

Committee of Permanent Representatives  
Subcommittee Meeting  
Thursday 5 March 2020  
9:00 am - 12:00 pm  
United Nations Office of Nairobi  
Conference Room 4

### **MEETING SUMMARY**

#### **Agenda Item 1: Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda.**

1. H.E. Mr. Fernando Coimbra, Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representative, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Brazil, opened the meeting.
2. The meeting agenda was adopted.
3. The Chair expressed his sincere condolences for the passing of Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, the fifth Secretary General of the United Nations, who served from 1982 to 1991, and highlighted Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar's numerous achievements as Peruvian diplomat and as UN Secretary-General, including his role in brokering the Iran-Iraq peace agreements, the adoption of the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, and the convening the first Summit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
4. The meeting observed a moment of silence in honor of the late former Secretary-General of the United Nations.

#### **Agenda Item 2: Draft elements of a decision on the Global Programme of Action for the protection of the marine environment from land-based activities.**

5. The Secretariat presented draft elements of a decision on the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities, taking into account comments received from Member States at the subcommittee meeting on 27 February 2020.
6. In general, Member States considered the draft a good basis for consideration at a future meeting of the IGR and provided the following comments:
  - One group of member States requested to add, in the preambular part, references to language contained in the Bali Declaration related to the decision making on the future of the GPA and its IGR, and to previous regional and CPR consultations, as well as to include a general reference to relevant SDG targets.
  - Several delegations noted the duplication of paragraphs 1 and 7.
  - Several delegations presented questions regarding the proposed multistakeholder forum, including on whether it should be held in conjunction with UNEA-5.
  - One delegation recommended the revision of operative paragraph 4, requesting clarification on the partnerships referred to in that paragraph.
7. The Secretariat took note of the comments and committed to consider them for a revised draft, in line with guidance provided by Member States.

8. The Chair invited Member States to provide written inputs to be submitted to the Secretariat by Friday 13 March 2020, and informed the meeting that the subcommittee will revert to the issue on 23 April 2020 to consider a revised draft with a view to find broad consensus.

### **Agenda Item 3: Update on the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030.**

9. The Secretariat provided an update on the progress made on the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, as declared on 1 March 2019 by the UN General Assembly in its resolution 73/284, including with regard to the launch of a second phase of consultation on a draft strategy for the Decade. The primary aims of the Decade, which comes into effect in January 2021, are to support and scale up efforts to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide and raise awareness of the importance of successful ecosystem restoration. The Secretariat also provided an update on the regional consultations, the roadmap on the way forward, and the multi-donor trust fund. Additional information on the activities of the Decade is available on the dedicated website which can be found [here](#).
10. Member States welcomed the briefing and the planned consultations, and provided the following guidance on the strategy and activities planned by the Secretariat:
  - Requested for additional information on the status of the consultations that have already taken place and the ones that are expected to take place.
  - Underlined the importance of mobilizing political will and ownership for the strategy.
  - Stressed that the strategy needs to look beyond restoration and identify concrete actions to prevent harmful habits.
  - Welcomed the use of innovation and underlined the importance of incorporating indigenous knowledge towards implementation for the Decade.
  - Requested further clarification on the link between restoration and key sectors such as health, security and job creation in order to foster and raise the need for financing by various actors which would lead to the success of the implementation of the Decade.
  - Welcomed the partnership and collaboration between UNEP and FAO on ecosystem restoration and the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and stressed the importance of implementing existing targets rather than defining new targets.
  - Requested information from the Secretariat to provide the budget for the establishment of a joint core team for the strategy.
11. The Chair requested the Secretariat to provide a more substantive presentation on what is being proposed in the strategy document in order to encourage a better response and more engagement from Member States at the next session where the agenda item will be discussed.
12. The Secretariat took note of the comments provided by Member States, including the request for more information on the budget, and committed to providing additional information once the Strategy is approved. The Secretariat also recognized the importance of indigenous knowledge to raise the profile on restoration and highlighted various consultations that have taken place, including a youth consultation (see [website](#)). The Secretariat announced that they have identified two flagship elements for the Decade, including a focus on the Sahel region, and that they have identified three pathways for the Decade building on existing knowledge, political will and technical capacity.

### **Agenda Item 4: Implementation of UNEA decision 4/2, paragraph 14.**

13. The Secretariat provided a short update on the ongoing process to develop an “action plan” for the implementation of paragraph 88 of the Rio+20 outcome document, “The future we want” in accordance with UNEA decision 4/2, and the on feedback received by member States at the meeting of the subcommittee on 23 January 2020, and additional guidance provided by the CPR Bureau on 30 January 2020.
14. The Chair recalled the decision to cluster the subparagraphs and discuss each subcluster in two rounds of consultations with the first consultation focusing on the following subparagraphs under paragraph 88:
  - (a) Establish universal membership;
  - (c) Enhance the voice and coordination function;
  - (g) Progressively consolidate headquarters functions in Nairobi, as well as strengthen its regional presence;
  - (h) Ensure the active participation of all relevant stakeholders
15. In summary, Member States provided the following guidance on the four subparagraphs in the ensuing discussion:

***(a) Establish universal membership in the Governing Council of the UNEP, as well as other measures to strengthen its governance as well as its responsiveness and accountability to Member States;***

- The CPR review process provides an excellent opportunity to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the UNEP governing bodies. The Secretariat can help the CPR improve its work by, for example, making better use of the intersessional period and including recommendations on areas that require CPR decisions in the supporting documents.
- There remains a gap between the universality of the UNEP governing body and the actual level of participation by all member States in the governing body. More efforts are necessary to motivate Member States that have not yet done so to establish missions in Nairobi and to accredit themselves to UNEP. The Secretariat could complement those efforts by, among others, continuing to provide timely meeting documentation and making them easily accessible on the website.
- Universality also related to:
  - Making Nairobi a more attractive option to serve as venue for global environmental meetings. This would require UNEP to work closely with UNON including on costing, as part of consolidation of headquarters function.
  - Some Member States suggested that all the meetings of the subsidiary bodies created by UNEA be held in the headquarters in Nairobi, so as to strengthen the inclusivity of the process. Other Member States suggested that the convening of such meetings in different countries has a positive impact on the ownership.
  - Strengthening the regional offices to better support countries on environmental policies; including the UNEP liaison with the African Union (Addis Ababa) and the League of Arab States (whose office recently closed in Cairo).
  - Increasing outreach efforts and focus on substantive, rather than internal reform-related issues.
  - Expanding the funding base of UNEP, since currently the contribution of only 15 member States represent more than 90% of the Environment Fund.
  - Ensuring adequate regional/geographical balance in UNEP staffing.

- The host country has an important role to play in supporting UNEP to achieve its mandate.
- Under this subparagraph, the Committee requested the Secretariat to provide:
  - An analysis of the constraints that countries face in seeking accreditation to UNEP and possible options to address them.
  - Mandate and composition of the UNEP liaison office to the African Union.
  - UNEP staffing table by regional/geographical breakdown.

***(c) Enhance the voice of UNEP and its ability to fulfil its coordination mandate within the UN system by strengthening its engagement in key UN coordination bodies and empowering it to lead efforts to formulate UN system-wide strategies on the environment;***

- UNEA should be closely connected to HLPF and the process of preparing UNEA inputs to HLPF should be transparent. With the discussion underway to reform HLPF in New York, UNEP could support national delegations to contribute to the process, in strengthening UNEP's coordination role and voice in the UN system.
- UNEP briefings on its engagement with the UN reform are appreciated and should continue on a regular basis.
- UN reform considerations should be factored into the preparation of the UNEP medium-term strategy, taking into account the new opportunities for funding and partnerships.
- Delegations also appreciate briefings provided by the Environment Management Group (EMG) and emphasized that its System-wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment should have visibility and impact. EMG should continue to provide briefings to the CPR, including on the uptake of the EMG work by the rest of the UN system and how it trickles down to the country level.
- UNEP could create more opportunities for coordination and dialogue among MEAs and with UNEP, including through the participation of the members of MEAs' governing bodies. This would also positively inform science-policy interface.
- The Secretariat was requested to provide:
  - The "menu of services" referred to in paragraph 51 of the Synthesis report.<sup>1</sup>
  - More information on the UNEP-hosted MEAs.

***(g) Progressively consolidate headquarters functions in Nairobi, as well as strengthen its regional presence, in order to assist countries, upon request, in the implementation of their national environmental policies, collaborating closely with other relevant entities of the UN system;***

- Member States expressed diverse views on the status of the consolidation of headquarters functions, with some seeing it as accomplished, while others stating that it is still a work in progress.
- Discussions under this subparagraph related to ensuring that UNEP makes impact at global, regional and national levels, partnering as necessary with other UN agencies and entities that are present on the ground.

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<sup>1</sup> "UNEP has been developing a menu of services which will become a key tool for engagement with our UN partners on the ground especially in the context of the Common Country Assessment and Cooperation Framework development processes."

- Member States highlighted the role of UNEP in assisting them, upon request, to implement their internationally agreed-upon environmental commitments. In this context, attention was drawn to the particular needs of the developing countries.
- In Nairobi, UNEP should cooperate more closely with UNON to make Nairobi a more attractive option for serving as venue for global environmental meetings.
- The ongoing consultations between the UNEP Executive Director and the UNON Director-General to improve UNON conference facilities may lead to recommendations that could be presented to the CPR and incorporated into the final action plan. It was suggested that UNEP facilitates CPR interactions with UNON so relevant issues could be raised and discussed openly with UNON.
- Kenya indicated its readiness to support UNEP and UNON in finding solutions to address infrastructural shortcomings; Kenya also encouraged other member States to help raise this issue during UN budget negotiations in New York so that UNON could be brought up to par with other UN centers.

*(h) Ensure the active participation of all relevant stakeholders, drawing on best practices and models from relevant multilateral institutions and exploring new mechanisms to promote transparency and the effective engagement of civil society.*

- The secretariat stated that although there was no agreement on a new stakeholder engagement policy (mandated by Governing Council 27/2), UNEP has taken effective measures to improve opportunities for stakeholder engagement within existing rules and regulations, building on the best practices and models from relevant multilateral institutions. As a result, UNEP has one of the most progressive stakeholder engagement policy in the UN system (captured in UNEP's Stakeholder Engagement Handbook). However, challenges remain in attracting and enabling stakeholders to make best use of existing opportunities in order to allow them to substantively contribute to the work of UNEP governing bodies, and in securing the necessary funding for these activities.
- Some delegations underlined that the UN reform discussions and the preparation of the medium-term strategy provide opportunities to further enhance the voice of stakeholders, and that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires close involvement of the private sector.
- Some Member States suggested that more reflection needed to be undertaken so as to facilitate the involvement of the private sector, considering its important role in the adoption of measures aimed at the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

16. The Secretariat welcomed and took note of the guidance provided by Member States.

17. The representative of UNON welcomed the request to hold a separate briefing and detailed presentation to the CPR on costing structures, including on detailed unit conference costs and the efforts underway via-a-vis New York to enhance UNON facilities, and sought Member States support to bring the complex up to standard with the other UN headquarters and hubs.

18. The Chair reminded the subcommittee that the remaining paragraphs in the second sub-cluster will be discussed at the next consultation scheduled for the subcommittee meeting on 24 March 2020. The Chair invited Member States to provide written comments on the subparagraphs discussed, that a date for a dedicated briefing by UNON would be determined at a later stage.

## **Agenda Item 5: Other matters.**

19. One political group requested for more information on the dates regarding the consultations on the Medium-Term Strategy and additional information on the uptake of the work of the EMG in the wider UN system. The Secretariat committed to provide answers in writing on the EMG and informed the meeting that the dates for the Medium Term Strategy consultations are still under discussion.
20. The delegation of France invited Member States to the month of Francophonie starting on 7 March 2020 at “Alliance Française” in Nairobi.

**Agenda Item 6: Closing of the meeting**

21. The meeting closed at 12:45 pm.