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Eleventh meeting

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10:00 – 13:00 and 15:00 – 18:00 (GMT+3)

Conference Rooms 2 (in person) and

Microsoft Teams (online)

Agenda item 3 (e)

**Contribution of the regional forums of ministers of the
environment and environment authorities to the UNEP Medium-
term Strategy and Programme of Work.**

Overview of the contribution of the regional forums of ministers of the environment and environment authorities to the UNEP Medium-term Strategy and Programme of Work

This background document entitled “Overview of the contribution of the regional forums of ministers of the environment and environment authorities to the UNEP Medium-term Strategy and Programme of Work”, has been prepared by the Secretariat to guide the discussion at the 11th annual subcommittee meeting of the CPR, under agenda item 3 (e) (Contribution of the regional forums of ministers of the environment and environment authorities to the UNEP Medium-term Strategy and Programme of Work). More specifically, the document outlines following aspects of the regional forums:

- Organizational structure and general format and of the forums.
- Roles and outcomes of the forums.
- Roles of regional offices.

The Committee will be invited to take note of the presentation from the Secretariat and provide guidance on further action needed by the Secretariat and Member States towards increased contribution of the regional forums of ministers of the environment and environment authorities to the UNEP Medium-term Strategy and Programme of Work.

<p>1. Context</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Sixth Session of United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6) adopted a resolution on enhancing the role and viability of regional forums of environment ministers and United Nations Environment Programme regional offices in achieving multilateral cooperation in tackling environmental challenges (Resolution 6/3). In line with paragraph 1 (a) of the resolution, the Secretariat will present an overview of the role of regional forums of ministers of the environment and UNEP regional offices in achieving multilateral cooperation in tackling environmental challenges. The presentation will be followed by an exchange of views with Member States and Stakeholders. • The Committee will be invited to take note of the update from the Secretariat and provide guidance on further action needed by the Secretariat and Member States towards increased contribution of the regional forums of ministers of the environment and environment authorities to the UNEP Medium-term Strategy and Programme of Work. This background document is prepared to support the presentation and discussions during the annual subcommittee meeting of the committee of the permanent representatives to the UNEP.
<p>2. About the Forums</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) convenes three regional forums as their Secretariat. These are a) the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), b) the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific (Asia-Pacific Forum), and c) the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC Forum). • In addition to these three regional forums, UNEP also involved in delivering the session of the Arab Forum for the Environment. A similar structure exists for Europe, known as Environment for Europe, under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). • Member States under their region-specific structure consider environmental priorities and challenges and adopt decisions on environmental management specific to their regions and/or contributing to the global environmental agenda, including UNEA. These forums also serve as platforms for Member States to engage partners, UN agencies, private sector representatives, scientists, academia, and civil society to share their perspectives on regional and global environmental interests. More specifically, regional forums play a crucial role in addressing environmental issues by facilitating collaboration among neighboring countries. They provide a platform for sharing information, coordinating policies, and jointly addressing challenges like pollution, resource management, and climate change at a regional level. This collaboration enhances the effectiveness of environmental protection measures and promotes sustainable development within specific geographical contexts.
<p>Asia and the Pacific Forum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNEP Asia and the Pacific organizes Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific as guided by the UNEA Resolution 2/2. Five forums of Ministers and Environment Authorities were organized to date. The Ministerial Forum provides a platform for Ministers to discuss issues of strategic importance for Asia and the Pacific including priorities and challenges on environmental dimensions of the Sustainable Development, review implementation of UNEA resolutions in the region, providing inputs to draft UNEA outcomes as well as discussing possible resolutions to be submitted at UN Environment Assembly which is the highest-level decision-making body on the environment.
<p>Latin America Forum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean is the region's most representative and longstanding political gathering on

	<p>environmental matters, established in 1982 through UNEP Governing Council resolution 5, section 3. The twenty-three meetings held to date have consolidated it as a key gathering on environmental issues at the regional level. Its meetings are held every two years and intersessional meetings with the Bureau and the High-Level Officers are held in-between. In addition, the LAC Forum has established twelve (12) working groups, which meet regularly to advance implementation of its decisions and to facilitate regional cooperation and exchange.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LAC Forum also serves as the regional gathering for discussion and preparation for the sessions of UNEA and provides its outcomes as input to the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, helping to narrow the gap between the regional and global environmental agendas.
Africa Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) was established in December 1985, following a conference of African ministers of environment held in Cairo, Egypt. • AMCEN therefore provides advocacy for environmental protection in Africa and ensures that basic human needs are met adequately and in a sustainable manner; to ensure that social and economic development is realized at all levels; and to ensure that agricultural activities and practices meet the food security needs of the region.
2.1 Organizational Structure and General Format and of the Forums	This section presents brief organizational structure and general format of the forums which varies by region.
Asia and the Pacific Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific is a political platform, with a Secretariat based in UNEP Asia Pacific Office in Bangkok. The Forum covers 41 Member States of the Asia Pacific Group. Ministerial Bureau comprised of one Chair and 2 Vice Chairs.
Latin America Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is composed of a Bureau (consisting of 8 members elected by the Forum, 2 from each of the 4 subregions: Caribbean, Central America, Andes and Southern Cone); High-Level Officers; twelve working groups; and an Inter-Agency Technical Committee currently composed of seven intergovernmental institutions, to advance inter-sessional work. It facilitates the participation of MGS representatives and regional and global partners in all these spaces. UNEP Office for Latin America and the Caribbean serves as Secretariat of the Forum.
Africa Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNEP provides the Secretariat for AMCEN. AMCEN is composed of a Bureau whose officers are ministers elected from equitable geographical distribution representing the five African Regions, West, East, Central, North and Southern Africa. It also consists of subsidiary bodies that are set up and their functions determined as may be appropriate. It facilitates the participation of MGS representatives and regional and global partners in all these spaces
3. Roles and Outcomes of the Forums	<p>Roles and outcomes of the forums varied due to differences in organizational structure of the Forum of the Ministers and Environment Authorities. Overall, it provides a platform to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hold region specific discussions on environmental issues, priorities, needs, challenges, and opportunities, and • share experiences and promote best practices as well as to identify future opportunities for exchange of experiences and best practices, and other collaborations at regional level.

	<p>While each forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities discussed region specific environmental issues, nature of the outcome document varied widely as well.</p>
<p>Asia and the Pacific Forum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Forum provides a platform for governments, intergovernmental organizations, and other stakeholders to discuss and prioritize environmental issues in the Asia Pacific region. The Forum offers Member States and other stakeholders an opportunity to present an Asia Pacific perspective on discussions at UNEA process. • Key events organized under the Forum, included: Asia Pacific Regional Youth Forum, Asia Pacific Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum, Asia Pacific Science, Policy and Business Forum, Senior Government Officials Meeting, and the Ministerial Segment, besides relevant side events linked to UNEA resolutions. Outcome from MGS Forums are submitted to Senior Officials Meeting and Ministerial Segment, as well as other global processes, including Global Youth Assembly, Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum, and Global Science, Policy, and Business Forum, OECPR and UNEA. • Forum also reviews implementation of the UNEA resolutions, discuss regional submission of draft resolutions, provide regional inputs to draft UNEA Ministerial Declaration and draft resolutions. • Key outcomes of the forum consist of a) Chair's Summary of the Senior Officials Meeting, b) Chair's Summary of the Ministerial Segment. Outcome of the Forum is submitted to CPR intersessions, OECPR and UNEA.
<p>Latin America Forum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 33 Member States of the LAC region are part of the LAC Forum. Its outcomes include decisions and a Ministerial Declaration. Decisions are not legally binding for Member States, rather, they aim to foster cooperation and exchange of knowledge and experience in the region. • Ministerial Declarations, which set the political vision and priorities for environmental action in the region. • Decisions, which vary in number each session, and contain practical recommendations and requests for Member States and the Secretariat to advance environmental action in the region, and which guide the work implemented by the twelve working groups and the Inter-Agency Technical Committee. • Examples of concrete actions undertaken as a result of the LAC Forum include, to mention just a few, the Common Framework of Sustainable Finance Taxonomies for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Regional Ecosystems Restoration Plan, the Regional Sustainable Consumption and Production Strategy, support for development and implementation of multiple NDCs and NBSAPs, Regional guidelines for implementation of the gender dimension in environmental interventions, or multiple exchanges of best practices in multiple areas of environmental management • The LAC Forum has established an Inter-Agency Technical Committee (ITC), composed of UNEP, UNDP, Economic Commission for LAC, Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, WHO/PAHO and FAO, to channel international cooperation activities into environmental priority areas in the region. These international institutions assist both in identifying financial sources for projects and studies and in coordinating rapid and flexible responses to national and regional environmental needs. • In addition, the LAC Forum continuously seeks to identify collaboration and coordination opportunities with regional and global partners active in the

	<p>environmental agenda in the region, such as other UN entities, OECD, the Iberoamerican Secretariat, and regional cooperation organizations, to mention a few.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Groups and Stakeholders are also a regular participant in activities of the Forum, in preparation for the meetings of the Forum and during these meetings. • Support the preparation of Member States for the sessions of the UNFCCC, UNCCD, CBD, INC on plastics, global and regional consultation meetings led by UNEP, and many other intergovernmental environmental processes. Support/advice for the development of policies (LAC).
Africa Forum	<p>Over the years, AMCEN has evolved to take on the following roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing continent-wide leadership by promoting awareness and consensus on global and regional environmental issues; Developing common positions to guide African representatives in negotiations for legally binding international environmental agreements; Promoting African participation in international dialogue on global issues of importance to Africa; Reviewing and monitoring environmental programmes at the regional, sub-regional and national levels; Providing regional strategic and policy guidance to promote sound environmental management for sustainable development; Promoting the ratification by African countries of multilateral environmental agreements relevant to the region; Building African capacity in the field of environmental management. Since the first session of AMCEN, several programmes, initiatives and activities have been developed to facilitate the effective implementation of its mandate towards environmental protection in Africa. • It has implemented many concrete measures regarding regional policy development, awareness-raising, advocacy, coordination, networking, knowledge management and dissemination, and training. Through its strong convening power, it has brought together African Governments, institutions and their development partners to deliberate and craft common positions on important issues for regional, international and global consideration. • The measures adopted by AMCEN in seeking solutions to environmental concerns in Africa have consistently been participatory and consultative since its inception. The existence of AMCEN has had an impact on the manner in which environmental issues are being handled in the region. AMCEN has also contributed to strengthening Africa's participation and active involvement both in global negotiations and in international agreements on the environment.
4. Roles of Regional Offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNEP currently has six regional offices: Africa Office (AO) (ROA), Regional Office for Europe (ROE), Latin America and the Caribbean Office (LACO), Regional Office for North America (RONA), Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), and Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA).
Secretarial support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The three UNEP regional offices (AO, ROAP and LACO) provide Secretarial functions including organizing /coordination and related responsibilities for the regional forums and their bodies (Bureau, meetings of High-Level Officials, working groups, etc.). • In addition, the regional offices assist the President/Chair of the Conference and its Bureau in the implementation of the decisions adopted by the Conference. • Secretariat also assist Chair/President to submit the Forum outcome to the Regional Groups of the CPR and its intersessions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretariat needs to mobilize financial resources to organize the Regional Forums as well as relevant events held under the Forum like Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum.
Contents development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop draft agenda setting and draft programme following draft structure of UNEA and in consultation with Governance Affairs Office and relevant Divisions. • Prepare relevant in-session and information documents • Deliver Forum Outcome (ministerial declaration/chair's summary). • Support the development of decisions/other outcomes. • Ensure (Assist Chair of the Bureau) submission of the Forum outcome to the Regional Group of the CPR and its intersession. • Ensure the submission of outcomes to UNEA. • Assist in implementation of ministerial forums decisions/resolutions. • Seek technical assistance and financial support for implementation of ministerial forums decisions. • Seek cooperation with regional global and regional partners to implement the forums' decisions.
Inputs to UNEA Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Forum is a platform to raise awareness of Member States, Intergovernmental Organizations, Major Groups and other Stakeholders, UN organizations and Donors about process, and expected outcome of UNEA, and provide clear roadmap for regional engagement at CPR and UNEA process. • Regional forums could provide, for broader consideration, highlights of environmental issues to inform UNEA's agenda and resolutions that reflect diverse or localized contexts since these forums develop tailored policy recommendations based on regional experiences and challenges. • Regional Forums could contribute to consensus through unified regional voices. By fostering dialogue and cooperation among countries within the regions, the forums can help build consensus on regional priorities and positions presented at UNEA. • Regional forums can ensure UNEA's smoother negotiations and decision-making by addressing and resolving regional differences in advance of the UNEA meetings.
5. Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Secretariat invites CPR to hold discussion on how to enhance substantive contribution from regional forums of ministers of the environment and environment authorities to better inform UNEP Medium-term Strategy and Programme of Work. • The Secretariat welcomes further guidance from the Committee on the proposals contained in this report, including any other recommendations the Committee may have for further action on financial resource mobilization to strengthen UNEP's support to the regional forums.