as emphasizing the importance of the principle of equitable geographical distribution, the Environment Assembly, in resolution 5/13, had recalled paragraph 3 of Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations on the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. One representative said that his country would continue to support the Junior Professional Officers Programme and would encourage talented people from his country to compete for positions at UNEP, as a means of supporting the drive to increase the diversity of the UNEP workforce.

31. Responding to the Executive Director's comments on the adoption of the Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste, several representatives, including some speaking on behalf of groups of countries, commended UNEP for its work on the matter. The Global Framework had been under negotiation for many years and it was to be hoped that

it would be implemented at the earliest opportunity, including through the proposed draft resolution on the Global Framework for consideration by the Environment Assembly at its sixth session. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noted that chemicals management remained a challenge for almost all the countries in Africa.

32. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, thanked UNEP for its work in preparing for the annual meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, and asked the secretariat to circulate the findings and conclusions of the review of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, underscoring the importance of taking stock of the progress achieved.

33. On the process of the reform of the United Nations system, several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, took note of the information provided in the quarterly report. The representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries thanked the Executive Director for the information on UNEP efforts to engage with the resident coordinator system to support the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. They said that they looked forward to learning more about future strategic UNEP initiatives to mainstream environmental matters in United Nations reform, in particular the mainstreaming of activities on chemicals, waste and pollution in line with the new Global Framework on Chemicals. One representative said that, on the issue of United Nations reform, he took note of UNEP involvement in co-organizing the workshops of the programme on enforcing the implementation of environmental treaties in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP-MEAs programme), which had taken place in June and July 2023 and aimed to bridge the gap between multilateral environmental agreements and United Nations country teams in Africa. He expressed the hope that the dialogue on the matter would continue, with UNEP able to play a pivotal role.

34. Turning to financial matters, several representatives took note of the UNEP financial statements, encouraging Member States to pay their contributions. One representative congratulated UNEP for the upward trend of contributions to the Environment Fund, noting that her country would continue to provide non-earmarked funding to UNEP. Another representative requested more information on the environmental impact of the Fund, and encouraged the synthesis of the work of different United Nations entities. One representative said that her understanding was that the United Nations regular budget and the Environment Fund should provide core funding for UNEP to respond to all environmental crises and challenges, and not be limited to just three environmental challenges. She expressed the hope that that fact would be reflected in future work and reports.

35. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the significant number of attendees at the Africa Climate Summit, held in Nairobi from 4 to 6 September 2023, along with the focus on the adaptation needs of Africa. One representative confirmed that the Africa Solar Belt announced by his country at the Africa Climate Summit would be implemented.

36. Noting that the quarterly report had not made reference to the third session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, held in Nairobi from 13 to 19 November 2023, as it had taken place outside the reporting period, one representative nevertheless commented on the hard work done at the third session, which had enabled participants to better understand different respective positions.

37. The representative of Germany announced that his country would contribute an additional €4 million to support the work of the secretariat of the intergovernmental negotiating committee, which, he said, was timely given the lack of a mandate for intensified intersessional work. It was to be hoped that the funding would facilitate the negotiation of an ambitious instrument.

38. Several representatives commented on the important role UNEP could play in fighting the triple planetary crisis of biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution. One representative commended UNEP for its work in that area, of which his country had been a beneficiary. He requested the secretariat to organize specific briefings on Global Environment Facility (GEF) projects to improve understanding of UNEP work with the Facility. Another representative expressed satisfaction that the concept of the triple planetary crisis was taking hold, and said that UNEP should help to break down silos to find innovative, integrated approaches to the triple planetary crisis, while contributing to poverty eradication and prosperity for all.

39. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noted with appreciation the support given to the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) by UNEP, which served as the secretariat to the Conference. Several representatives underlined the

importance of the outcome declaration of the Conference at its nineteenth session, held in Addis Ababa on 17 and 18 August 2023, and urged UNEP, through the Executive Director, to continue providing the necessary support to the Conference for the implementation of its decisions in the areas of climate action, including building the resilience of the urban poor. Of particular importance was the need to assist African countries to implement AMCEN decisions, including at the country level, capitalizing on the available opportunities for the national and regional development agendas. The representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries expressed regret that the Executive Director had not had the opportunity to meet AMCEN ministers since the beginning of her tenure. He encouraged her to attend an AMCEN meeting, which could encourage increased engagement among African countries with the environmental agenda, as well as regarding their contributions to UNEP.

40. Several representatives welcomed the successful organization of the seventh African Animal Welfare Conference, co-organized by UNEP and held in Kigali from 25 to 27 September 2023. As indicated in the quarterly report, the Conference had addressed the implementation of Environment Assembly resolution 5/1 on the animal welfare–environment–sustainable development nexus. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that he looked forward to engaging with the secretariat on the final draft of the scoping report that had previously been circulated.

41. On air quality, several representatives commended UNEP for its support to the International Day of Clean Air for blue skies and expressed the hope that the draft resolution on promoting regional cooperation on air pollution to improve air quality globally, for consideration by the Environment Assembly at its sixth session, which had been co-sponsored by Canada, Morocco and the United States of America, would help in addressing the challenge of clean air for all. A representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries commended the reference in the quarterly report to the workshop co-hosted by Kenya and UNEP, held in Nakuru, Kenya, on 7 September 2023, to raise awareness on enhancing air quality, promoting accessible air quality and climate data, and using the linkages between air quality and climate change issues to develop evidence-based policies and strategies. He asked whether UNEP intended to scale up the initiative across Africa.

42. One representative joined the Executive Director in looking forward to World Environment Day, on 5 June 2024, to be hosted by Saudi Arabia, and noted that the areas it sought to address, namely land restoration, desertification and drought resilience, were critical to many African countries and crucial to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The timing was particularly significant, as 2024 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa.

43. On regional cooperation, one representative recalled that the presidential declaration of the fourth Meeting of Presidents of the States Parties to the Amazon Cooperation Treaty, known as the Amazon Summit, held in Belém, Brazil, in August 2023, in which UNEP had participated, had established a new cooperation agenda to advance sustainable development in the Amazon. The joint statement “United for our forests” had been made by States parties to the Amazon Cooperation Treaty, with the participation of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Indonesia, and 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. He noted that, in Brazil, deforestation had reduced by 49.5 per cent in 2023, avoiding the release of 250 million metric tons of CO₂ into the atmosphere.

44. The representative of Australia announced that her country would provide 30,000 Australian dollars to facilitate the attendance of representatives of Pacific island countries at the sixth session of the Environment Assembly.

45. Responding to the quarterly report, one representative said that his country highly valued and appreciated the work of the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative, for which UNEP provided the secretariat. In that regard, the representative asked whether UNEP had considered setting up partnerships and exchanging experiences between the Congo basin and the Amazon basin in the areas of forest governance, halting deforestation and restoring tropical forests. The recent Summit of the Three Basins, held in Brazzaville in October 2023, had deepened the ties between the relevant countries, and it was essential to continue the process. He sought clarification regarding the ways in which the Initiative had addressed the defence of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the Amazon, and whether plans existed to develop the concept of environmental justice, as had occurred in his country. He asked how the Initiative collaborated with other international or regional programmes to reinforce conservation efforts and fight deforestation; what next steps would be taken

by the Initiative; and, more broadly, whether measures were in place to gauge the impact of UNEP programmes, and the effectiveness of the policies they promoted.

46. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, reiterated the urgent need to safeguard the sound implementation of Environment Assembly resolution 5/5 on nature-based solutions for supporting sustainable development, and to avoid the misuse of the concept of nature-based solutions. Another representative highlighted the importance of UNEP continuing to organize events that built on the outcomes of intergovernmental consultations, which would be particularly useful in order to compile examples of nature-based solutions and to examine the existing costs and benefits of, and sources of finance for, nature-based solutions.

47. One representative said that the need to address the restructuring of the financial structure in order to mitigate climate change remained a priority for the smaller and more vulnerable States. His country therefore welcomed the steps taken to monetize the loss and damage fund at the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and he drew attention to the Bridgetown Initiative promoted by Barbados, which offered useful solutions in that regard.

48. One representative encouraged UNEP to implement projects in partnership with the Early Warnings for All initiative, which had been launched at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Strengthening climate adaptive capacities, supporting disaster risk reduction and achieving climate-resilient sustainable development were areas of particular importance to African countries.

49. Welcoming the *UNEP Greening the Blue Report 2022: The UN System's Environmental Footprint and Efforts to Reduce it*, which focused on the environmental impact of the United Nations system, one representative commented on the increased emissions recorded for 2022 and asked what action the United Nations, and UNEP in particular, would be taking to reduce their carbon footprint from air travel.

50. One representative said that his country was fully committed to working with UNEP and the international community to implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, including through the Global Framework Biodiversity Fund.

51. The representative of Belarus said that while his country supported the increase in assessments of environmental damage, the erection of a fence at the border between his country and Poland had not been given due attention. He expressed the hope that in 2024 the opportunity would arise for more dialogue on the matter, including an assessment and joint steps to minimize the damage.

52. The representative of France announced that, in partnership with UNEP, his country would be organizing the first Buildings and Climate Global Forum on 7 and 8 March 2024. In its report on building materials and the climate, published in September 2023, UNEP had stressed that the built environment sector accounted for at least 37 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions. Government ministers for construction would be invited to the summit in Paris and would have the opportunity to adopt a resolution calling for carbon neutrality in the construction sector.

53. The Executive Director expressed her deep appreciation for the comments and questions.

54. On the contribution of UNEP to the forthcoming Summit of the Future, she recalled that UNEP was in the process of producing a foresight report in line with the requests made at the first special session of the Environment Assembly for the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of UNEP that UNEP should strengthen the science-policy interface, look deeper into the future and study the key emerging trends that could have an impact on the future of the environment. As well as the survey to which members had been asked to respond, she recalled that regional consultations had been held around the world, and further consultations would be held on the sidelines of the Youth Environment Assembly in February 2024. In that way, the views of scientists, non-governmental organizations, Indigenous Peoples and young people, as well as Governments, could be brought together. The foresight report would be available prior to the Summit and would be presented by UNEP as a potential input for reflection at the Summit. She expressed the hope that the second round of the survey, which would be provided to all Member States, would elicit a broad response so that all voices were heard.

55. On the issue of UNEP staffing, she said that the Young Talent Pipeline had been a very exciting process and she confirmed that UNEP was only looking for the most highly skilled candidates. Throwing the net more widely was helpful in that regard, as recent recruitment had shown. Emphasizing that UNEP was focused on diversity, she said that 28,000 people had actively participated in 16 outreach efforts to familiarize people with UNEP, its work, and life in Nairobi. Half

the events had been conducted in person and the other half online. In the most recent reporting period, UNEP had increased hiring from the African States by 9 per cent, from the Asia-Pacific States by 6 per cent, from the Eastern European States by 12 per cent and from the Latin American and Caribbean States by 2 per cent. As a result, recruitment from the Western European and other States had gone down in accordance with the change that was sought and with due consideration for paragraph 101 of the Charter of the United Nations.

56. Regarding the digital side event at the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, which had formed part of the High Impact Initiative on Digital Public Infrastructure, UNEP had noted the lack of an environmental dimension in digital public infrastructure conversations. UNEP had decided to bring the matter to the attention of the world and of the United Nations and she said that she was pleased to say that the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Technology was now leading a universal safeguards framework for digital public infrastructure. UNEP was not the lead agency for the project, but would be happy to provide further information as it developed.

57. Taking note of the request for increased interaction with AMCEN, she noted that, for the first two years of her term, the restrictions relating to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had made it impossible for her to attend AMCEN meetings, and that, over the following two years, her schedule had conflicted with that of AMCEN. However, the Deputy Executive Director had always attended, as was common practice for the ministerial forums of all five United Nations regions. Noting that she had personally attended several AMCEN meetings on the sidelines of the sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, she nevertheless expressed the hope that she would be able to attend a meeting of AMCEN at a future date.

58. She thanked Member States for their support for the report on the damage in the Gaza Strip. Noting the urgency of the situation, she said that UNEP would produce the report, which was already under way, as quickly as possible. Such reports normally took six to seven months to complete. UNEP had produced around 25 similar assessments in cases of damage from both conflict and natural disasters and would continue to respond to Member States' requests for such assessments.

59. On the issue of the border fence highlighted by Belarus, noting that UNEP was engaging on the issue through the United Nations resident coordinator system, she said that such walls and barriers always hindered the movement of wildlife.

60. She thanked members for their support on multilateral environmental agreements in Africa, which were of paramount importance and for which UNEP was proud to serve as a global partner.

61. She thanked Brazil for hosting the establishment meeting for the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund, which had been launched at the Seventh GEF Assembly, as well as for its work championing Indigenous Peoples, who were the stewards of 80 per cent of the world's biodiversity.

62. The Executive Director said that UNEP would be happy to give a briefing on GEF, and she confirmed that the GEF Africa programme was its largest by some distance: of the \$1.7 billion spent on projects around the world, the Africa region received \$562 million, Latin America \$412 million, and Asia and the Pacific \$310 million.

63. She thanked Kenya for hosting UNEP in Nairobi and for its strong leadership at the Africa Climate Summit.

64. She thanked Germany for its continued support for the Global Framework on Chemicals, for the financial contribution to data knowledge towards the green recovery of Ukraine, and the strong backing for the intergovernmental negotiating committee, which she described as a critical process.

65. The Executive Director thanked Australia for its funding contribution, welcoming the new Ambassador.

66. Noting that Early Warnings for All was a crucial programme, supported by the Secretary-General, in which the role of UNEP was among the largest of all the implementing agencies, she said that the secretariat would be happy to brief Member States in greater detail.

67. On the *Greening the Blue* report, which UNEP produced for the United Nations as a whole, she said that the main reason for the increase in the carbon footprint of the United Nations in 2022 had been the lifting of restrictions related to COVID-19, compared with 2021 when many countries had been in lockdown. She pointed out that the UNEP footprint extended far beyond that of its staff and included the members of the Committee, with sponsored travel counting as part of the UNEP contribution. With the 17 conventions for which UNEP provided the secretariat and significant

amounts of travel, the UNEP contribution to the United Nations carbon footprint appeared much higher than it was.

Agenda item 7

Consideration of relevant evaluation reports and audits

68. In the absence of new evaluation reports or audits for consideration by the Committee, the Chair closed the item.

Agenda item 8

Preparations for the upcoming session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

69. Consideration of the item was deferred to the 165th meeting of the Committee.

Agenda item 9

Report of the subcommittee

70. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to the document entitled, “Report of the subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives” (UNEP/CPR/164/9).

71. Taking note of the report of the subcommittee, the representative of the United States said that his country did not recognize the recommendation contained in the draft decision set out in paragraph 5, on the voluntary indicative scale of contributions, from previous documentation submitted to the subcommittee. He sought clarification regarding the origin of the recommendation and requested the inclusion in the report and in any documents emerging from the current meeting of the fact that the United States did not participate in the voluntary indicative scale of contributions.

72. The Chair took note of the comment.

73. The Committee of Permanent Representatives endorsed the document entitled “Report of the subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives” (UNEP/CPR/164/9) and adopted the draft decision set out therein. Decision 164/1 on recommendations of the Committee of Permanent Representatives at its tenth annual subcommittee meeting is set out in the annex to the present document.

Agenda item 10

Any other business

74. No other matters were raised.

Agenda item 11

Closure of the meeting

75. The meeting was declared closed at 12.20 p.m. on Thursday, 25 January 2024.

Annex

Decision adopted by the Committee of Permanent Representatives at its 164th meeting, on 25 January 2024

Decision 164/1: Recommendations of the Committee of Permanent Representatives at its tenth annual subcommittee meeting

The Committee of Permanent Representatives

1. *Endorses* the Chair's summary of the tenth annual subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, held in Nairobi from 20 to 24 November 2023, and requests the secretariat to take into account the comments made by Member States, including when preparing for future meetings of the Committee and the subcommittee, and the annual subcommittee meetings;
2. *Requests* the secretariat to provide in an information document the responses to those questions posed and comments raised by Member States during the tenth annual subcommittee meeting that were not fully addressed by the secretariat at that meeting, following notification by Member States of such outstanding questions and comments;
3. *Also requests* the secretariat to brief Member States on any significant intended changes to the organizational structure of the United Nations Environment Programme before such changes are made;
4. *Takes note* of the presentation on action by the United Nations Environment Programme to strengthen protection against sexual and any other type of exploitation and abuse and against sexual harassment in the workplace, and encourages the Executive Director to further develop indicators and systems, building on United Nations system-wide tools and mechanisms, to effectively monitor the situation and ensure that all personnel, implementing partners and beneficiaries are adequately protected against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, and to ensure that victims and survivors are placed at the centre of the Programme's approach to the matter;
5. *Requests* the secretariat to prepare, in consultation with the Bureau of the Committee, a strategic schedule of meetings of the subcommittee and the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives to allow for effective, inclusive and participatory consultations and negotiations on draft resolutions and decisions for consideration by the United Nations Environment Assembly, to avoid the convening of more than two meetings at the same time during the sixth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives and the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and to make the schedule available to Member States as early as possible and before the end of 2023;
6. *Encourages* the Presidency of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to guide the co-facilitators in organizing, as appropriate, early consultations with major groups and stakeholders, collecting views and positions on draft resolutions for possible consideration by Member States, and encouraging the proponents of draft resolutions to engage with the major groups and stakeholders facilitating committee, with the support of the secretariat;
7. *Reminds* all Member States to proactively review their financial support to the United Nations Environment Programme and encourages them to contribute their full share according to the voluntary indicative scale of contributions to ensure that the Programme can be strengthened and can successfully implement its programme of work;
8. *Requests* the secretariat to continue exploring alternative sources of funding, and to analyse and address the barriers to engaging with new funding sources.