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**United Nations Environment
Assembly of the United Nations
Environment Programme**

**Committee of Permanent Representatives to the
United Nations Environment Programme**
139th meeting
Nairobi, 19 June 2017

**Draft minutes of the 138th meeting of the Committee of
Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment
Programme, held on 10 March 2017**

Agenda item 1

Opening of the meeting

1. The meeting was opened at 9.45 a.m. on Friday, 10 March 2017, by Ms. Julia Pataki, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Romania to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP.
2. The meeting was attended by 98 participants representing 56 members, 2 participants representing 1 observer, 1 intergovernmental organization and 1 other entity. The representatives of Madagascar, Monaco, Montenegro and Nicaragua participated via videolink.
3. The Chair welcomed the following new members to the Committee: Mr. Ernesto Gomez Diaz, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Cuba; Ms. Theresia Samaria, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of Namibia; Ms. Luisa Fragoso, Chargé d'Affaires and Permanent Representative of Portugal; and Mr. Osman Keh Kamara, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone.
4. She bade farewell to the following departing members: Ms. Brenda Pangrazi, Deputy Permanent Representative of Argentina; Mr. Raul Rodriguez Ramos, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Cuba; Mr. Japhet Isaack, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of Namibia; Mr. Francisco-Xavier de Meireles, Chargé d'Affaires and Permanent Representative of Portugal; and Mr. Andrew G. Bangali, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone.
5. The Chair welcomed Estonia and Malta as new members of the Committee.

Agenda item 2

Adoption of the agenda

6. The agenda was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/CPR/138/2).

Agenda item 3

**Adoption of the draft minutes of the previous meetings of the Committee of
Permanent Representatives**

7. The Committee adopted the minutes of its extraordinary meeting held on 5 December 2016 (UNEP/CPR/138/2), and the 137th meeting of the Committee, held on 16 January 2017 (UNEP/CPR/138/3), on the basis of the draft minutes.

Agenda item 4

Report of the Executive Director

8. Introducing the item, the Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, drew attention to the written report of the Executive Director entitled “Executive Director’s progress update to the 138th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives”, noting that the Executive Director was unable to attend the meeting. In his oral briefing, the Deputy Executive Director highlighted certain elements of the report.

9. With regard to recent meetings, he noted that the Executive Director had attended the first meeting in the intersessional process to consider the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, held in Brasilia from 7 to 9 February 2017. He welcomed the meeting as a significant contribution to efforts towards achieving a cleaner planet.

10. On climate change, he expressed appreciation for the contribution of the Government of the Netherlands, together with the Global Environment Facility and other partners, to the launch of the new Global Centre of Excellence on Climate Adaptation, being hosted by the Netherlands. He undertook to provide further information after the meeting on the services offered by the centre.

11. An important area of activity referred to in the Executive Director’s update was the relationship between the environment and conflicts. UNEP was keen to enhance, and raise the visibility of, its disasters and conflicts subprogramme, and to learn from experience gained in countries such as Afghanistan and Sudan. It was the ambition of UNEP to respond to requests for assistance from Colombia, Iraq, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic and others, as well as the Lake Chad and Sahel regions, and to step up its capacity for conflict prevention and the important environmental dimension thereof, in line with the broad strategy laid out by the United Nations Secretary-General to strengthen the United Nations’ overall capacities for conflict prevention.

12. Other significant areas of UNEP focus included the state of the world’s oceans, biodiversity, and cooperation with business and the private sector. The Executive Director had launched the Clean Seas Campaign at the fourth World Ocean Summit, held in Bali, Indonesia, from 22 to 24 February 2017. The Deputy Executive Director said that he was pleased to note that 10 countries had already pledged support for the campaign, with the Government of Indonesia pledging to achieve a 70 per cent reduction in marine waste by 2025 and to contribute \$1 billion a year to fight pollution of the seas.

13. The area of biodiversity, however, was lacking a coherent response from world leaders. He urged Member States to build on the process of developing a road map begun by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its thirteenth meeting, held in Cancun, Mexico, in 2016. It was to be hoped that by the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in China in 2020, it would be possible to mobilize world leaders and obtain the level of commitment needed to reduce the loss of biodiversity in the world.

14. UNEP was also seeking to discuss with the Committee ways of enhancing cooperation and partnership with business and the private sector. Until recently the dialogue between environmental organizations and the private sector had not been sufficiently constructive, but the world was now realizing that without a major shift in business practices it would not be possible to achieve internationally-agreed environmental goals for the planet. UNEP would be reaching out to businesses to promote the ambition of a pollution-free planet and he urged members to seek partnerships with businesses in their own countries and to promote the concept that environmental protection was a good business practice.

15. The Bureau of the Committee had received a request to give a presentation to members on the cooperation between UNEP and the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat). The Deputy Executive Director undertook to liaise with UN-Habitat colleagues and to respond to that request.

16. He drew attention to two multilateral environmental agreements, the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. Twelve countries were yet to ratify the Minamata Convention, with two African countries likely to do so in the coming days. The Marshall Islands had been the first to ratify the Kigali Amendment; he urged all members to follow suit.

17. Finally, he noted the report of the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network, which had been presented at the recently concluded fourth annual meeting of the subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives. In its report, the Network had assessed UNEP as a solid organization, well structured, well managed, and with a clear mission. He

congratulated Member States on their contribution to the work of UNEP and urged them to read the report and transmit it to their capitals.

18. In the ensuing discussion, representatives expressed appreciation to the Executive Director for his written report and to the Deputy Executive Director for his oral briefing.

19. A number of representatives expressed satisfaction with the work of the fourth annual meeting of the subcommittee. Describing the mood at the meeting as “upbeat”, one representative welcomed the genuine optimism and willingness to engage that had characterized the meeting; the strengthening cooperation between the bureaux of the Committee and the Environment Assembly; and the more focused and results-oriented inputs from stakeholders. He urged UNEP to maintain the momentum to ensure the success of the forthcoming third session of the Assembly. Another representative welcomed the transparent and detailed information provided in the course of the meeting on all the subprogrammes of UNEP, as requested by Member States. The organization was exceeding expectations in many areas and she expressed appreciation to UNEP staff for their efforts and dedication before and during the meeting.

20. With regard to engagement with business and the private sector, one representative said that the forthcoming World Economic Forum on Africa, to be held in Durban, South Africa from 3 to 5 May 2017, presented an opportunity for UNEP to promote the message of the third session of the Environment Assembly and bring on board as many private sector players as possible, particularly from the African region, and he asked how UNEP intended to use the opportunity.

21. A number of representatives welcomed the organization’s efforts to expand its work and improve the influence of UNEP internationally, and particularly in developing countries. One representative expressed the hope that UNEP would continue to broaden the debate on environmental goals worldwide and welcomed in particular the outreach to the private sector.

22. Welcoming the regional activities of UNEP outlined in the Executive Director’s report, particularly in Africa, one representative commended the organization’s efforts to strengthen its regional presence. Significant progress had been made but there was still work to be done in improving coordination of project development and implementation of regional projects. He called for greater collaboration with regional offices in these areas and for projects to be implemented through the regional offices rather than from headquarters, in the spirit of a regional presence. Projects should include capacity development at the regional level to this end.

23. Another representative welcomed efforts to enhance the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the business transformation and change management initiative within UNEP. The Programme’s active engagement with all stakeholders was highly valued and was seen as a significant contribution to enhancing the visibility of UNEP.

24. One representative welcomed the implementation of the new organizational structures within UNEP. He said that his Government would continue to cooperate with UNEP in environmental improvements, particularly in the area of road construction, and had invited the Executive Director to take part in the forthcoming Belt and Road forum for international cooperation, to be held in China in May 2017.

25. On the financial situation, one representative expressed support for the UNEP strategy to mobilize resources from Member States and had commenced efforts to ensure that his Government fulfilled its commitments.

26. One representative thanked the Executive Director for UNEP cooperation in the World Ocean Summit held in Bali and called on Member States to support the global Clean Seas Campaign.

27. One representative expressed appreciation for the work of UNEP on disasters and conflicts, particularly with regard to the implementation of Environment Assembly resolution 2/15 on the protection of the environment in areas affected by armed conflict. He noted, however, that in spite of a number of appeals from his Government for UNEP assistance in dealing with national environmental challenges, his country had again not been mentioned in the report of the Executive Director among the countries that had requested assistance, and he reiterated the call for UNEP to respond in that regard.

28. A representative of the business and industry major group expressed appreciation for the opportunity to work with UNEP and applauded the organization’s continuous outreach efforts towards business and industry through the major group as well as individual associations and companies. With regard to the third session of the Environment Assembly, she advocated the need to expand the circle of business and industry in the major group and to involve more regional organizations and more small

and medium-sized companies. The major group looked forward to contributing to the work of UNEP on pollution and would propose solutions, advice and partnerships to advance that work.

29. The Deputy Executive Director thanked members for their comments and in particular for the appreciation expressed of UNEP staff.

30. With regard to the regional presence of UNEP in Africa, he noted that it was much stronger than it had been in the past and that UNEP had a completely transparent system in place for project approval. UNEP also had greater capacity in the regions than hitherto to assist project implementation, although he acknowledged that it was not yet sufficient to implement all projects through the regional offices. Furthermore the imbalance between earmarked and non-earmarked funding presented challenges for the secretariat in terms of staffing to support multiple regional offices.

31. He said that UNEP was aware of the World Economic Forum on Africa, as well as forums for other regions, and confirmed that UNEP would be represented at these.

32. In response to the concerns expressed by one representative, the Executive Director noted that UNEP did everything possible to respond to requests from Member States, although it was sometimes constrained by funding or capacity. He assured the representative that UNEP would be willing to assist the Government in question.

33. In her comments, the Chair added that all Member States were extremely interested in cooperation and building relationships with business and the private sector and would appreciate regular updates on how that strategy was being developed. With regard to the evaluation of UNEP by the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network, she said that the Committee was very encouraged to see the results. She noted that UNEP benefited from the extremely rich expertise among its staff which had contributed to the successful performance assessment and expressed the hope that this would be preserved in the future.

34. With regard to the cooperation between the bureaux of the Committee and the United Nations Environment Assembly, she said that it had been agreed that the Chair of the Committee would participate in Assembly Bureau meetings as an ex officio member and a representative of the president or member of the Assembly Bureau would participate in Committee Bureau meetings, also as an ex officio member.

Agenda item 5

Outcome of the fourth annual meeting of the subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

35. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to a document entitled “Chair’s summary for the fourth annual subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP” that had been circulated to Committee members. She noted that the summary was in draft form and invited members to submit their comments on the document in writing, following which the draft would be amended and discussed by the Bureau and then made available on the Committee’s portal.

36. Outlining the key points, the Chair said that the meeting had focused on an in-depth discussion of the programme of work and budget and preparations for the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly; it had also provided input to the President of the Assembly’s presentation to the high-level political forum on sustainable development at its annual meeting, in July 2017.

37. She highlighted the participation in the meeting of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres, who had addressed the subcommittee on his approach to the complexities of the environment and other major issues. She expressed appreciation to all those who made his visit possible and noted its significance in terms of raising the visibility of UNEP.

38. The Bureau of the Committee had briefly evaluated the annual meeting of the subcommittee and assessed that it had been very successful and had achieved its objectives in terms of fulfilling the mandate of the subcommittee. The documentation for the meeting was considered to have been excellent and had been provided in a timely manner. The Bureau had also considered some of the challenges and recommendations for the next subcommittee meeting, including shorter presentations and more time for analysing data and for dialogue between the secretariat and Member States.

39. In his remarks, the Deputy Executive Director thanked the Chair and the Bureau for their comments and said that lessons had been learned from the annual meeting of the subcommittee. He paid tribute to the members of the Committee for their commitment to, guidance on and oversight of the preparations for the meeting. The secretariat would be preparing a consolidated road map incorporating the Committee’s feedback and setting out the actions to be taken in preparation for the

forthcoming third session of the Environment Assembly, including the political outreach essential for a successful session and a clear communications plan. The secretariat was committed to working with Member States individually and collectively, and to building on national and regional experience in order to communicate a clear global message on pollution. The role of UNEP was to support and facilitate the actions of Governments, the private sector and individuals through communication and taking a leadership role for the world to follow.

40. Turning to administrative matters, he referred to the discussion by the subcommittee of budget issues for the Assembly session, saying that he remained confident that the funding required would be forthcoming. The secretariat was open to discussions on participation in the Assembly session by some countries and would discuss the matter further with Member States in the future.

41. In the ensuing discussion, several representatives expressed appreciation for the Chair's summary and congratulated the Chair, the Bureau and the secretariat on a successful annual meeting of the subcommittee, which was described by one representative as having been very productive and interactive.

42. A number of representatives welcomed the findings of the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network while noting that there were areas for improvement. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, called for more details to be provided of the reasons for insufficient progress or overachievement identified in the performance review and on how UNEP would tackle the challenges and opportunities in future activities.

43. On the budget, he reiterated the need for transparency and more detailed financial information on the contributions received and the allocation of earmarked and non-earmarked funds; this would enable better assessment of progress, budget allocations and overall performance across programmes, and would also enable the Committee to provide guidance on budget reallocation where necessary and to better understand how budgetary constraints could be dealt with. With regard to resource mobilization and the need for core funding, he called upon the secretariat to encourage a broader range of contributors, in particular to the Environment Fund, and to open a dialogue with new potential contributors.

44. Another representative said that the subcommittee meeting had highlighted the challenges associated with the reduction of core funding, and the need for a strong Environment Fund as the foundation of UNEP work. Robust core funding also ensured the independence and neutrality of United Nations entities. Together with other representatives, he encouraged all Member States to make their contributions to the Environment Fund.

45. A number of representatives encouraged UNEP to make use of the positive results of the performance assessment in fundraising efforts and to provide an update on the funding strategy, which should include innovative ways of attracting more stable resources, including from the private sector, and would feed into the Environment Assembly session.

46. On preparations for the Environment Assembly session, several representatives welcomed the consensus reached on the theme of pollution. They also called for the early publication of the background document on the theme.

47. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said the discussions in the subcommittee on the subject had been most encouraging. The third session of the Assembly provided an opportunity to explain, demonstrate and deliver the benefits of taking action towards a pollution-free planet. For the session to have an impact, a clear call for action should accompany the background document, which should be published as early as possible. He called on the secretariat to galvanize action and commitments worldwide and from all relevant stakeholders. Another representative commended the secretariat's ambitious approach to making the Assembly session an interactive, highly visible event that would catalyse action by a broad range of stakeholders in the future. She said that clearly articulated and coordinated action would be necessary to achieve that outcome. The engagement of the private sector and civil society was crucial to achieving a transformation to a pollution-free planet. Another representative emphasized the economic effect of pollution, particularly for developing countries. It was vital, he said, to tackle pollution from a global point of view.

48. Referring to the role of the Assembly in the United Nations system and the high-level political forum, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noted that tackling pollution had been emphasized by the Secretary-General and the Executive Director as important not only for the environment itself, but also for poverty eradication, health, ecosystems, natural resources, cost savings and security. He therefore welcomed the commitment from the President of the Assembly to actively engage in the meeting of the high-level political forum, and emphasized the importance of the

Assembly's contribution to the Forum in providing inputs for the implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A clear message from UNEP and the Assembly would contribute to the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

49. One representative drew attention to the serious problem of marine pollution. Urgent action was required to tackle marine litter, but the problem had to be tackled at source, on land. He called for joint action to follow up on decisions on marine litter adopted at the first two sessions of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

50. There were also requests for early discussions of the draft resolutions for the Assembly session, given the limited time available during the session, and for the number of resolutions to be limited. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, considered that the high-level segment of the session should produce a concrete outcome addressing the theme of the meeting in the form of a negotiated ministerial declaration providing guidance on the issue. Another representative expressed the hope that the Assembly would agree on a strong political outcome relevant to the "person on the street" and not just to officials and environmentalists. Another said the outcome document should contain a political declaration addressing the whole world.

51. Regarding the structure of the session, a number of representatives cautioned against holding more than two parallel meetings at a time, taking into account the small size of many delegations, and said that there should be opportunities for regional forums to present the results of their activities at the session, including at the high-level segment.

52. The representative of Norway said that his Government would provide funds to cover travel costs for participants from developing countries. It was important that all Member States should be present at the session in order to reach broad agreement on the session outcomes.

53. On regional activities, the representative of the African group welcomed recent UNEP activities on the continent and looked forward to the strengthening of the presence of UNEP at the subregional level. He also welcomed the secretariat's outreach to Member States and regional groups with regard to the current status of the Environment Fund and urged Member States to make their voluntary contributions.

54. One representative thanked UNEP and the Partnership for Action on Green Economy for their efforts in organizing the 2017 ministerial conference of the Partnership for Action on Green Economy, to be held in Berlin.

55. A number of representatives asked the secretariat to delete paragraph 8 of the Chair's summary regarding the use of "UN Environment" instead of the acronym "UNEP" on the grounds that no substantive discussion had taken place on the matter and it therefore did not reflect the proceedings at the subcommittee meeting. They agreed to submit their comments in writing as requested by the Chair.

56. In his response, the Deputy Executive Director expressed appreciation for the comments. He thanked the Government of Norway for its commitment to make an additional contribution to funding of the Environment Assembly session, and congratulated the Government of Germany on the launch of the International Sustainable Chemistry Collaborative Centre, to which UNEP would contribute.

57. In conclusion, the Chair urged all Member States without resident representation in Nairobi, to make use of the facilities for remote participation to enable them to take part in Committee meetings; the presence and inputs of all members were very important for the work of UNEP.

58. The Chair thanked the Committee for the very efficient fourth annual meeting of the subcommittee and looked forward to working with the Committee on preparations for a successful third session of the Environment Assembly.

Agenda item 6

Report of the subcommittee

59. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to a document entitled "Chair's report of the subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives" (UNEP/CPR/138/6). She noted that since the 137th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, held on 16 January 2017, there had been four meetings: a meeting of the subcommittee on 7 February 2017, the fourth annual meeting of the subcommittee held from 6 to 9 March 2017, a meeting of the informal open-ended working group on 16 February 2017, and a briefing for new members of the Committee on 24 January 2017. Briefings had also been provided by the secretariat on the environment under review subprogramme and on the budget and programme performance; an update by the Environment

Management Group; on issues relating to the third session of the Environment Assembly; and on the rules and procedures for the Assembly session in the presence of the legal adviser.

60. The Committee took note of the Chair's report.

Agenda item 7

Other matters

61. No other matters were raised.

Agenda item 8

Closure of the meeting

62. The meeting was declared closed at 11.30 a.m. on Friday, 10 March 2017.
