

Committee of Permanent Representatives
Subcommittee Meeting
Thursday 23 June 2020
9:00 – 12:00
Online Meeting

Background Document for Agenda Item 2: Implementation of paragraph 8 of UNEA Decision 4/2

Note on preparations for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the creation of UNEP

This document, entitled “Note on preparations for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the creation of UNEP” provides an update from the Secretariat on the current preparations of the commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The note outlines several key aspects associated with the implementation of paragraph 8 of UNEA Decision 4/2, including

- The status of consultations with member States and stakeholders led by the Executive Director;
- Launching the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP at the fifth session for the UN Environment Assembly;
- Possible engagement and outreach activities following the launch;
- Ensuring a strong science-policy interface; and;
- Further consultations with Member States: proposed next steps.

The note has been presented and discussed during the Joint Preparatory Retreat of the Bureaux of the UNEA and of the CPR which took place on 9-10 June 2020. Member States are invited to consider the note and provide further guidance on the above.

Preparations for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the creation of UNEP

I. Introduction

1. This note outlines the following aspects associated with the implementation of paragraph 8 of UNEA Decision 4/2:

- Status of consultations with member States and stakeholders led by the Executive Director;
- Launching the commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP at the fifth session for the UN Environment Assembly;
- Possible engagement and outreach activities following the launch;
- Ensuring a strong science-policy interface; and;
- Further consultations with Member States: proposed next steps.

The note should also be considered in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has created significant additional uncertainty to effectively plan for activities related to the commemoration.

II. Status of consultations with member States and stakeholders led by the Executive Director

2. During February 2020, the Executive Director held consultations with regional and political groups on the implementation of UNEA Decision 4/2, specifically paragraph 8. The outcome of the consultations were largely considered and captured in the [joint document](#) by Kenya and Sweden on a UN high-level political meeting in Stockholm in the spring of 2022, dated 10 February 2020.

3. The main initial conclusions of this first round of consultations were:

- a) The 50th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP (UNEP@50) should be held at the UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya;
- b) UNEA-5 in February 2021 provides a useful opportunity to kick-start the commemoration;
- c) The launch of the commemoration of UNEP's 50th anniversary should not preclude other important events involving various stakeholders, including, for example, multilateral environmental agreements;
- d) The 50 year commemoration of UNEP, as mandated in [UNEA Decision 4/2](#), is distinctly different, but interrelated with a possible UN high-level political meeting to take place in 2022 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment, which will require an enabling mandate from the UN General Assembly; and
- e) UNEP, including its governing bodies, the UN Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives, is well positioned to support preparations and discussions regarding both UNEP@50 and a UN high-level political meeting, and can contribute to mutual coherence and consistency.

4. Subsequent to the initial rounds of consultations, the Secretariat provided a [presentation](#) on the implementation of paragraph 8 of decision 4/2 to the [150th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives](#), on the basis of a [Secretariat background document](#), and reported on the outcome from previous informal consultations on the matter held with Member States.

5. The Committee took positive note of the proposal to launch the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of UNEP at UNEA-5, while noting that the issue required further consideration at an upcoming meeting of the CPR subcommittee. The Committee also agreed that consultations on the implementation of paragraph 8 of UNEA decision 4/2 and on the preparations for UNEA-5 should be addressed separately, including with regard to agenda items and background documentation.

6. Following the offer from Sweden to host a high level political meeting in Stockholm in 2022 to commemorate the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment, and in the spirit of partnership that has guided the collaboration of the delegations of Kenya and Sweden in this regard, the two delegations informed the meeting that they would need more time for consultations and to elaborate further on the offer.

7. The Committee requested the Secretariat to take into account the views expressed at its 150th meeting in order to prepare in a dedicated report on the substantive aspects of the preparations for the 50th anniversary of, in accordance with paragraph 8 of decision 4/2.

8. The present note constitutes an opportunity to further elicit views from the Bureaux of the Environment Assembly and of the Committee of Permanent Representatives as well as other Member States and stakeholders on the preparations to commemorate UNEP's 50th anniversary, with a view to prepare such a report for further consideration by the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

III. Launching the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP

9. Based on the outcome of the consultations with Member States and stakeholders, it is recommended that the forthcoming Environment Assembly launches the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP, as mandated by decision 4/2 of UNEA 4, at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.

10. A launch of the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of UNEP during UNEA may also provide a wider context for the implementation of [General Assembly Resolution 73/333](#), "Follow-up to the report of the ad hoc open-ended working group established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/277".

11. A launch of the commemoration during UNEA-5 will also offer Ministers of the Environment and leaders of the global environmental community several opportunities to strengthen environmental multilateralism, as outlined in Box 1.

Box 1: Potential opportunities to strengthen environmental multilateralism from launching UNEP's 50th anniversary during UNEA-5

- *Strengthen UNEP through a renewed long-term vision building on the Rio+20 Outcome Document;*
- *Enhance and strengthen the integration of environmental considerations within the UN-system in the context of strengthening the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda and UN reform;*
- *Promote the science policy interface by making further use of science to catalyze environmental action at all levels;*
- *Reflect on the historic achievements, impact and importance of international environmental law, policy development and governance since the creation of UNEP in 1972, taking into account paragraph 88 of the Rio + 20 Outcome Document, and the findings and recommendations of the an action plan for the implementation of subparagraphs (a)–(h) of that paragraph 88, as mandated in paragraph 14 of decision 4/2.*
- *Strengthen UNEP's support to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) towards a more effective multilateralism in the field of the environment;*

- *Re-examine how global environmental governance can be modernized and strengthened, including through the ongoing process of review of the effectiveness and efficiency of UNEP’s policy-making organs, as mandated by paragraph 9-13 in UNEA decision 4/2;*
- *Establish a possible link between the commemoration and the implementation of General Assembly resolution 73/333.*

12. The kick-off of the commemoration could take the format of an interactive plenary session of the UN Environment Assembly, held during its high-level segment, during which Member States together with selected high-level guests can reflect on the key achievements of the programme during the past 50 years and launch a communication campaign towards 2022.

13. Such a dedicated session at UNEA-5 and communication and outreach campaign to kick-off the commemoration can contribute to raise awareness about the role and value-added of UNEP to policy-makers and the general public alike, by showcasing its central role and continued importance in terms of its mandate, strategic programmes, science-based approach, and policies for a healthy environment.

IV. Possible engagement and outreach activities following the launch

14. In 2020, the Secretary General of the United Nations, António Guterres, called on all UN Agencies and Programmes to mark the 75th Anniversary of the UN by providing people the chance to engage in a conversation with the United Nations about its future role. UNEP has actively supported this ambitious and inclusive endeavor to position the UN and UNEP as the main multilateral platform for people everywhere to share their thoughts on current and emerging global environmental trends.

15. Building on this innovative “global conversation”, UNEP intends to develop a broad engagement and outreach strategy to celebrate and reflect on key achievements and to solicit views for a new course for the Organization’s future, in light of recent global trends and challenges such as those associated with COVID-19, unsustainable consumption and production, climate change, the loss of biodiversity and pollution. The aim would be to make the case for environmental multilateralism as an integral and indispensable instrument to these global challenges and to reaffirm UNEP as the UN voice for the environment.

16. Furthermore, to ensure that civil society and the general public will have the opportunity to influence and feel ownership for UNEP@50, UNEP will, in accordance with its mandate and established practices for stakeholder engagement, undertake broad outreach efforts to strengthen the engagement of accredited non-governmental organizations and major groups and stakeholders in the commemoration activities.

17. Additional possible activities are outlined in Box 2.

Box 2: Additional possible activities following the kick-off of the 50 year commemoration of the creation of UNEP

- *Setting in place, in accordance with its mandate, capacity-building and engagement programmes to contribute to a new generation of environmental leaders worldwide;*
- *Invite the Multilateral Environmental Agreements to support and be part of the UNEP@50 commemoration by providing an expanded platform for outreach and systemic action.*

- *Build on the experience of World Environment Day-related campaigns, to build a network of outreach activities throughout the year (“A World Environment Year”);*
- *Initiate specific competitions/challenges to identify and publicize innovative solutions to challenging environmental issues;*
- *Develop social media material tapping into the rich content of UNEP and joint UN projects that reflect the achievements of multilateral instruments in addressing environmental challenges, such as those arising from climate change, biodiversity loss and unsustainable natural resource management;*
- *Create toolkits and opportunities for environment ministries, civil society organizations, private sector entities and academia to provide consistent messaging around the 50th Anniversary, including on past achievements, success stories and the way forward.*

18. Further efforts will also be made to minimize the environmental footprint of the commemorations, including by promoting the principle of “gathering the few and connecting the billions”, through the identification and application of effective information and communication technology and artificial intelligence solutions for UNEP-related meetings.

V. Ensuring a strong science-policy interface

19. As we approach 50th anniversary of the Stockholm Conference and of the creation of UNEP in 2022, the global community is at major cross-roads. While the commemoration will provide an opportunity to celebrate manifold successful environmental accomplishments achieved over the past fifty years – such as the healing of the ozone layer¹ – there is, at the same time, a strong need to strengthen the national implementation of the science-based environmental agenda for action towards sustainable development by 2030 and beyond.

20. Indeed, despite progress made, the work that UNEP and its partners undertake to catalyze the environmental science-policy interface need to be further strengthened, to trigger and accelerate action towards achieving the environmental dimension of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other internationally agreed environmental goals.

21. In view of need for urgent action to address global environment challenges, Member States have called upon UNEP to prepare a proposal for science-policy input on the global environment, in consultation with Member States and making use of contributions from relevant stakeholders, in commemoration of the creation of UNEP, in accordance with paragraph 7 of [UNEA-4 Resolution 4/23](#).

22. In response to this request, UNEP is developing the first **UNEP Global Assessments Synthesis Report** which will provide a synthetic analysis of the key findings and messages emerging from all major recent global environmental assessments. It is expected that this new report will be launched prior to the Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5) to be held in Nairobi in February 2021. Throughout the development of the Synthesis Report, UNEP will also undertake the **Global Environmental Assessments Dialogue**, bringing together experts from all major global environmental assessments undertaken in the UN family, with support from Member States and hundreds of scientific

¹ United Nations. 2019. Ozone on track to heal completely in our lifetime, UN environment agency declares on World Day. United Nations News, New York.
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/09/1046452>

authors, with the aim to foster increased coherence, synergy and consistency across these major assessments.

23. In addition, UNEP is proposing to further advance the request from Member States as per Resolution 4/23 by developing a **Review of Fifty Years of Strengthening the Science-Policy Interface (1972-2022)**. This additional report could be developed to describe progress made over the past half a century with regard to the environmental science-policy interface, as well as to draw forward-looking lessons for the Science-Policy Interface agenda for the coming decades. Preparations for this proposed report have not yet started and would require additional financial resources for the report to be launched in early 2022.

VI. Further consultations with Member States: proposed next steps

24. Members of the subcommittee are invited to consider and provide further guidance with regard to the proposal to launch UNEP@50 during UNEA-5 and related proposals outlined in this note including

- a) Consider the proposals to ensuring a strong science-policy interface;
- b) Provide feedback on other proposed engagement and outreach initiatives;
- c) Allow Member States to further consider and share ideas regarding the offer from Sweden to host a high-level political meeting in Stockholm in 2022, possibly on the basis of additional information to be submitted in advance by the proponent Member State.

25. In addition, the Executive Director intends to continue to conduct informal consultations with Member States and Sustainable stakeholders.