

UNEP – 4th Annual Subcommittee

EU/MS comments on the contribution of UNEA to the HLPF

Background documents:

- *UNEP 7.2.2.17, Note to MS addressing the questions put forth by the President of ECOSOC on the theme of the 2017 High Level Political Forum*
- *25.10.2016 Letter from ECOSOC President to UNEA Chair, requesting inputs to the 2017 HLPF*
- *UNGA Resolution 71/231 Report of the UNEA of UNEP*
- *June 2016, UNEA inputs to 2016 HLPF.*

Comments:

- The environment is an essential dimension of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. UNEA and UNEP play a key role in delivering on this agenda. The HLPF has the central role in overseeing the follow up and review, and the different intergovernmental bodies and forums have been invited to support such review of progress on the SDGs. Input from UNEA and UNEP to the HLPF is therefore crucial to allow a holistic assessment of progress and formulation of integrated responses.
- During last year's HLPF, there was too little visibility of the environmental dimension or of the actions undertaken by UNEA and UNEP. This should not be repeated this year.
- Sending a substantial input in response to invitation of the ECOSOC president is therefore crucial, as that should also be the basis for the key messages the UNEA president will be able to convey during the HLPF itself as reflected in UNGA resolution 71/231. That contribution should predominantly demonstrate the specific and real contribution of environmental action to 'leaving no one behind' and the SDGs. It should highlight and demonstrate that by keeping environment under review and effectively tackling environment issues UNEP is contributing to the 2030 agenda and the themes of the HLPF.
- In terms of **process**, EU and its MS welcome the possibility to share views on the messages that can be conveyed to the HLPF. We are of the view that these messages should be sent by the UNEA President on behalf of UNEA, and should cover actions undertaken by UNEA and UNEP. EU and its MS support active participation of the UNEA president in the HLPF, in response to the encouragement by the General Assembly. We look forward on confirmation where the UNEA President can participate.
- In terms of both **form and substance**, the EU and its MS consider that much work remains to be done to elaborate an input that duly reflects the contribution of UNEP and UNEA to the 2030 Agenda. UNEP should make full use of this opportunity to showcase its work and should notably build on its work at the science-policy interface to incorporate much more substance. Given the amount of contributions received by the HLPF, the input should also have an attractive form, be operational and be widely communicated. The EU and its MS do agree with the approach to follow the specific questions from the ECOSOC president's template which focus on the overall theme of the HLPF. Yet within this approach, EU and its MS would need to see more focus on the 6 SDGs selected for this year's in depth thematic review, in order to render the contribution as concrete and solution-oriented as possible. EU and its MS would also suggest making a clear

distinction between decisions taken by UNEA and the actions undertaken by UNEP in response thereof.

- Where possible the contribution should make suggestions to the HLPF where implementation will benefit from strengthened synergy between the 3 dimensions of the 2030 agenda or enhanced cooperation across the UN system.

Specific comments

A) assessment of the situation regarding the principle of “ensuring that no one is left behind” at global level

- This section should focus less on repeating general principles or statements (eg **points a1-a5**) and more on concrete actions such as under **point a7**). In doing so, the section should highlight how the environment dimension trickles down in the other pillars.
- This section should explain what leaving no one behind means from an environmental perspective in terms of access to resources, information, participation, and how environmental inclusiveness could be linked with, and create synergies/opportunities for wider inclusiveness. Some examples of how UNEP is integrating these perspectives into its work would help encourage more inclusive approaches to implementing the Agenda.
- The analysis should therefore first and foremost start from the recognition that ongoing deterioration of environment will jeopardise development gains, health and security notably for the poorest and most vulnerable, including women. Hence not tackling environment issues will leave many behind and impoverished. This should be illustrated with some clear examples (e.g. chemicals and waste with its clear link to SDG3.9; air quality with its links to SDG 3.4, indoor air pollution from cook stoves, outdoor air pollution; oceans through SDG14,) presenting them from a results oriented UNEP perspective. No objection to the other areas mentioned in the note provided their link to the specific SDGs is made clearly.
- Likewise, **point a4**) should not say that the interrelationship between human-rights and the three dimensions of sustainable development need to be recognized, rather it should explain, where appropriate, how this interrelationship is being developed in UNEA/UNEP context.
- This section should also reflect how UNEP contributes to effective global, regional and national environments policy underpinning lasting development gains and poverty eradication (cf **section b4-15**) is currently reflecting how the poverty agenda should trickle down in environment policy).

B) the identification of gaps, areas requiring urgent attention, risks and challenges

- would be good to have the identification of those gaps linked to findings from scientifically sound assessments, panels, information networks,... on the state of, trends in and the outlook for the environment, and what this means for the achievement of the specific goals under in-depth review and the achievement of all goals. Provision of such policy relevant information to the HLPF would not only strengthen the science-policy interface, but would also be in line with provisions from UNEA 2/5 §18c & d and §20.
- **Point b1**) speaks about pollution in general. This could be more developed focussing on the most relevant issues – eg based on key challenges identified in the POW and MTS as well as on the 6 in-depth SDGs, which could also use findings from UNEA-2.

C) Valuable lessons learned on eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity

- this section is rather weak and contains no real lessons-learned, surely a more affirmative message, based on UNEPs work, is possible on the importance of environment for sustainably eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity, including on the ability of environment to sustain livelihoods, natural resources exploitation for prosperity, healthy environment healthy and productive people, resilient ecosystems and ability of poor people to withstand shocks.....
- more examples could be given of the crucial role of partnerships and UNEP's catalytic role in fostering them.

D) emerging issues likely to affect the realization of poverty eradication and achieving prosperity

- To what extent can we consider a general reference to eg an exclusive focus on economic growth, large scale clearing of forests, or projects diverting local water supplies as an emerging issue? More substantial information would be welcomed on the emerging issues identified, for example by utilizing examples from the UNEPs Frontiers 2016 report.
- **point d3)** It would be interesting not only to focus on developing countries alone, but also to give a perspective from developed countries on this. Plenty of people have been left behind; if we look at Eurostat's 2020 indicators, almost 24% of the population of the EU was at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2015– what are the links with environment here?

E) areas where political guidance by the HLPF is required

- Apart from e3) and e9), this section appears to put the wrong focus: it repeats text from the HLPF resolution, focuses on how HLPF could or should operate or on what HLPF could deliver in theory. This section needs specific suggestions, highlighting those areas where guidance – especially from an environmental point of view – is needed.
- **Point e1)** either doesn't belong here or is wrongly formulated. it wrongly uses the word hope for UNEA. As if UNEA is weaker than some other organisations. Messages of confidence should be formulated. It is precisely this contribution that needs to help in realising this objective. It is not about UNEA here, it should be about environmental issues on which political guidance is needed. And it is up to this contribution by UNEA to ensure that such issues are being picked up.
- The message to pass here, in addition to 3 and 9, would have to be that the HLPF – given its central role overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes at global level – needs to deliver balanced assessments and integrated recommendations on emerging issues, utilizing the substantial input from UNEA and UNEP in order to take on board the environmental dimension.

F) Policy recommendations on ways to accelerate progress in poverty eradication

- In general, the policy recommendations are ok, but thematic grouping (eg by SDG to be reviewed) could be considered to avoid long lists.