

Committee of Permanent Representatives
Subcommittee Meeting
Thursday 6 May 2021
2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. (GMT+3)
Online Meeting

**Agenda Item 2: Consideration of the cycle of term of office of the
Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives**

This document serves as a background document for agenda item 2 - Consideration of the cycle of term of office of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives. As requested by the Bureau of the CPR at its meeting on 23 March 2021, it provides an analysis and outlines options for the composition and regional rotation cycle of the Bureaus of the UN Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

I. Background

In accordance with [UNEA Decision 5/3 on the adjournment and resumption of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly](#) (paragraph 8), the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) is recommended, at its 154th meeting, to “...consider, in view of systemic problems and in a comprehensive manner, the cycle of the term of office of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives in relation to that of the Bureau of the Environment Assembly”.

The recommendation was the result of a debate whereby some regional and political groups and individual Member States considered it appropriate to extend the term of office of the CPR bureau until the end of the second part of UNEA-5 (UNEA 5.2). The underlying reasons for this proposal may be summarized as follows:

1) to address the effect of the inadvertent prolongation of the term of office current Bureau of the UN Environment Assembly from February 2021 to 2 March 2022 (the final day of UNEA-5.2), thereby avoiding that the same regional group will preside both governing bodies during the period 1 July 2021 to 2 March 2022;

and/or

2) to address a systemic issue to avoid or minimize a situation whereby the same regional group will preside both governing bodies at any given time, by seeking to permanently align the terms of office for the CPR Bureau with that of the UNEA Bureau.

Other regional and political groups and individual Member States pointed out that such overlaps have happened in the past (for example during the cycle of UNEA-1 in 2013-15) without concerns being raised, and questioned the value-added of making any change in the cycle of the terms of office for the CPR bureau. Eventually, an agreement emerged to further study the issue with a view to reaching a decision within the CPR itself.

II. Relevant UNEA rules of procedure and decisions

Under Rule 20 of the UNEA rules of procedure, the Members of the Bureau hold office until their successors are elected.

Pursuant to Decision 5/1, the 5th session of UNEA decided in accordance with rule 8 of its rules to adjourn temporarily and resume its session from 28 February to 2 March 2022. Consequently, the Bureau of UNEA-5 will continue to function until the 5th session of UNEA is formally concluded and a new Bureau is elected. From this follows that no formal decision has been taken to “extend” the current term of office of the current UNEA Bureau. Rather, the fact that the current members of the UNEA-5 Bureau will serve until a new Bureau is elected at the conclusion of UNEA-5 is due to the decision of UNEA-5 to adjourn and to resume in February 2022.

With regard to the CPR Bureau, Paragraph 9 of Governing Council Decision 19/32 provides that “the Committee of Permanent Representatives shall elect a Bureau composed of a Chairperson, three Vice Chairpersons and a Rapporteur, for a period of two years, taking into account the principles of rotation and equitable geographical representation”. The reference to rotation and equitable geographical representation refers to the CPR Bureau itself and its own rotation and geographical representation and it does not refer to any other governing bodies, such as UNEA.

Furthermore, the UNEA rules of procedure and relevant decisions do not require the cycles of the Bureaus of UNEA and of the CPR to be formally aligned. Similarly, in the UN system at large, the regional rotation of Bureaus of plenary bodies and of subsidiary bodies are also not required to be aligned.

Finally, subject to the provisions of Rule 18 that provide for regional rotation, Bureau members are eligible for re-election under Rule 20. If a proposal to align the cycle of the terms of office of the CPR gains support, it would from a legal perspective be preferable to do this within the existing rules of

procedure i.e. by re-election of the current Bureau, rather than by extending their term of office. The rules do not provide for the extension of the term of office, only re-election.

III. Possible options

The below sections outline three options regarding the cycle of the term of office of the CPR Bureau, building on the existing practice of regional rotation, and compare them to the existing cycle of the term of office of the UNEA Bureau (see [Annex I](#)). It should be noted that while all three options assume that the current timing of future UNEA sessions will remain unchanged, and that UNEA-6 therefore will take place one year after UNEA-5.2, i.e. in February 2023.

Option A: Established Practice

This option foresees no change in the existing cycle of rotation for the CPR Bureau, with the election of a new CPR Bureau and Chair for the period 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2023.

This option would entail that from time to time, as has also been the case in the past, and unless there is a change to the current regional rotation for Members of the UNEA Bureau, there will sometimes be an overlap with regard to the chairing of both Bureaus (for example during the periods 2013-15 and 2023-25 when the Asia-Pacific Group chaired/will chair both Bureaus).

[Annex II](#) provides an overview of the cycle of rotation for this option, based on the current order of regional rotation.

Option B: Re-election of existing CPR Bureau in July 2021 and subsequent alignment with UNEA cycle

Under this option, the CPR would exceptionally agree to re-elect the current Members of the CPR Bureau to a second term from 1 July 2021, and recommend that UNEA adopt a decision at its 5th session to align the terms of office of the CPR Bureau with the term of office of the UNEA Bureau. Under this recommendation, the CPR would elect a new Bureau at its first regular meeting after the closure of a UNEA session taking into account the composition of the UNEA Bureau. This would mean that the current composition of the CPR Bureau would remain unchanged until Spring 2022, when the 158th meeting of the CPR is expected to take place. The CPR Bureau elected at the 158th meeting of the CPR would assume its responsibilities shortly thereafter, tentatively on 1 July 2022. Under this option, elections to the CPR Bureau would then take place every two years, following the election of the UNEA Bureau.

Unless the regional rotation for the UNEA Bureau changes, this option would also entail an overlap with regard to the chairing of both Bureaus at the same time, for example in 2023-24 when the Asia-Pacific Group will preside over both the UNEA and CPR Bureau.

[Annex III](#) provides an overview of the cycle of rotation for this option, based on the current order of regional rotation.

Option C: Election of new CPR Bureau in July 2021 and subsequent alignment with UNEA cycle

Under this option, the CPR would elect new Members of the CPR Bureau to take office on 1 July 2021, and recommend that UNEA adopt a decision at its 5th session to align the terms of office of the CPR Bureau with the term of office of the UNEA Bureau. Under this recommendation, the CPR would elect a new Bureau at its first regular meeting after the closure of a UNEA session taking into account the composition of the UNEA Bureau. The CPR Bureau elected at the 158th meeting of the CPR would assume its responsibilities shortly thereafter, tentatively on 1 July 2022. Under this option, elections to

the CPR Bureau would then take place every two years, following the election of the UNEA Bureau. For the year 2021/2022, this would mean that the term of office of the next CPR Bureau would be cut short, from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 (instead of 30 June 2023).

This option would, starting from 2022, avoid overlaps with regard to the chairing of both Bureaus at the same time, provided that the current regional rotation for the UNEA Bureau remains unchanged. However, for the period 1 July 2021 – 2 March 2022, the two bureaus would be chaired by the same regional group.

Annex IV provides an overview of the cycle of rotation for this option, based on the current order of regional rotation.

IV. Conclusion

The UNEA rules of procedure do not address questions relating to the extension or the alignment of terms of the bureaus of governing or subsidiary bodies. Extending or limiting the cycle of the term of the CPR Bureau in exceptional cases would not be consistent with paragraph 9 of the Governing Council 19/32, and may create a precedence whereby the time frames of elected bureaus may be reduced or extended arbitrarily.

Therefore, subject to a specific decision taken by UNEA in the future, or a change in the current rules of procedure, any action to change the cycle of the terms of office should be done within the existing practice of Bureau elections. This leaves three main options open: to continue with established practices, to re-elect the current bureau and maintain its chairmanship for a second term as an exception to the principle of regional rotation, or to elect a new bureau with the understanding that it will exceptionally serve for a shorter time period than previously, with the objective to align the terms of cycle with the UNEA Bureau. For the two latter options, the election / re-election would need to be combined with a recommendation to UNEA to take a decision to align the election of the CPR bureau with that of the UNEA Bureau, for example by deciding that the CPR should elect its bureau, based on regional rotation, at its first regular meeting after the closure of a UNEA session, and that the newly elected Bureau would take office shortly thereafter.

Finally, with regard to the possible alignment of the election of the two bureaus, this may have unintended consequences for the effective preparations for future UNEA sessions, as it would limit the opportunity for the incumbent Members of the CPR Bureau to share its experience gained from organizing the previous UNEA and OECPR session with the newly elected UNEA Bureau. In addition, temporal alignment of the elections of the UNEA and CPR Bureaus may give an impression that UNEP's governance is only centered around the preparations of UNEA sessions, thereby downplaying the Committee's mandate to also oversight and review of UNEP's Medium Term Strategy and Programme of Work.

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Annexes

Annex I: Current composition and cycle of the terms of office of the Bureau of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA)

Annex II: Option A – established practice

Annex III: Option B – re-election of existing CPR Bureau in July 2021 and subsequent alignment with UNEA cycle

Annex IV: Option C - election of new CPR Bureau in July 2021 and subsequent alignment with UNEA cycle

ANNEX I

Composition and cycle of the terms of office of the Bureau of the UN Environment Assembly

Year	2014-16 UNEA-1	2016-17 UNEA-2 UNEA-3	2018-19 UNEA-4	2019-2022 UNEA-5.1 UNEA-5.2	2022-23 UNEA-6	2023-25 UNEA-7	2025-27 UNEA-8	2027-29 UNEA-9
President	APG Mongolia	GRULAC Costa Rica	EEG Estonia	WEOG Norway	African	APG	GRULAC	EEG
Vice Presidents	African (2) Egypt, Kenya	African (2) Gabon, Nigeria	African (2) Gabon, South Africa	African Burkina Faso	African	African (2)	APG (2)	African (2)
	APG Iraq Poland	APG (2) Iraq, Philippine Colombia	APG Islamic Rep. of Iran	APG (2) Indonesia Bahrain	APG (2)	APG	GRULAC	APG
	EEG (2) Romania, Georgia	EEG (2) Czech Rep. Montenegro	EEG Czech Rep	EEG (2) Estonia Serbia	EEG	EEG (2)	African (2)	EEG (2)
	GRULAC Peru	GRULAC Barbados	GRULAC (2) Brazil Antigua and Barbuda	GRULAC (2) Costa Rica Suriname	RULAC (2)	GRULAC	WEOG	GRULAC (2)
	WEOG Belgium, Norway	WEOG USA	WEOG (2) Finland Switzerland	WEOG France	WEOG (2)	WEOG (2)	EEG (2)	WEOG (2)
Rapporteur	GRULAC Saint Lucia	WEOG Belgium	APG Pakistan	African South Africa	EEG	GRULAC	WEOG	APG

APG: *Asia-Pacific Group*
EEG: *Eastern European Group*
GRULAC: *Latin American and Caribbean Group*
WEOG: *Western European and others Group*
AFRICAN *African Group*

ANNEX II

Option A: Established Practice

Composition and cycle of the terms of office for the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

Year	July 2011 - June 2013	July 2013 - June 2015	July 2015 - June 2017	July 2017- June 2019	July 2019 - June 2021	July 2021- June 2023	July 2023 - June 2025	July 2025 - June 2027	July 2027- June 2029
Chair	WEOG Denmark	APG* Republic of Korea/ Indonesia	EEG Romania	African Botswana Ghana	GRULAC Brazil	WEOG*	APG*	EEG	African
Vice Chairs	African Ghana	African Uganda	African Botswana	APG Republic of Korea	APG Sri Lanka/ Pakistan	African	African	African	APG
	EEG Poland/ Russian Fed.	EEG Romania	APG Iraq	GRULAC Colombia	EEG Romania/ Poland	EEG	EEG	APG	GRULAC
	GRULAC Mexico	WEOG Belgium	GRULAC Brazil	WEOG Finland/ USA	WEOG Nether- lands	GRULAC	WEOG	GRULAC	WEOG
Rappor- teur	APG Iran	GRULAC Chile	WEOG Germany	EEG Poland	African Ghana/ South Sudan	APG	GRULAC	WEOG	EEG

*Overlaps with same regional group presiding UNEA

APG: Asia-Pacific Group
 EEG: Eastern European Group
 GRULAC: Latin American and Caribbean Group
 WEOG: Western European and others Group
 AFRICAN African Group

ANNEX III

Option B: re-election of existing CPR Bureau in July 2021 and subsequent alignment with UNEA cycle

Composition and regional rotation cycle of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

Year	July 2011 - June 2013	July 2013 - June 2015	July 2015 - June 2017	July 2017- June 2019	July 2019 - June 2021	July 2021- June 2022	July 2022 – June 2023	July 2023 - June 2025	July 2025- June 2027
Chair	WEOG Denmark	APG** Republic of Korea/ Indonesia	EEG Romania	African Botswana Ghana	GRULAC Brazil	GRULAC*	WEOG	APG**	EEG
Vice Chairs	African Ghana	African Uganda	African Botswana	APG Republic of Korea	APG Sri Lanka/ Pakistan	APG	African	African	African
	EEG Poland/ Russian Fed.	EEG Romania	APG Iraq	GRULAC Colombia	EEG Romania/ Poland	EEG	EEG	EEG	APG
	GRULAC Mexico	WEOG Belgium	GRULAC Brazil	WEOG Finland/ USA	WEOG Nether- lands	WEOG	GRULAC	WEOG	GRULAC
Rappor- teur	APG Iran	GRULAC Chile	WEOG Germany	EEG Poland	African Ghana/ South Sudan	African	APG	GRULAC	WEOG

*CPR Bureau re-elected for the period 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022, with GRULAC remaining as chair

**Overlaps with same regional group presiding UNEA

APG: *Asia-Pacific Group*
 EEG: *Eastern European Group*
 GRULAC: *Latin American and Caribbean Group*
 WEOG: *Western European and others Group*
 AFRICAN *African Group*

ANNEX III

Option C: Election of new CPR Bureau in July 2021 and subsequent alignment with UNEA cycle

Composition and regional rotation cycle of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

Year	July 2011 - June 2013	July 2013 - June 2015	July 2015 - June 2017	July 2017- June 2019	July 2019 - June 2021	July 2021- June 2022	July 2022 - June 2023	July 2023 - June 2025	July 2025- June 2027
Chair	WEOG Denmark	APG* Republic of Korea/ Indonesia	EEG Romania	African Botswana Ghana	GRULAC Brazil	WEOG*	APG	EEG	African
Vice Chairs	African Ghana	African Uganda	African Botswana	APG Republic of Korea	APG Sri Lanka/ Pakistan	African	African	African	APG
	EEG Poland/ Russian Fed.	EEG Romania	APG Iraq	GRULAC Colombia	EEG Romania/ Poland	EEG	EEG	APG	GRULAC
	GRULAC Mexico	WEOG Belgium	GRULAC Brazil	WEOG Finland/ USA	WEOG Netherlands	GRULAC	WEOG	GRULAC	WEOG
Rapporteur	APG Iran	GRULAC Chile	WEOG Germany	EEG Poland	African Ghana/ South Sudan	APG	GRULAC	WEOG	EEG

*Overlaps to some extent with same regional group presiding UNEA

APG: *Asia-Pacific Group*
 EEG: *Eastern European Group*
 GRULAC: *Latin American and Caribbean Group*
 WEOG: *Western European and others Group*
 AFRICAN: *African Group*