

Subcommittee meeting on 26 September 2016

Lessons learnt from UNEA 2 and preparations UNEA 3

These remarks complement the written submission by the EU and its MS of 30 June 2016 and highlights some key issues relating to the UNEA outcome and visibility, the preparatory process for resolutions, including the role of the CPR.

Outcome

- A Ministerial outcome remains a key objective for the EU/MS as it is the way to ensure impact at political level. However, this is not an objective per se at any price: It must deliver an outcome with clear political messages that are both communicable to the broader public and relevant for policy-makers.
- We would prefer an outcome document focused on the theme of the specific session rather than a very broad declaration that is hard to communicate and risks losing impact due to its breadth. The theme should be chosen with a view to a link to the theme/SDGs under review at the following HLPF session. In that way, the outcome document would automatically contain relevant messages to be conveyed to the HLPF.
- Regarding the process, we should avoid technical negotiations during UNEA. The key elements could be pre-discussed in the CPR/OECPR but the Ministers at UNEA should have the possibility to provide their own input and to find compromises on difficult issues, so be engaged at an earlier stage than at UNEA 2. This will require strong leadership by the UNEA President.
- From UNEA 4 on, Member States may want to consider engaging in a more political discussion on the programme of work thanks to the reduced time lapse between its adoption and its entry into force. A debate and decision at the ministerial level on specific flagship initiative(s) and associated budget that UNEP may carry out within the framework of its programme of work could notably reinforce the political appeal and impact of UNEA and its high level segment.

Preparatory process for resolutions

- We consider an at least informal agreement between the MS essential to submit resolution proposals early on, before an agreed deadline, and to focus resolution proposals on issues of global relevance. Issues of specific importance for a certain region should be dealt with at regional level.
- It is important to find a good balance between the role of the CPR and capitals in the preparatory process for UNEA meetings. Both have specific expertise and specific challenges (such as the CPR's limited geographical representation). The preparatory process should be designed in a way to ensure the best possible use of this respective expertise and set-up.
- The CPR has a key role in the monitoring of implementation of existing resolutions, as well as the PoW and the budget. There is a clear added value in having this function exercised by the CPR in Nairobi with daily contact with UNEP.

- Beyond this key role in monitoring, the CPR can also make a useful contribution in the preparatory process of the resolutions for UNEA. However, we would prefer less line-by-line negotiations of resolution text but rather a focus in the time before the OECPR on clarifying the proposals, getting background information from the Secretariat on potentially controversial issues, if needed discussing possible alternative language which the Secretariat could prepare at the request of the CPR members for specific sections. This would facilitate the formal negotiations which should take place at OECPR and UNEA to ensure technical expertise from the capitals is present. At the same time, this focus of CPR work would allow sufficient time in between meetings to properly prepare positions in the capitals and at regional level. If there is agreement (see above) on an early submission deadline for resolution proposals, it could also be envisaged to reach agreement that certain less technical and more political resolutions get pre-negotiated in the CPR.

Increased visibility of UNEA

- We are of the opinion that UNEA need more media visibility, which goes hand in hand with the political visibility.
- In order to raise awareness of UNEA in the outside world, we should use people oriented and simple language which sticks to the point and UNEP should prepare a clear communication strategy that supports UNEA

EU/MS views on the selection of the theme for UNEA 3

Based on the experience of UNEA 1 and 2 and as part of the broader lessons learnt process for UNEA 3, the EU/MS suggest aiming at formulating potential themes for UNEA 3.

We are interested in hearing views on the themes for UNEA-3 and are open to reflect on such proposals. Our considerations on such themes of UNEA will be guided by the following criteria:

- Global, not only regional, relevance, in line with UNEA's role as the global authority on the environment
- Reflect the added value of UNEP vis a vis individual environmental conventions, by focusing on cross-cutting issues
- Attractiveness for ministers, i.e. allowing for lively debates and agreement on meaningful messages and concrete actions. Concrete actions may have a longer lead time.
- Communicability and relevance for a broader audience, including the general public and policy makers also beyond the core environmental sphere.
- Possibilities to bring in a wider range of stakeholders for discussions of the theme, e.g. business representatives, other UN bodies, other than environment ministers
- Link to HLPF to facilitate impact in broader UN processes. Here, we think it is particularly useful if the theme could be linked to the SDGs under in depth review in the following HLPF session. For 2018, these are (see UNGA Resolution A/70/60) SDGs 6 (Water), 7 (Energy), 11(Cities), 12 (SCP) and 15 (biodiversity), which offer particularly good areas for input through UNEP, and which link up neatly to some of the priorities expressed by the ED.

We would also be open to consider more focus of the entire UNEA session around that particular theme, including events and resolutions, as this will facilitate the outcomes more easily. It is particularly of interest in view of the shortened UNEA 3 session which would benefit from such overall thematic focus.

If any major forthcoming international events (such as now in October 2016 Habitat III) are coming up in the following years, they should also be taken into account.
