

**Subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the UNEP
(Online meeting, 2 July 2020)**

**Agenda item 3. Implementation of paragraph 14 of UNEA Decision 4/2
(paragraph 88 of Rio+20)**

Comments by the European Union and its Member States

EU and its MS appreciate the Secretariat's report presenting emerging elements on additional actions required for implementation of all subparagraphs of paragraph 88 of the Rio+20 outcome document "The future we want".

Subparagraph (a) on universal membership and strengthening the governance

The EU and its MS note that the implementation of most subparagraphs is ongoing and believe that the outcomes of the CPR review process will contribute to the further strengthening of the effectiveness and efficiency of UNEP's governing bodies, to UNEP's responsiveness and accountability to MS and to the implementation of this paragraph.

The EU and its MS welcome the virtual meetings and consultations that the Secretariat has arranged during spring/summer 2020 and see these as a good and practical way to engage with capitals and non-Nairobi based missions. The EU and its MS wish the Secretariat to continue providing such opportunities even after physical meetings in Nairobi become feasible again.

The EU and its MS would also like to know whether the UNEP report on the legal implications of holding multilateral negotiations meetings online would be available for sharing with UN MS.

The EU and its MS welcome the steps taken by UNEP to move to an electronic platform and make further use of this in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and encourage UNEP to take into account the excellent work under Sustainable UN in promoting digital solutions within the UN System.

We support further efforts on standardizing and formalizing CPR online meetings to enable remote participation of MS in the deliberations of the CPR.

Subparagraph (b) on financing

The EU and its MS reiterate the need for all MS to live up to the joint responsibility to provide predictable financial support to UNEP. Secure, stable, adequate and increased financial resource from the regular budget of the UN and voluntary contributions is important for fulfilling UNEP's mandate and in many ways for achieving implementation of para 88 as a whole.

The EU and its MS remain concerned about the persisting gap in the Environment Fund. We note that the earmarked funds, in spite of their increase, do not ensure a balanced and efficient implementation of the Programme of Work. With only half of all MS contributing to the Environment

Fund and only a quarter doing so in line with or going beyond the voluntary indicative scale of contributions, we fall short of our joint commitment to strengthen UNEP by – amongst others – providing voluntary financial resources that would correspond to the universal membership in this organization. The EU and its MS invite all MS to contribute to the Environment Fund in line with their national capabilities.

We also encourage UNEP to demonstrate the effects of non-sufficient core funding and continue to increase the visibility of non-earmarked funding and of the countries contributing to the Environment Fund. We also support other UNEP proposals on actions under points 7 and 8.

The EU and its MS are interested in continued discussions on financing. In particular, we would like to know more on the assessment of the current resource mobilization strategy implementation and on the lessons learned as well as to receive feedback from UNEP with regard to the changes in communication that have already been implemented. This will be particularly important in order to ground the upcoming discussions on the MTS on a realistic assessment of the current and near-term funding situation of UNEP.

We would also like to hear about expected cost-implications (if any) of UNEP moving into more digital forms of work in the future.

Subparagraph (c) on UNEP's coordination role

The EU and its MS consider this subparagraph of substantial importance for the implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda as a whole. We believe it is necessary for UNEP to have a strong coordination role on environment related issues.

We welcome the reinforced language with regard to the linkages between the HLPF and UNEA, in particular the offer by the Secretariat to assist, upon request, member states in preparing their UNEA related messages as well as in developing their national voluntary reviews to the HLPF.

We see the need to improve the process of compilation of UNEP's contribution to HLPF, in order for it to be concise and timely and thus, as effective as possible.

The EU and its MS appreciate UNEP's recent active engagement in the UN Development System Reform, which is instrumental for ensuring the mainstreaming of environment at the regional and national level. We welcome continued updates from UNEP on how involvement in UNDSR has increased UNEP's delivery on the environmental dimension of the SDGs and how UNEP has taken a role in the national and regional context. We also stress the importance of taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the UNDSR in the context of the MTS.

We believe that the application of the Framework for System Wide Strategies and their visibility should be enhanced. We support the Executive Director in continuing to proactively lead the international environmental agenda and using the EMG to further coordinate and cooperate with relevant UN agencies.

We encourage closer involvement of MEAs in UNEA sessions in the future, and we would like to call upon the ED to continue strengthening coordination with MEAs, as well as other multilateral fora, that take relevant decisions for the state of the environment. We expect concrete outcomes

regarding promotion of cooperation and coherence between UNEP and MEAs in the ongoing CPR-based review process.

Subparagraph (d) on science-policy interface

The EU and its MS believe that keeping the world's environmental situation under review is the backbone of UNEP's work. In particular, we consider the on-going work to assess the future of GEO to be very important for ensuring that this flagship activity by UNEP remains a valid and useful contribution for both scientists and policy makers in the future as well. Therefore, we reiterate our earlier recommendations that the assessment genuinely considers an open-ended range of options, including bold and innovative approaches to harness the full potential of GEO in serving the needs of MS for knowledge to set in motion the necessary transformative action.

Also, while developing and elaborating options for GEO, other activities by UNEP aimed at providing access to environmental information should be taken into account, along with the need for improved collaboration between different assessments, further coordination of underlying scenarios and datasets, mutually strengthening key messages and dissemination efforts to improve efficiency.

The EU and its MS encourage the Secretariat to continue ensuring that the discussions in the Future of GOE process carry on electronically and the timeline of the process is adjusted so as to enable tangible results by the Annual Subcommittee Meeting in October this year.

Subparagraph (e) on environmental information

The EU and its MS note that the development of the environmental data strategy called for in UNEA4 declaration and in resolution 4/23 will be a useful contribution to the prioritizing of activities and implementation of subparagraph e). We appreciate the updates on the process of its development that will be provided regularly.

We would welcome further updates on the World Environment Situation Room as well as on how UNEP evaluates the impact of its communication.

The EU and its MS support and encourage UNEP's efforts towards digital transformation and vision for digital cooperation in the environmental domain.

The EU and its MS encourage UNEP to continue to improve the effectiveness of its communication activities, building on lessons learned under the mentioned campaigns as well as from the virtual World Environment Day and the virtual Town Hall discussions during the Joint Retreat of the Bureaux.

Subparagraph (f) on capacity building

The EU and its MS commend UNEP's extensive capacity building efforts and support to MS in the formulation and implementation of environmental policies aimed at achieving internationally agreed goals, in particular environment-related SDGs.

We are interested in the update on the progress of the Strategy for South-South and Triangular Cooperation implementation, in particular in relation to capacity-building and facilitating access to technology.

We also note the recognition of the need to develop capacity building that will integrate multiple processes (such as the Fifth Montevideo Programme, UN development system reform, etc.)

We see a specific reference to the importance of CTCN and we encourage UNEP to continue to look into strengthening this mechanism, especially with regard to finding long-term funding options together with UNMS.

Subparagraph (g) on headquarters functions

The EU and its MS welcome UNEP's efforts in responding to COVID-19 pandemic and its root causes as well as promoting green recovery. UNEA5, UNEP@50 and Stockholm+50 provide excellent platforms for enhancing UNEP's impact at all levels.

We believe that the existing regional presence is up to date, but that UNEP's impact could be enhanced, including at the regional level, through better cooperation with relevant UN agencies that are present. We also suggest that the consultations with the ED of UNON result in concrete actions that contribute to reasonable and predictable (conference) services, possibly as part of the Action Plan. We appreciate the information provided in the updated document on UNEP's continued collaboration with both the host country and UNON to improve UNON's capacity to host big meetings in Nairobi and would like to hear in more detail what concrete improvements are planned and when. Furthermore, we believe that the role of the CPR can be further strengthened – with the help of Secretariat's increased transparency and accountability – by enhancing its oversight role, that will provide a basis for decision making at UNEA on how to improve the implementation of the PoW/B and the resolutions.

The EU and its MS consider the need to concentrate functions in Nairobi, identified in para 88, as acted upon and met. In addition, the EU and its MS wish to point out that the present state of play is considerably different now as compared to 10 years ago. The current popular demand for delivering results for the environment gives room for growth. A zero-sum approach risks diminishing and constraining UNEP's possibilities to ensure they are well placed and staffed – in Nairobi and elsewhere - to meet rising demands. Any type of further discussions should highlight the need to look at UNEP's functions globally – what is the most impactful way of ensuring delivery of the environmental dimension and the needed support for the member states? We consider that the existing network of regional and sub-regional offices is now strategically well placed to ensure this. Of course, with more financing, the impact would be greater. As for physical placement of UNEP staff, the EU and its MS consider that a lot of progress has been made and that we are in quite a good situation right now.

The EU and its MS believe that successful cooperation with relevant UN agencies present on the ground will be much more important than UNEP's presence in any region, as long as the relevant products, instruments and policy advice or other support to mainstream environmental considerations for sustainable development can be delivered in an effective manner. In that respect, the approach envisioned to support more MS and regions through cooperation with other UN agencies in the light of the UN Reform, will be very important for increasing UNEP's impact.

However, there is plenty of room for improvement in the services provided by UNON at the Nairobi headquarters, as well as the predictability of costs. The decision invites the UNON director to contribute to the implementation of subparagraph g) concerning the headquarters functions in Nairobi.

The EU and its MS encourage and support UNEP and UNON in their efforts to improve the UNON conference facilities and believe that they would result in concrete actions and agreements that contribute to reasonable, affordable and predictable prices of conference services that are comparable to other UN stations, improved quality and adequacy of services and an overview of the cost savings of the shared functions with UN Habitat, delivered by UNON.

Subparagraph (h) on stakeholder participation

The EU and its MS welcome UNEP's efforts to engage with various stakeholder groups, including the private sector and in the implementation of the Strategy for private sector engagement.

We encourage UNEP's efforts in ensuring further ways for stakeholders to engage remotely via interactive video links and underline that this type of engagement does not exclude participation at physical meetings.

We especially welcome the focus by UNEP on inclusion of and enhanced cooperation with Children and Youth Major Group (not excluding the importance of other Major Groups).

Finally, the EU and its MS would like to note that it is expected that the latest versions of the private sector engagement strategy/policy, partnership policy, etc. be updated in the light of the MTS and UN Reform.
