

**AFRICAN GROUP INTERVENTIONS DELIVERED
BY**

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**AT THE 154TH MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT
PROGRAMME**

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Check against delivery

Agenda item 4: Consideration of the cycle of term of office of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

Since it is the first time taking the floor, the African Group takes note of the Executive Director's report and how the secretariat has implemented the Medium-Term Strategy thus far. We further take note of all the work done by the Programme in African countries and appreciate the continuous engagement in this regard.

Furthermore and on behalf of the African Group I wish to take this opportunity to thank and commend you, Excellency Ambassador Fernando Coimbra and Chair of the UNEP CPR for the way you have conducted the meetings of the CPR and for the outstanding work during the past two years. The Group appreciates the way you have maintained transparency, inclusiveness and effective participation, even under the very unusual and challenging circumstances due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Allow me to also thank the members of the UNEP CPR Bureau for their contribution.

Mr Chair,

At the outset, the African Group wishes to thank member States for their engagement in this debate stemming from the discussions and decisions of UNEA-5.1 in February 2021. We welcome the progressive spirit in which member States have stated their views with the main aim of coming up with a timely and amicable solution that would allow us to move the deliberations for preparing for UNEA-5 part two forward, given the packed and substantive agenda before us and the limited time we have.

The Group also thanks the secretariat for all the information provided to help guide the discussions thus far. Furthermore, the Group has taken note of the nomination letter addressed to UN regional groups to nominate members to the new Bureau. Recalling the spirit of paragraph 7 of UNEA Decision 5/3, on the consideration of the cycle of term of office of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, the African Group wishes to encourage the secretariat to allow for the decision to be finalised by member States on this matter first without giving the impression that its outcome is being pre-empted. This is to ensure that the deliberations are carried out and concluded amicably through a member states owned process.

The African Group emphasizes the importance of good faith, collective ownership, and of ensuring that we achieve win-win outcomes that are agreeable to all of us. In this vein, the Group expresses its hopefulness that such an outcome is within reach and that all Groups

and delegations - despite some divergence - have the interest of our important work in preparing for UNEA-5.2, and of our intersessional work more broadly, at heart.

Mr Chair,

The African Group wishes to categorically state that our position on enabling the UNEP CPR Bureau, under the current configuration, to finalise UNEA-5.2 is a principled policy stance and should not be construed as undermining the role and/or targeting any or a specific regional Group. Such impressions tend to divert focus away from the substantive matters at hand, and therefore do not lead to constructive outcomes. They certainly do not reflect the spirit and intent of the on-going debate on the ground. The African Group position is based on ensuring regional geographical balance and notably avoiding cumulative functions for any group, be it this time or in the future.

The point here is not resenting the claim of a region to preside over the CPR, but rather to look objectively to an exceptional situation where we had to opt for a two-part UNEA-5 and an extension of its Bureau tenure for that purpose. In our view, those same particular circumstances still prevail and dictate similar reflexes/approach to address the issue accordingly.

Mr Chair,

The Secretariat has made it abundantly clear that all options presented in the “Options paper” are fully in line with the relevant Rules of Procedure. The African Group maintains its historical position of not changing, reinterpreting or reopening the Rules of Procedure in any way shape or form, hence the Group would not have agreed to proposals that run contrary to this cardinal position.

We have also heard from the secretariat that the aforementioned options paper is based on the assumption that the timing of future UNEA sessions will remain unchanged. It is for this reason that we continue to request for information on how, in line with the Rules of Procedure, the African Presidency for UNEA-6 can enjoy its full two year term. This is of course based on the fact that we could not take up the Presidency this year due to the unforeseen circumstances and the compromise we made, one way or another in our approach to UNEA-5 and holding it over two parts, under the assumption of our questions and concerns being responded to and not overlooked. This is the clarity that we were seeking at the time of discussing the adjournment and resumption of UNEA-5 last year, and we believe that now is the opportune moment to receive guidance on the way forward.

The Group is of the view that we must have clarity on the arrangements for UNEA 6 well in advance of UNEA 5.2 in February of 2022, and that these arrangements can ensure that African presidency is given sufficient time to prepare for the next UNEA session in an adequate manner. The African Group also looks forward to seamless cooperation with UNEA-5 Presidency and Bureau - in particular with regard to the preparations for the UNEP@50 special session - and also looks forward to fruitful engagement with the CPR Bureau in the run up to the 6th session of UNEA. The engagement between the CPR and UNEA Bureaus has proven instrumental to the preparations of UNEA sessions in the past - including UNEA-5.1 with the current Bureau - and hence we reemphasize the importance of geographical balance and diversity in this regard.

As we have earlier indicated we do not envisage a situation where one regional group serves in office for a duration that is less than what is provided for under the Rules of Procedure or incontrovertible practice. We have noted that the current UNEA-5 Bureau has served in office for more than two years, not simply because elections have not been held, but that its term has been prolonged due to covid-19 implications. As a result that has affected the taking up of office for two years for the bureau of UNEA-6.

Mr Chair,

When we agreed to hold UNEA-5 in two parts, we also agreed that we will constantly treat it as one UNEA-5. We therefore call for understanding in allowing for the current UNEP CPR Bureau to finalise its work in 2022. In this regard, the African Group looks favourably upon option B and the proposal to re-elect/elect the new Bureau under the current regional composition for the period until June 2022, with the same officers as appropriate and available; and with the caveat that the timing of future UNEA may not remain the same to ensure the Bureau of UNEA-6 a full term.

The African Group understands the valid points that have been raised by the WEOG and delegations supporting a similar position in particular as this relates to serving a full term as Chair of the CPR, hence the Group does not support option C as it would entail cutting the term of office of the Bureau short.

In line with our proposal, UNEA can thereafter give guidance to the CPR to hold elections once UNEA-5 has concluded in order to elect new members for the CPR Bureau with WEOG as the chair on the basis of the upcoming regional rotation for the full term of two years. The African Group remains readily available to offer support to Portugal and Finland as the nominees to serve as Chairs of the new Bureau in 2022. The Group further commits

to working closely and diligently with all regional groups, performing its duties as the incoming President for UNEA-6.

Mr Chair,

The African Group wishes to encourage member States to avoid any deadlock in this discussion. Further considerations on the alignment and how to in future avoid any overlap as well as other systemic issues that may arise, can be best addressed under the CPR-based review process. This is to allow for proper interpretation, better understanding of common positions and a level approach to these challenges in the context of the other issues and proposals that have already been put forward in the CPR-based review process.

I thank you!

Agenda item 6: Assessment and lessons learned from the online session of the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly

It is my honour to deliver this intervention on behalf of the African Group.

Chairperson,

At the outset allow me to take this opportunity to express the Group's appreciation to the Chair of the UNEP CPR, Amb Fernando Coimbra of the Federal Republic of Brazil, and your Bureau for the important work conducted in preparation for the first part of UNEA-5. The Group commends your consultative and participatory approach in moving the work of the UNEP forward as the custodian for the environment agenda whose office is situated in the only UN Headquarter in the developing world and in Africa. The Group commends equally the excellent leadership and deft stewardship exhibited by the Norwegian UNEA Presidency and the entire UNEA Bureau both in preparing for and chairing part one of the fifth session of UNEA, and looks forward to the continuation of these efforts for UNEA-5.2.

It certainly was not easy coordinating the work of the CPR under the unprecedented challenges brought about the COVID 19 pandemic, which has led to our interactions being confined to online meetings and our discussions and decisions focused on administrative, budgetary and procedural matters. The African Group commends the entire membership of the CPR for their commitment and understanding in stirring the deliberations on issues of sustainable development through the exchange of information and positions brought by the

online platforms. This was done despite the limitations and technical challenges faced during all our interactions.

Chairperson,

The online session for UNEA 5.1 enabled us to move discussions on administrative, programmatic and procedural matters and has ensured that UNEP is competent to fulfil its mandate without interruption. This has indeed shown us that while we can continue having discussions for purposes of information exchange and understanding each other's positions, the situation is not ideal for the realisation of an inclusive, transparent and effective process with equal participation from all member States. This is also in the spirit of the AMCEN decision of not having virtual negotiations.

As we look ahead to the resumed UNEA-5 and UNEP@50 commemoration in 2022, the African Group would like to re-iterate its readiness and commitment to work with all Member States, Regional Groups, the Bureaux, Executive Director and Secretariat on the preparations for the resumed in-person session in 2022. We look forward to substantive deliberations during the inter-sessional period with the understanding that action can only be taken at the session in 2022.

I thank you!