

Australia's Intervention to UNEP ASC-7 Agenda Item 5(iii): Preparations for UNEA-5

15 October 2020

- Chair, colleagues, good evening from Australia.
- To start off, Australia would like to join others in expressing our appreciation to the Norwegian Presidency and the Secretariat for the consultative and transparent process that has been undertaken thus far.
- Australia supports the pragmatic compromise that has been proposed, that is a two-part UNEA-5 first convened virtually in February 2021 followed by an in-person segment reconvened in February 2022.
 - This proposal allows us to make core business decisions related to the functions of UNEP, whilst still providing an opportunity for substantive policy matters to be addressed at the reconvened segment.
 - Importantly, and as expressed by our European Union and Swiss colleagues, the proposed High-Level Segment including the adoption of a ministerial declaration in February 2021 underscores our continued joint commitment, at the ministerial level, to multilateral environmental cooperation despite these challenging times of COVID.
- Just a few weeks ago in New York, but in reality, virtually, many of our Leaders stressed the importance of multilateral cooperation in addressing the global challenges that we are all facing.
 - We have to acknowledge that virtual engagement is difficult, and it is particularly so for some delegations as we have heard tonight.
 - However, our colleagues in many other multilateral forums have persevered and demonstrated that outcomes through virtual means are possible. And as expressed by the Presidency, we should at least try and do so in good faith and in the spirit of multilateralism.
- Australia stands ready to work with the UNEA Presidency and other Member State colleagues to send a message to the global community that environmental multilateralism matters and we believe that it is timely to do so in February 2021.
 - While Australia would support progressing additional substantive issues in February 2021, we recognise that the Norwegian Presidency and the Secretariat have proposed a fair and pragmatic compromise that meets the different needs of Member States.
 - We look forward to working with all Member States in good faith in support of environmental multilateralism.
- Thank you.