

United States Intervention

UNEP CPR Sub-committee October 4, 2018

Agenda Item 3 – Green Coalition on the BRI

- We are concerned that UNEP’s commitment to support “greening” of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was made without any notice to or consultation with Member States, and that Member States learned of it indirectly, and not from UNEP.
- As per the UNEP charter, transparency and inclusiveness are fundamental principles for all UNEP operations, and Member States expect to be consulted before significant new initiatives are undertaken and as projects progress. UNEP, as a Member State institution, should consult with all Members on major projects, including with respect to projects and activities under this initiative.
- What is the overlap and relationship between the Green Belt and Road Coalition and the China-Africa Center work? Some of the work sounds essentially the same.
- UNEP is listed as a co-chair of the coalition. Will this mean that the “green development concepts and environmental policies” and policy recommendations and other support the Coalition provides to countries will be those that UNEP already employs?
- Who are the “Leading Partners” and “specially invited individuals”?
- Who are the international experts, and what will their expertise be? (BRI? Green finance? Environmental impact assessments?)
- The Coalition is allegedly “open and inclusive,” yet only certain countries have been invited to join.
- The Coalition’s work will be “delivered” through a biennial high level roundtable, which indicates the work will be done over a long term. Meanwhile, BRI projects intended to be “greened” by this initiative will be proceeding. This underlines the need for a commitment by BRI host countries and China to use existing international environmental/social standards now.
- In describing how Coalition work will align with the program of work and budget, UNEP states green finance modelling assessments will be done in ten Belt and Road countries. Where are those countries? Have they requested this work? Are there specific projects that UNEP will be targeting, or will all projects in those countries be involved?
- The Background document states the aim of UNEP’s engagement in greening the Belt and Road is “to help counties along the Belt and Road create policy environments that

enable investments in green, sustainable, and inclusive pathways.” Given the number of countries along the Belt and Road, this is an enormous amount of work, and it is in addition to the work described under the Framework Agreement on Strategic Cooperation with China to be funded by the China Trust Fund. What is the anticipated cost and where will this funding come from?

- The breadth of proposed activities under the Green Belt and Road Strategy raise questions of whether UNEP has the institutional capacity to address the concerns outlined above, and the effect these projects will have on UNEP’s program of work, and budget, including whether it will divert core funding away from other activities.
- UNEP says its work under this initiative will include developing green finance models in African countries, strengthening national legal frameworks, co-leading the Coalition, which currently excludes many Member States, and engaging with stakeholders from various sectors. Member States are entitled to know what each of these work areas will cost, and how shifts in UNEP staffing and budgets to support this program will affect other UNEP programs. Furthermore, UNEP should provide a plan to all Member States for how these programs will be selected, implemented, and subsequently monitored.
- We see a reputational risk if UNEP is perceived as endorsing the Belt and Road Initiative, which, even though it is loosely defined, embraces a different set of standards and principles.
- Finally, we sent UNEP detailed questions on its Green Belt and Road Strategy months ago and have not received adequate answers despite repeated requests. We appreciate the additional information provided on September 21, but UNEP must provide full answers to these questions.