Committee of Permanent Representatives
Subcommittee Meeting
Nairobi, 19 November 2024
13:00 – 16:00 (GMT+3)
Hybrid meeting
Conference Room 4 (in person)
and Microsoft Teams (online)

Chair's Summary

Agenda item 1: Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda.

1. H.E. Ms. Nicol Adamcová, Vice Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Kenya and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), opened the meeting.

2. The agenda was adopted.

Agenda item 2: Review of UNEP's thematic programmes.

3. The Secretariat provided a review of the following UNEP thematic programme: "Digital Transformations".

4. Delegations[1] that took the floor welcomed the presentation and provided the following comments in summary:
   a. Noting the importance of capacity building as one of the key lessons learned in the implementation of the Programme, highlighted the need for UNEP to enhance its efforts both internally and externally to support Member States and sought clarification on effective approaches and challenges experienced in that regard.
   b. Highlighted the challenges encountered in implementing or upgrading the World Environment Situation Room (WESR) and suggested exploring ways to enhance its utilization to maximize its potential impact.
   c. Stressed the importance of linking the Programme initiatives to the global initiatives such as for example the Global Digital Compact (GDC).
   d. Encouraged UNEP to leverage on the momentum initiated at the Digital Day of the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP29) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), leading to the adoption of a Green Digital Declaration and suggested that UNEP takes part in such discussions and initiatives.

5. In response, the Secretariat thanked delegations for their comments and provided the following clarifications:
   a. Highlighted the need for tailored, community-focused content as well as blended learning approaches, combining online and in-person experiences, as effective strategies for capacity building.
   b. Identified challenges in navigating UNEP's extensive datasets and avoiding duplication, which led to creating a federated platform through the WESR, while also highlighting funding challenges as donors tends to favor specific solutions over

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[1] European Union, Germany.

foundational platforms, prompting a proof-of-concept approach for future fundraising.

c. Confirmed UNEP's active participation in United Nations wide digital sustainability efforts, including initiatives such as the Coalition for Digital Environmental Sustainability (CODES), the GDC, and collaborative work with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) with respect to the Green Digital Declaration during COP29.

Agenda item 3: Briefing on the World Environment Situation Room.

6. The Secretariat provided a briefing on the on the World Environment Situation Room (WESR).

7. Delegations[2] that took the floor welcomed the presentation and provided the following comments in summary:
   a. Highlighted that WESR can become an enabling environment for scaling digital solutions such as Strata and UN Biodiversity Lab via a single federated system.
   b. Requested further information on:
      i. The timeline for incorporating different digital solutions into WESR and the additional steps needed to enable more interactive use of the tools.
      ii. Challenges experienced in implementing the new vision for WESR.
      iii. The peer review process in scientific-research settings, as well as plans for the external advice or consultation planned to support the development of the new WESR.
      iv. The relationship between WESR and existing knowledge management strategies and clearing houses that exist under specific Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).
      v. How the Secretariat would address inconsistencies between data from different sources that merged into one platform.
8. In response, the Secretariat thanked delegations for their comments and provided the following clarifications:
   a. Noted that the new WESR is a data platform that can federate as many existing solutions as possible, and not just those developed by UNEP.
   b. Highlighted funding challenges for the implementation of the WESR as well as challenges with respect to data quality, availability, and interoperability.
   c. Noted that one of the expected outputs on the Global Environmental Data Strategy (GEDS) consultations is to identify best practice for data quality and data interoperability, and applying these standards to the WESR platform.
   d. Emphasized active collaboration with MEAs to co-create digital solutions in ensuring data usefulness and integration.
   e. Explained that while WESR does not currently have a formal peer-review process, it undergoes informal reviews through bilateral and multilateral meetings, events, consultations with UN agencies for input and cross-validation to avoid redundancies.
   f. Highlighted that some of the GEDS discussions focus on the potential need for a formal review process for environmental data before incorporating into platforms such as WESR.
   g. Stressed that the development of the new WESR is a long-term, multi-year endeavor, with the current efforts serving as the foundation for future progress.

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[2] European Union, Spain, Argentina.

Agenda item 4: Briefing on the Global Environmental Data Strategy.

9. The Secretariat provided a briefing on the Global Environmental Data Strategy.

10. Delegations[3] that took the floor welcomed the presentation and provided the following comments in summary:
    a. Emphasized the importance of ensuring environmental data availability and affordability and further stressed the need for strategic dissemination and adoption of the GEDS by Member States.
    b. Highlighted the importance of democratizing access to information and integrating digital tools to support vulnerable populations, and of aligning with the Secretary-General's report on Critical Energy Transition Minerals and the outcomes of the Summit of the Future .
    c. Requested further information on:
        i. The timeline for finalizing the GEDS, and Member State involvement in the later stages of its development.
        ii. Guidance to integrate digital tools into national policies and strategies, particularly for vulnerable countries.
        iii. A decentralized implementation model for GEDS backed by multistakeholder governance.

11. In response, the Secretariat thanked delegations for their comments and provided the following clarifications:
    a. Clarified that on-going GEDS consultations i) actively involve academia, private sector and Major Groups and Stakeholders to ensure full inclusivity ii) will take place in November and December 2024, with further opportunities for engagement as the draft GEDS strategy matures through 2024.
    b. Acknowledged the need for strategically disseminating GEDS and for collaborating with Member States on effective adoption mechanisms.
    c. Noted that the first draft of the GEDS will be available by the end of the first quarter of 2025, with two presentations to the CPR before consideration by the seventh session of the United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA-7).
    d. Highlighted that efforts are underway to incorporate digital tools into national and global strategies, with a focus on empowering vulnerable populations and tackling environmental challenges.
    e. Reaffirmed UNEP's commitment to aligning developments of critical energy transition minerals with the Secretary-General's report, emphasizing the role of digital tools in monitoring harmful chemicals and mitigating environmental impacts.

Agenda item 5: Briefing on the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's (UNCTAD) Digital Economy Report

12. The Secretariat provided a briefing on the 2024 UNCTAD Digital Economy Report. (the Report).

13. Delegations[4] that took the floor welcomed the presentation and provided the following

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[3] European Union, Argentina, Finland, Costa Rica, Children and Youth Major Group.
[4] Columbia, Spain, Russian Federation, Germany.

comments in summary:

    a. Stressed the importance of traceability and transparency in assessing the environmental impact of the digitalization lifecycle and inquired about the integration of lifecycle approaches into broader frameworks such as the Environment Management Group (EMG).

    b. Highlighted the ongoing risks related to the digital divide, especially with the development of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), and requested further elaboration on capacity-building initiatives, entrepreneurship support, and establishment of consumer and data protection policies in developing countries.

    c. Requested further information on:

        i. Whether lifecycle assessments should focus broadly on raw materials or specifically on waste-related environmental challenges.

        ii. How UNEP would address the pressures of both the low-carbon and digital transitions through a balanced approach to critical minerals.

        iii. How topics like Digital Product Passports and the circular economy are being operationalized within the Report's recommendations.

    d. Inquired about the specific contribution to the Report.

14. In response, the Secretariat thanked delegations for their comments and provided the following clarifications:

    a. Confirmed the integration of lifecycle approaches into the EMG and noted that various United Nations agencies are keen on joining this effort.

    b. Acknowledged progress achieved with respect to capacity-building in developing countries and emphasized gaps, particularly in relation to entrepreneurship, consumer protection, and data protection policies.

    c. Noted risks posed by generative AI in widening the digital divide, stressing the need to address inclusiveness and sustainability while ensuring successful partnerships for developing countries.

    d. Highlighted the need for greater private sector involvement in ensuring transparency and measuring environmental impacts of digital technologies.

    e. Acknowledged the importance of balanced approaches, addressing both waste and raw material extraction in lifecycle assessments, to tackle environmental pressures effectively.

    f. Emphasized the need for a cohesive strategy integrating low-carbon and digital transitions amidst growing pressures.

    g. Highlighted ongoing collaboration with ITU to develop standards for digital devices and explore the application of Digital Product Passports for transparency and traceability.

    h. Clarified UNEP's collaboration with UNCTAD in the development of the Report, including co-drafting the Report's outline, peer review, drafting contributions, and references, along with participating in the Report's launch.

Agenda item 6: Other matters.

15. No other matters were raised.

Agenda item 7: Closing of the meeting.

16. The meeting closed at 16:00 (GMT+3).