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

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### **149th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme**

Nairobi, 18 February 2020

Conference Room 1

9:00 – 12:00, 13:30 – 16:30

### **Agenda Item 7: Interagency collaboration in the context of the Environment Management Group**

This note serves as a background document for Agenda Item 7 entitled “Interagency collaboration in the context of the Environment Management Group”, which has been included in the agenda at the requests of member States and serves the purpose of keeping the members of the Committee updated and informed about the work undertaken by the Environment Management Group (EMG), with particular focus on the scope and nature of its work and in 2020. The purpose is also to contextualize the work of the EMG as a UN-wide interagency mechanism on the environment, including with regard to how the Group supports the UNEP’s coordination mandate and the implementation of UN Environment Assembly resolutions, as appropriate.

The document provides an overview of the role and contribution of the UN Environment Management Group in enhancing coordination and collaboration in the UN system on the environment in support of implementation of paragraph 88 (c) of the Rio+20 outcome document and relevant UN Environment Assembly Resolutions.

The Committee of Permanent Representatives is invited to take note of the information and to provide inputs and guidance to the work of the EMG, as appropriate.

## **UN system-wide collaboration on the environment through the Environment Management Group**

### **I. Introduction**

The Environment Management Group (EMG) was established in 2001, pursuant to General Assembly [resolution 53/242](#), following the reform agenda of the UN Secretary-General at the time, to improve UN inter-agency coordination in the field of the environment and human settlements.

Since its establishment, the EMG has served as a UN system-wide coordination mechanism, fostering common approaches, information exchange, joint action and synergy among UN entities on environment and human settlement issues.

As the only UN inter-agency mechanism entirely focused on the environment and human settlements, the EMG contributes as a unique mechanism for UNEP in implementing its founding mandate to "promote international cooperation in the field of the environment"<sup>1</sup>, in particular through promoting cooperation and coordination among its Members. UNEP hosts the EMG Secretariat and chairs the EMG Senior Officials, the group's decision-making body consisting of heads of UN entities. The EMG memberships consist of 51 specialized agencies, programmes and organs of the UN including the secretariats of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

The Environment Management Group as an implementation mechanism for paragraph 88c of the Rio+20 outcome document

In paragraph 88c of the outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, "The future we want", member states set out to "enhance the voice of UNEP and its ability to fill its coordination mandate within the UN system by strengthening its engagement in key UN coordination bodies...".

As its chair and host, UNEP has leveraged EMG as a forum for keeping environmental issues high on the UN system's agenda and as a neutral platform for policy dialogue and strategic thinking among UN entities on environmental mainstreaming and more recently, on the implementation of an integrated approach of the environmental dimension of the SDGs.

Since the adoption of the Rio+20 outcome document in 2012, a significant number of environmental issues have been jointly addressed in the EMG, leading to system-wide analysis, strategies, approaches and joint statements through which the UN system spoke with one voice for the environment.

Examples of UN system wide responses to paragraph 88c through the EMG include:

1. Paragraph 88 c of the Rio+20 Outcome document specifically requested UNEP to lead efforts to formulate UN system-wide strategies on the environment. Pursuant to Governing Council decision 27/5 and Environment Assembly resolution 1/11, the EMG prepared *the UN System-Wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment*. Launched at the 2<sup>nd</sup> session of UNEA in May 2016, its objectives are to enhance cooperation and collaboration across the UN system on environment in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and to strengthen the UN system's capacity and synergies to enhance the integration of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda. The Framework prepares a triennial synthesis report on UN system-wide contributions to the

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<sup>1</sup> General Assembly [resolution 2997 \(XXVII\)](#)

implementation of the environmental dimension in the SDGs, as well as thematic reports focusing on specific SDGs.

The first “System-wide Collaboration on the Environment: Synthesis Report on UN System-wide Contributions to the Implementation of the Environmental Dimension in the SDGs” was published in November 2017.

2. Preparing a review of UN activities to promote *the sound management of chemicals and waste*, and release of a joint commitment by heads of agencies to step up joint and coordinated efforts to promote additional synergies between UN organizations in supporting countries in activities to achieve the sound management of chemicals by 2020.
3. The establishment of a UN Coalition to combat sand and dust storms to facilitate information exchange; capacity building and training; fundraising, and; advocacy and awareness raising.
4. The establishment of the UN E-waste Coalition to raise awareness, increase knowledge and provide integrated support to countries in preventing, reducing, collecting, recycling and disposing of e-waste sustainably through enhanced coordination of the UN and its partners at all levels.
5. Development and adoption of *the Framework for Advancing Environmental and Social Sustainability in the UN System*'s own management and operations, and a related implementation guide
6. Development and adoption of The Model Approach to Environmental and Social Standards for UN Programming, which helps UN entities ensure that environmental and social aspects are integrated into their programmes and projects.
7. Organization of *the EMG nexus dialogue series* that provides key recommendations and policy messages on the coherent implementation of the environmental dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to relevant forums including the UN Environment Assembly and the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

## **II. Contributions by the Environment Management Group to the implementation of UNEA resolutions**

### *1. Resolution 1/11 and 2/5*

UNEA Resolution 1/11 on Coordination across the United Nations system in the field of the environment and resolution 2/5 on Delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development make direct references to the Environment Management Group, including a request to prepare a report on the integration of the 2030 Agenda into the environmental work of the UN, and a request to identify measures to maximize the effectiveness of the EMG, while encouraging the group to continue its work to promote corporate sustainability in the UN system. In response to these requests, the EMG continues to provide progress reports towards the implementation of the relevant resolutions to UNEA, including reporting on findings of the System-wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment.

Furthermore, in response to the resolutions, a review of the EMG's terms of reference, modalities of work and, more broadly, effectiveness and fitness for purpose was carried out, resulting in the 2015 report "Maximizing the effectiveness of the Environment Management Group in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". The Report provided recommendations and findings on the EMG's modalities of work as well as its substantive focus and role in view of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Building on the recommendations in the report, updated Terms of Reference and new rules of procedures for the Environment Management Group were prepared, including references to the 2030 Agenda, the System-Wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment and the corporate internal UN environmental sustainability work undertaken by the Group.

## *2. Resolution 3/11*

The EMG Secretariat provides input to the reports on progress on resolution 3/11 on the Implementation of paragraph 88 (a)–(h) of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, specifically with reference to paragraph 88(c) as outlined above.

## *3. Resolution 4/6*

Emphasizing the importance of strengthened coordination and multi-stakeholder cooperation for achieving long-term elimination of plastic discharge into the oceans, the fourth session of UNEA, in its resolution 4/6 on Marine plastic litter and microplastics, invited the EMG to engage in and contribute to the Ad Hoc Open-ended Expert group on Marine Litter and Microplastics by providing inter alia a mapping of all relevant UN agencies, programmes, initiatives and expertise with relevance to marine litter including plastic litter and microplastics.

## *4. Other UNEA resolutions*

The EMG's work often directly or indirectly contributes to other UNEA resolutions, even when a direct reference to the EMG is not made. Many resolutions stress the need for multi-stakeholder involvement and may make specific references to the importance of involving other UN entities in mainstreaming activities.

For instance, resolution 4/10 on Innovation on biodiversity and land degradation recognizes the UN Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms, established by the EMG, as an international interagency initiative in support of the implementation of the resolution.

EMG Nexus Dialogues have been held in follow-up of resolutions such as resolution 4/5 on Sustainable infrastructure, or provided input to resolutions, such as resolution 4/2 on Promoting sustainable practices and innovative solutions for curbing food loss and waste.

## **III. The Environment Management Group in 2020**

Delivering on the above-mentioned issues, the EMG will focus on the following topics in 2020:

## *1. Biodiversity*

Building on the EMG's contribution to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and following the request of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the EMG Senior Officials established a Consultative Process in September 2019 to prepare a UN system contribution to the preparation and implementation of the new biodiversity framework.

The Consultative Process has prepared a summary of core messages from the UN system on the preparation, scope, structure and content of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework as well as a summary of UN entities' comments on the related 2050 Vision and the 2030 Mission, Goals and Targets. The co-chairs of the OEWG were informed of the overview and initial views of the UN agencies Members of the EMG on the strategic framework, prior to the issuance of the Zero draft of the Framework, to which the EMG will also be providing coordinated feedback.

In 2020, the EMG will continue to work alongside the Open-ended Working Group process to identify an approach for a shared follow up, coordination and implementation of the biodiversity framework by the Members of the EMG, including the potential for Members to be custodians of a biodiversity goal(s), target(s) and/or indicator(s), and EMG Members' support for implementation by other actors.

The first thematic report under the System-Wide Framework of Strategies in the Environment, to be published in 2020, will focus on biodiversity. The report will highlight opportunities for the Members of the EMG to enhance their own core objectives by advancing the biodiversity agenda as well as areas of work that may benefit from further collaboration.

## *2. Marine litter and microplastics*

In response to UNEA resolution 4/6, the EMG has established a Task Team on Marine Litter and Microplastics in 2019 with the aim to deliver the following in 2020:

- Serve as a platform for information exchange among UN system entities on activities and expertise related to marine litter and microplastics;
- Create synergy and avoid duplication of work by identifying further collaboration opportunities including at the country level, or prospects to expand existing initiatives within the UN system Members of the EMG related marine litter and microplastics;
- Raise awareness within and outside of the UN system Members of the EMG on sources and impacts of marine litter and microplastics, highlighting the linkages to the issue of different sectors and mandates, and identifying entry points to addressing the challenge.

## *3. Electronic waste*

10 EMG Members of the UN E-waste Coalition are working to develop a joint implementation mechanism for UN entities on tackling e-waste at the country level.

## *4. Sand and Dust Storms*

15 EMG members of the Sand and Dust Storm Coalition will work through the EMG to prepare a Strategy, an Action Plan and a Governance Structure for future work of the Coalition.

5. *EMG Nexus Dialogues*

Nexus dialogues in 2020 will focus on themes such as gender and environment, environment and human rights, sustainable fashion in the context of sustainable consumption and production and synergies between chemical and biodiversity conventions in the context of sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

6. *Strategy for sustainability management in the UN system 2020-2030*

In response to decisions by the EMG Senior Officials and the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination, the EMG is facilitating an interagency consultative process to develop an internal UN System Sustainability Strategy 2020-2030, to be completed in 2020, with the technical leadership of UNEP. The Strategy is expected to be instrumental in reaching the vision whereby the UN system is a leader in integrating environmental and social sustainability considerations across its work in a systematic and coherent way, practicing the principles that it promotes and leaving a positive legacy.