

## **Speech to CPR 167**

(14 minutes)

### **WEB TITLE: A vital three months for environmental diplomacy**

*Your excellency, Firas Khouri, Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, Ambassadors and colleagues.*

This meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) comes as we get ready to embark on an intense three-month period of environmental diplomacy that will, I believe, set the course of sustainable development for years to come.

To begin, the Summit of the Future is less than two weeks away where world leaders are expected to adopt the Pact for the Future. The current zero draft strongly emphasizes the need for action across the three environmental planetary crises of [climate change](#), [nature and biodiversity loss](#), and [pollution and waste](#). These crises are critical issues we must address for our common future –theme of the Summit.

Naturally, youth leaders want to be meaningfully engaged in the Summit and UNEP will continue to champion young voices from every corner of the world with events on Youth Action Day. Beyond the Summit, UNEP will lead and engage on many key moments during the General-Assembly High-level week. Among these moments is the UN General Assembly High-level Meeting on Antimicrobial Resistance which will be an opportunity to secure new targets and practical steps in addressing AMR.

By the end of this year, the three Rio Conventions to protect biodiversity, counter climate change and slow desertification will have each held gatherings of their Conference of the Parties. For the 16<sup>th</sup> UN Biodiversity Conference – COP16 – hosted by the Government of Colombia, we will gather in the city of Cali under the banner of “Peace with Nature”. In Cali, we need to see progress, amongst other things, on how we turn the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) commitments into tangible action, strengthen resource mobilization and the financial mechanism is good and ready for implementation; and how to operationalize the benefit sharing mechanism for digital sequencing information on genetic resources.

At the UN Climate Conference - or COP29 - in Baku, ably guided by the Azerbaijan presidency, the focus will be on setting the stage for countries to submit enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in early 2025, increasing transparency efforts in line with the upcoming

first submission of the Biennial Transparency Report and delivering the new quantified goal on climate finance – which can be argued is the successor to the US\$100 billion per year goal.

Following COP29, eyes will turn from Baku to Belem, in Brazil as the country continues with COP30 preparations. For COP30, we hope Brazil can bring forward the leadership and momentum from their G20 Presidency to help secure the commitments needed to achieve our climate goals ahead of, and during, COP30. My hope is that we shall arrive in Belem with a significant number of new, genuinely ambitious NDCs. UNEP is proud to be supporting

And finally, at UNCCD COP16 in Riyadh, the focus will be on how we achieve land degradation neutrality by 2030 and integrate this commitment into national development plans, restore degraded lands and bring the land agenda more concretely into the three Rio Conventions for accelerated, integrated progress. I take note that one of the key issues under discussion is the question of a Protocol of Drought. I thank the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, this year's World Environment Day hosts and COP16 Presidency.

These are all hugely important moments, and as you have heard in previous briefings, UNEP is and will remain deeply engaged in all these processes – providing science, support and advocacy for rapid delivery of solutions.

This includes supporting regional groups as they prepare and align their negotiating positions. I was particularly honoured and pleased to attend the 10th Special Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment that took place in Cote d'Ivoire last week and adopted the Abidjan Declaration, which called for a drought management protocol and an increase in Africa's ambition to reduce desertification and land degradation. These are central issues we must address in Riyadh.

The Special Session of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean is also currently taking place in Brazil right now. UNEP Deputy Executive Director, Elizabeth Mrema, is attending to support discussions on climate action, biodiversity, and land degradation and restoration priorities for the region ahead of the upcoming COPs.

Let me also take a moment to focus on another critical process that UNEP's Member States started. I am, of course, talking about the final round of negotiations on the instrument to end plastic pollution.

More than two years ago, the UN Environment Assembly gavelled a historic resolution in which Member States signed up on the ambition to deliver a final instrument by the end of 2024. All

eyes now turn to Busan, where the decision is in your hands, the Members States, to work together and forge a global instrument that is ambitious, effective, credible and just. One that responds to the needs and calls of people and communities from across the world.

Let me be clear, and as I have said many times, this instrument is not about banning plastics. Plastic is – and will remain – an incredibly useful material. But we need to be careful about how and where we use it, from clean transport and energy to construction and healthcare. We must tackle single-use and short-lived plastics. And, by taking a life-cycle approach, we need to ensure that the plastics we do use stays in the economy.

We will need the commitment and engagement of all stakeholders, and we will need strong political support to land a deal that can be strengthened over time. So, I am asking all Member States to do their utmost to forge an agreement and quickly move forward to adoption, ratification and implementation.

In addition, G20 Ministers of the Environment will meet in early October, in Rio de Janeiro. I am looking forward to taking part, as the action by G20 nations, including their strong leadership on plastics, is essential to address environmental challenges.

My appreciation and recognition to Brazil for showing continued leadership on the environment through its G20 Presidency, under the theme “Building a just world and a sustainable planet”. We will continue supporting the G20 as the presidency shifts to South Africa later this year, a shift that comes as the African Union concludes its first year as full member of the G20.

Excellencies,

You were recently briefed on the progress of the Secretary-General’s Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals. Yesterday, the panel released their seven voluntary guiding principles that are designed to transform mineral value chains by putting at the forefront human rights, justice and equity, as well as environmental protection. The principles commit to ensure fairness, transparency and accountability, and foster global cooperation to drive sustainable development, shared prosperity and lasting peace. They are, as the Secretary-General said, a how-to guide to help generate prosperity and equality alongside clean power.

The reality is, if we are to stay on track for a 1.5°C scenario, we must invest in a reliable and affordable supply of critical energy transition minerals. Nations with these minerals – many of them in Africa – can use the increased revenues to reduce poverty, and for sustainable

development and long-term investments – if they break exploitative colonial patterns and ensure value addition is done at home.

However, since ramping up unsustainable mining will likely further damage our environment, and eventually exhaust the supply of these critical minerals, we need to approach their extraction and use in products with clear policies on circularity and environmental stewardship.

The issue of critical minerals, and circularity and resource efficiency, is also central to accelerating the digital revolution. For this reason, Member States have asked UNEP to consider the environmental dimensions of digital technologies, in terms of opportunities and impacts on the environment.

At the Summit of the Future, UNEP will release an Issues Note looking at the environmental impact of the artificial intelligence lifecycle – covering critical minerals and metals, energy and greenhouse gas emissions, water and e-waste. The note identifies areas of concern and makes recommendations on how to minimize the environmental impact of AI so that the benefits of this technology can be realized without damaging the planet.

Excellencies,

These issues and many others will have a bearing on UNEP's 2026-2029 Medium-Term Strategy, 2026-2027 Programme of Work, and the focus of the next UNEA.

As you will be aware, I am hosting a series of informal luncheons with Nairobi-based Permanent Representatives to listen to your insights, experience and suggestions as we mark the 10-year anniversary of UNEA. The purpose is to create an informal dialogue to identify ideas on how to make UNEP and UNEA as responsive and results focused as it can be. I thank the ambassadors who have contributed so far and look forward to hearing from others in the coming weeks.

Now is also the moment when we are initiating the process of developing a new Medium-Term Strategy and Programme of Work. So, on this issue, let me again underline the fundamental importance of stable and adequate funding as an essential precondition to the delivery of UNEP's mandate. I thank Member States for their active participation, advice and support during our discussion pertaining to this agenda item at the annual subcommittee in July.

I particularly recall that Member States noted the importance of the Environment Fund in enabling UNEP to execute its mandate and encouraged all Member States to contribute their full share to the Environment Fund.

I would like to inform you that, by the end of August this year, 70 Member States had contributed to the Environment Fund, of which 41 have contributed their full share. The total US dollar amount pledged is US\$73.66 million towards the budget of US\$100 million.

My thanks to all Member States that have contributed. However, with less than four months of the year left, there is still a significant stretch to be made. I encourage all Member States that have not yet contributed, to do so. Every contribution matters, so my thanks in particular go to the countries, including a good number of least developed countries and small island developing states, who have paid their full contribution.

Excellencies,

Next time we meet, I hope we will be discussing ambitious outcomes from the events ahead of us, and how we translate those outcomes and decisions into action. This is truly a critical agenda ahead of you. It is an agenda filled with pivotal decision-making moments, all of which are key moments that you, Member States, have previously decided were needed. Now is the time for us all to deliver.