

Intervention by H.E. Agrina Mussa, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) during its Sub-committee meeting of 11th June 2019 on the issue of lessons learned from the fourth session of UN Environment Assembly

Madam Chairperson,

My delegation would like to thank the Acting Executive Director and her team for the efforts and hard-work involved in developing this discussion document on assessment and lessons learnt. It goes without saying that such an outcome was a result of dedication, professionalism and good leadership.

Malawi welcomes the assessment provided regarding five items in part two of the document.

We would like to commend the Secretariat for coming up with recommendations on how the lessons learnt can best help member states come up with best practices. We note the various recommendations, attached to each of the eleven lessons learnt. Indeed, it is pleasing to observe, the detail and focus of these recommendations. Malawi would like however to caution that in considering these recommendations, care should be taken so as not to look at them as a package for wholesome adoption. Rather due consideration should be given to the uniqueness and individuality of each of the lessons learnt.

That said, *Madam Chairperson*, Malawi would like to make some comments on lesson numbers 1, 3 and 10 regarding the theme, draft resolutions and implementation of outcomes of previous sessions, respectively.

On lesson number 1, on the theme, Malawi certainly agrees with the need to have timely identification of a politically appealing and strategic theme. In fact, not only appealing but palatable as well!

That said, our experience with UNEA IV, is that the identification of a theme can certainly be better handled, by everyone involved. Overall, we believe that *consensus* rather than *compromise* is the best way to identify and move forward a theme.

Although consensus is possible through compromise, my delegation believes that compromise is founded mostly on partisanship rather than generality. Compromise tends to be movement from a position of absolute gains, whereas consensus is much more likely to be from a premise of relative gains.

While Malawi recognises that although consensus is not necessarily better than good, compromise is at best living with the worst of a possible good situation! In this vein, *'Towards A Pollution Free Planet'*, fared much better in my delegation's view as a consensual understanding, than *'Innovative Solutions For Environmental Challenges And Sustainable Consumption And Production'*!

It is in this view that Malawi welcomes the initiative of the President of UNEA 5 through his letter dated 27 May 2019, where he wants to facilitate an inclusive, transparent and effective preparation process, including on the choice of the theme for UNEA 5. my delegation wants to reiterate sentiments that the choice of a theme which is broad enough to allow a range of interests while at the same time resulting in focused results-oriented outcomes and resolutions with a common thread, is a key challenge to be overcome going into UNEA 5. We believe the President's initiative augurs well for the general spirit of the recommendations.

Malawi would however want to be cautious on the idea of agreeing or defining themes or general focus areas that cover more than one future session of UN Environment Assembly. In as much as this would be an innovative approach, it runs the risk of precluding developing and emerging challenges, and even consensus on such challenges. At the same time, while precedence must have a start date, sometimes practice and tradition tends to work better if there is willingness to better manage such status quo.

Madam Chairperson,

On lesson number three, regarding draft resolutions, we agree that tabling of resolutions should be complementary to the UNEP programme of work and be both clearly linked to the theme of the Assembly or addressing emerging issues.

We believe that the CPR of UNEP through its sub-committees remain acritical and viable tool in achieving efficiency regarding draft resolutions. The CPR remains the essential criterion, modality and time-bound governing body for presenting and negotiating draft resolutions and decisions.

From the experience of UNEA 4, my delegation is of the view that it is possible to avoid a situation where, draft resolutions create seismic differences and fundamental differences. It is indeed possible to negotiate from sovereign and differentiated positions, while at the same time, principally finding significant common ground.

Finally, Madam chairperson, my delegation is in agreement with lesson ten which states that implementation of previous sessions of the UN Environment Assembly, remains a priority and a challenge.

Malawi is very keen to see the preparation by the secretariat of roadmap and division of work on the implementation, funding and reporting on UNEA resolutions.

My delegation is also keen to scrutinise options for improved framework for reporting on the implementation of UNEA resolutions to be integrated with the reporting on the programme of work and budget. We believe that such efforts may go some way in ameliorating the challenges faced regarding implementation of previous. My delegation welcomes the appointment of a lead division for follow up on UNEA 4, ministerial declaration.