



**153<sup>rd</sup> meeting  
of the Committee of Permanent Representatives of UNEP  
26 January 2021**

**Interventions on behalf of the European Union  
and its Member States**

*Agenda Item 1: Opening of the meeting*

- Chair, Madam Executive Director, distinguished colleagues; it is my privilege to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.
- From the outset, I would like to wish all the distinguished colleagues a Happy and Healthy New Year and share my hope that with our efforts to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 we will use all opportunities, including the mobilisation of financial means and strong political commitments to recover to a better and greener world.
- As this session is our last meeting before the on-line UNEA and the OECPR<sup>1</sup>, the EU and its Member States would like to recognise and thank for the joint efforts led by the President of UNEA, the CPR Chair and the respective Bureaus, along with the UNEP Secretariat, skilfully navigated by Madam

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<sup>1</sup> Open-Ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, to be held on 15-16 February 2020 to finalise preparations for UNEA-5.1.

Executive Director, and her Deputy, to prepare and deliver on this extremely important meeting, taking place in an unprecedented context.

- We would like to pay tribute in particular to the collective engagement of all on the UNEP's Medium Term Strategy, the Programme of Work and Budget that are now very well prepared and thought-through documents, ready for approval by the UNEA. We are also pleased with the timely preparation of the extensive set of more than 20 substantive reports of the Executive Director submitted to UNEA-5 following up on requests from previous sessions. While most of them are to be deferred to the in-person session of UNEA-5 in February 2022, we appreciate their timely availability that will help Member States, based on their content, shape the agenda and outcomes of that meeting.
- Dear colleagues, you have certainly heard the EU and its Member States arguing on numerous occasions in favour of the UNEA to stand to its mandate as the global environmental authority and to not shy away from passing its messages to the world. It is particularly true in the midst of the pandemic, where recognising its link with the environment and guidance towards a green recovery and mobilising ambition for the agenda ahead of us, including on Biodiversity, Climate, Chemicals and Waste, Food Systems and Plastic pollution, is important as never before.
- In this regard we give our full support to the President of UNEA to continue his efforts to mobilise the full membership to agree on the "Message from the on-line UNEA-5 in Nairobi". It remains the view of the EU and its Member States that absence of the voice of UNEA, the voice of Nairobi as the global capital on the environmental dimension of sustainable development will reduce its relevance and will cast a shadow on UNEP and its headquarters, and in consequence negatively impact the environmental and sustainable development agendas.

- To this extent, we welcome and support the communication activities highlighted in the Secretariat's communication strategy and call upon the Executive Director to spare no effort in reaching out to the widest possible audience to underline the relevance of the key areas of UNEP's work to support action on climate, nature and pollution and its contribution to a green recovery and in stressing the relevance of UNEA's theme and its messages.
- With regard to the work between the two sessions of UNEA-5, we believe that Member States should take the lead in the process to follow up on the reports and at their request be supported by the Secretariat within the limits of the Programme of Work and relevant resolutions. Whereas the issue of marine litter and microplastics remains a priority for the EU and its Member States, we consider that any activities towards the resumed UNEA session next year should not result in repeating discussions of the Ad-hoc open ended expert group (AHEG) or reopening its conclusions: We should move on from there
- Colleagues, we look forward to discussing with you the remaining preparations for UNEA-5 as per the agenda of today. We wish you all and ourselves a fruitful meeting.

I thank you.

*Agenda Item 4: Preparations for the virtual session of OECPR and UNEA-5*

- The EU and its Member States thank the Secretariat for the preparation of the provisional and annotated agenda, as well as the updated draft structure, for the on-line session of the OECPR-5 in 2021.
- We are of the view that the proposed structure of the virtual session continues to ensure an effective and efficient use of the time, whilst allowing the Chair flexibility to make use of the subsequent days of the week available in case of contingencies.
- The EU and its Member States welcome the inclusion in the provisional agenda of a progress update on the implementation of the UN General Assembly resolution 73/333 and look forward to the consultations that are now scheduled after the online session of UNEA.
- We further welcome the reference and listing of the 23 working documents for consideration by UNEA-5. Recognising that substantive consideration of the Executive Director's reports is to be deferred to the second segment of the UNEA-5 in 2022, we would welcome possible updates of the reports ahead of the resumed session in 2022 and would like to request the Secretariat to inform us how they intend to deliver on these updates. We would also like the Secretariat to clarify in the Agenda of the OECPR meeting that the deferral does not apply to the Medium Term Strategy and the Programme of Work.
- **[ONLY FOR WRITTEN SUBMISSION:** The EU and its Member States further reiterate the view that the current duration of the virtual session of OECPR-5 in 2021, does not preclude the foreseen duration of the 5 days of the resumed OECPR-5 in 2022.]

### *Agenda Item 5: Preparations for UNEP@50*

- The EU and its Member States thank the Secretariat for preparing a draft strategic plan for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the creation of UNEP.
- We support the kick-off of UNEP@50 at UNEA-5.1, underlining its main mandates, in particular the science-policy interface, and look forward to engaging further with UNEP and other UN Member States in the preparations leading up to the celebrations.
- The EU and its Member States would like to express their support to have the commemoration of UNEP@50 back-to-back with the resumed session of UNEA, in 2022. This is in line with UNEP's strategic plan on the commemoration of UNEP@50. To allow for broad and higher-level participation, the EU and its Member States would have a tentative preference for a one day Special Session to be convened to commemorate UNEP@50 back-to-back with the resumed session of UNEA will also. However, we would appreciate a clarification by the Secretariat on the logistical, administrative, procedural and budgetary differences of organizing the commemoration, either as integrated part of the resumed session of UNEA-5, or as a special session back-to-back with the resumed session of UNEA-5.
- In any case, we believe that a one day high-level commemorative event will help to assure high-level participation throughout the event.
- We would like to note that, with regard to para 22 of the Secretariat's note, that outlines the option of UNEP@50 being convened as a Special Session, there is no reference to UNEA5.2, which is not consistent with the language in the draft decision (para 9). This should be corrected by including a reference to the back-to-back placement with UNEA-5.2.

- The EU and its Member States recognize the link between and coherent objectives of UNEP@50 and the UNGA Resolution 73/333, to contribute to raising awareness on the added value of UNEP and its fundamental role in enhancing the international environmental agenda and international environmental governance. In this regard we welcome the reference in the Secretariat's note that the UNEP@50 commemoration constitutes an opportunity to adopt the outcome of the consultation process under UNGA Resolution 73/333.
- The EU and its Member States fully support the Swedish proposal for Stockholm+50, including its proposed dates in June 2020. As stated by the Secretariat, in the background documents, Stockholm+50 and UNEP@ 50 are two events that are distinct but interrelated, complementary and mutually reinforcing.
- We recall that the process for Stockholm+50 is currently taken forward in New York, with the aim to introduce a draft enabling resolution as promptly as possible.
- The EU and its Member States furthermore welcome and look forward to the launch by the Executive Director of the first UNEP Global Assessments Synthesis Report entitled "Making Peace with Nature: A scientific blueprint to tackle the climate, biodiversity and pollution emergencies".
- We would like to reiterate the suggestion of examining how this process could benefit the work done so far for the future of the GEO process. In line with this, the effort of focusing on UNEP's core mandate of a science-policy interface should build on the experience and work performed by the GEO process and vice versa.
- The EU and its Member States welcome the potential communication outputs. We note, however, that it is not quite clear what the new para 25 on additional

outreach activities in 2022 after the 2022 World Environment Day actually refers to and would request the Secretariat to clarify.

*Agenda Item 6: Consideration of draft decisions of UNEA-5*

- The EU and its Member States thank the Secretariat for preparing the draft decisions to be adopted at UNEA-5.1 in February 2021.
- With regard to the draft decision on the adjournment and resumption of UNEA-5, the EU and its Member States welcome the updates and improvements made so far.
- Concerning *paragraph 5*, we consider that the process would benefit greatly if clarity is provided as to when the political declaration of UNGA Resolution 73/333 will be adopted.
- The EU and its Member-States are of the view that commemorations of the 50th anniversary of UNEP in 2022 would be the most adequate occasion to adopt the political declaration called by UNGA Resolution 73/333.
- The adoption of the political declaration at UNEP@50 is suitable both in terms of the scope and substance of the event.
- Indeed, the substance of the declaration fits well in the concept presented by the Secretariat and the level of ambition that we collectively wish for the commemorations of UNEP@50. It will equally contribute to strengthening UNEP, highlighting science and international environmental governance and will also be complementary to the issues addressed at UNEA-5.2.
- The EU and its Member States believe that such approach will result in major outcomes that complement each other, contributing to increasing the consistency and coherence of political messages and avoiding unnecessary duplications.
- Therefore, and to provide clarity in this respect, we would like to hear the views of the Legal Advisor concerning the possibility of explicitly including,



in paragraph 5, a proposal or recommendation on the adoption of the political declaration called by UNGA Resolution 73/333 during UNEP@50.

- To this end, we have a tentative preference for a Special Session to be convened to commemorate UNEP@50 back-to-back to UNEA-5.2 (option expressed in *paragraph 9*) and adopt the political declaration of UNGA Resolution 73/333 on that occasion.
- The EU and its Member States would like to reiterate their preference that UNEP@50 be organized in one single day, in conjunction with UNEA-5.2, which seems more appropriate for a high-level commemorative event and to assure high-level participation. This would also alleviate pressure on a likely very dense week during UNEA-5.2.
- However, we would like to have a clarification by the Secretariat on the logistical, administrative, procedural and budgetary differences of organizing the commemoration, either as integrated part of the resumed session of UNEA-5, or as a special session back-to-back with the resumed session of UNEA-5.
- The EU and its Member-States welcome the encouragement to all Member-States to submit draft resolutions for consideration by the resumed session of the United Nations Environment Assembly at least ten weeks prior to the resumed session of the fifth meeting of the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives.
- The EU and its Member States would like thank the Secretariat for their work on the new paragraph that provides impetus for intersessional work, following up on the reports provided to the online session of UNEA, that we think would be useful in the run up to the resumed session. .

- While the issue of marine litter and microplastics remains a priority for the EU and its Member States, especially for the resumed UNEA session next year, we remain flexible in terms of type, content and scope of activities for the intra-sessional period. We believe that Member States should take the lead in the process now to follow up on the reports and, at their request, be supported by the Secretariat in that endeavour within the limits of its Programme of Work and existing resolutions. We consider that any such activity should not result in repeating discussions of the Ad-hoc open ended expert group (AHEG) or reopening its conclusions: We should move on from there.
- The EU and its Member States welcome the conclusion of the AHEG and the fulfilment of its mandate identifying possible global response options, without the need for further technical work. Therefore, any potential activity should build on the outcomes of AHEG, in particular the identified global response option that enjoyed most support, namely the global agreement on plastics.
- The EU and its MS stress the importance of keeping the political momentum towards taking global action on marine litter and micro plastics at the resumed session of UNEA-5, in 2022.