

1st UNEA of UNEP
Nairobi, 23-27 June 2014

EU+MS Opening Statement for the opening plenary session (10:00-13:00)
delivered by H.E. Ambassador of Greece Mr. Eleftherios Kouvarytakis

Madam Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the EU and its Member States. First of all, let me take the opportunity to express our appreciation to the Government of Kenya for hosting this first and historic meeting of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

We extend our sincere appreciation to the Executive Director of UNEP Mr. Achim Steiner and all UNEP Secretariat for the preparations of this first session of UNEA. A lot of ground has been covered in the intersessional period from OECPR, but still there is a big workload ahead of us for the coming days, especially regarding the preparation of decisions for adoption at UNEA, as stipulated in paragraph 9(c) of Decision 27/2.

The EU and its Member States wish also to congratulate you and the recently elected members of the UNEA Bureau for your election, and state that we are ready to cooperate with you in order to overcome difficulties and impediments.

This session marks the beginning of a new era, featured by a strengthened and upgraded UNEP in the context of universal membership, an important step forward in the reform of the international environment governance and within the broader context of the reform of the institutional framework of sustainable development. The EU and its MS are committed to make this 1st UNEA a success.

Concluding discussions on some key points regarding UNEP governance is a priority, such as the Rules of Procedure and the UNEP stakeholder policy, which must implement the mandate from Rio+20 to ensure the effective engagement of civil society. UNEP's role in the UN system is another very important institutional topic.

On environmental policy, important decisions are before us on a range of issues, from issues such as science-policy interface, chemicals & waste and

water, to emerging ones like marine litter, ecosystem-based adaptation and air quality.

The work of the Committee of the Whole is also related to the High-Level Segment which will discuss two very important issues: “Sustainable Development Goals and the Post-2015 development agenda, including sustainable consumption and production” as well as “illegal trade in wildlife”.

Let me note that, in this context, it is important to ensure that UNEP showcases the role of the environment in sustainable development and as an enabler of poverty eradication and inclusive and sustainable growth and prosperity. UNEP’s rich evidence base can be drawn upon to highlight the need for the integration of environmental issues within the Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, UNEP, as the leading UN authority on the environment, must prepare for its key role in contributing to the implementation of the post 2015 sustainable development framework.

Mr. Chair,

The EU and its Member States remain committed to working together with other partners in ensuring the best possible outcome from this first session of the UNEA, consistent with the decision we took in Rio in 2012 for the upgrading of UNEP.

Thank you.