

GRULAC Intervention

First informal substantive consultation meeting on UNGA Resolution 73/33, 21-23 July 2020

Chaired by: Co-facilitators **H.E. Ms. Saqlain Syedah**, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of **Pakistan** and **Mr. Ado Lohmus**, Permanent Representative of **Estonia**

Item 3. General statements by regional and political groups and interested Member States and Members of Specialized Agencies.

Thank you, Chair. It is my pleasure to speak on behalf of GRULAC. First of all, we would like to thank you for the elaboration of the *Co-Facilitator's Document* and to the Secretariat for the *Information Note*. Both documents contain relevant information that will help us guide this process based on the mandate of the resolution at hand, on the history and the milestones in the creation of a significant legal body of environmental work since 1972, and on the five objectives and thirteen substantive recommendations in order to prepare a political declaration for a United Nations high-level meeting.

Our region would like to take advantage of this opportunity to present some consensual elements that might shed some light into the way forward. This is an excellent opportunity to envision a non-binding, action-oriented declaration that strengthens the implementation of international environmental law and governance but does not undermine existing relevant legal instruments and frameworks and relevant global, regional, and sectoral bodies. It is of the utmost importance to respect the existing environmental achievements, acknowledging the evolution of international environmental law since 1972 and not to allow any backtracking to take place.

In this declaration, human beings and nature are to be valued and, as such, are entitled to live in harmony with each other, as indicated by paragraph 1 of the Rio+20 Declaration. It is only through this guiding statement, that the challenges of, among others, biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution can be overcome.

This is a political declaration that should strengthen the role of UNEP, and focus on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in line with the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development carried out in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, entitled "The future we want", including paragraphs 88 and 89 thereof.

In these difficult times of COVID-19, we must recommit to the sustainable development goals. Many countries in our region and throughout the world are currently experiencing the devastating effects of the pandemic in all aspects of life. This crisis will create even more poverty and will risk the progress made in the last decades. These people must not be left behind suffering from serious environmental problems as we strive toward "The Future We Want".

It is in this context that the indispensable need for additional means of implementation in support of the efforts undertaken by developing countries and all the principles of Rio and, among them, the common but differentiated responsibilities acquire even more relevance.

This discussion, as clearly stated in the mandate of resolution 73/333, should happen in the context of the celebrations of five decades of the creation of UNEP. The political declaration should take into account the diagnosis carried out on the global state of the environment, the work of UNEP to help us face environmental challenges and to reflect better tools to strengthen the implementation of international environmental law and governance. It will be important to have clearer assessments and monitoring of national capacities and requirements to address those challenges.

Our group is eager to engage, under the clear guidance from the co-facilitators, in discussions in relation to the implementation of international environmental law.

Mr./Madame Chair,

These topics are particularly relevant but there are other central issues for consideration in the preparation of this non-binding political declaration. They should be taken into account to substantially improve the work of the environmental system. One of those central aspects is that UNEP, without interfering in the independent nature of the environmental conventions nor encroaching in their respective mandates and governance mechanisms, should work in a creative way in order to better coordinate the environmental work and identify spaces for synergies to take place among the different environmental agreements.

In this regard, it is important to recall that the mandate of UNEP is to set up the environmental agenda as “the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment”.

Finally, GRULAC would like to express its strong support to the multilateral system, which has been questioned in these difficult times of the COVID-19 pandemic and, in this case, understands that the strengthening of UNEP shall be a contribution in this direction.

Thank you.

Version Final 3

21JUL20, 06:00