



**154th meeting
of the Committee of Permanent Representatives of UNEP
20 May 2021**

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

Agenda Item 3: Report by the Executive Director

- Chair, Madam Executive Director, distinguished colleagues; it is my privilege to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. Montenegro and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.
- Let me start by thanking the Executive Director and her team for the very informative Quarterly report, which is highly appreciated.
- The EU and its Member States would like to congratulate UNEP on the successful preparations and conduct of UNEA5.1, along with the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum, the Global Youth Environment Assembly and the Science-Policy-Business Forum. In spite of the limitations of a virtual format, we take good note of the impressive participation of over 1,500 delegates from 153 Member States, including over 60 at ministerial level.
- We highly value the collective effort that resulted in the significant outcomes of the meeting, such as the Medium Term Strategy, the Programme of Work and Budget, relevant decisions and the Political message.

- We look forward to discussing the lessons learnt under relevant agenda item of today's meeting.
- The EU and its Member States would like to further congratulate UNEP on the continuous strengthening of the science-policy interface and the recent significant scientific reports, notably the Making Peace with Nature report, which should significantly contribute to the UNEP@50 and Stockholm+50 preparations.
- We also thank UNEP for its leadership in promoting the Sustainable Consumption and Production agenda and its partnering in the Global Alliance for Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency.
- Last but not least, we would like to praise UNEP for the work on COVID-19 response, particularly with regard to the sound management of plastic and medical waste as well as the Global Recovery Observatory and express concern about the alarmingly low rate of the recovery spending worldwide being environmentally sustainable. We also welcome and support the strengthening of UNEP's engagement on "One Health", including joining the Tripartite with WHO, FAO and OIE.
- To complement the excellent Executive Director's report, I am pleased to share some good news from Europe: On 12 May, the European Commission adopted a **Zero Pollution Action Plan**¹, which responds to the objective of the European Green Deal to achieve a toxic-free environment by 2050. The Action Plan sets out broad 2030 targets covering air, water soil, biodiversity, noise and waste. Its key goals include: protecting soil by reducing nutrient loss and chemical pesticide use by 50%; halving the production of non-

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/pdf/zero-pollution-action-plan/communication_en.pdf

recyclable municipal waste; and cutting plastic litter at sea by 50% and microplastics released into the environment by 30%.

- In the international context, the EU will promote the zero pollution ambition through diplomatic efforts, investments, provision of expertise and financial resources to scale up international partnerships and action in and with third countries. At the multilateral level, the EU will continue supporting international action in line with the SDGs and following up on UNEA resolutions, notably the implementation plan “Towards a pollution-free planet”, working for an ambitious post-2020 international framework for the sound management of chemicals and waste, enhance actions under the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Minamata Conventions, and promote a global agreement on plastics.
- Mr Chair, let me conclude by thanking you and the outgoing CPR Bureau for the hard work and the leadership, particularly during these uneasy times. The EU and its Member States remain committed to the substantive work ahead.
- Finally, allow me to say a warm word of thank to our dear Ambassador of Romania, Ms Julia Pataki, for whom this CPR meeting is the last before her departure from Nairobi. Dear Julia, your exemplary dedication and collaborative spirit you brought with you during your term as a CPR Chair, in years 2015-2017, and as a Vice-Chair during other Bureau cycles, contributed tremendously to what we are used to call “Nairobi spirit”. You have laid foundations for exemplary cooperation within the CPR, between the CPR and UNEA Bureaus, across regional and political groups, and between us as individuals. Be assured that your legacy will remain in Nairobi and will inspire us to overcome sometimes difficult moments and challenging discussions, making the Nairobi spirit thrive.

I thank you.

Agenda Item 4: Cycle of term of office of the CPR Bureau

- The EU and its Member States would like to thank the UNEP Secretariat for the background documentation for this agenda item.
- We would like to refer to our elaborated explanation of position presented in the CPR subcommittee meeting on 6 of May².
- The EU and its Member States express our support to the points made in the WEOG statement and welcome the WEOG candidates for the CPR Chair. Our sincere thanks to Portugal and Finland.
- As regards the proposal to extend the mandate of the current CPR Bureau, the EU and its Member States would like to note that this possibility is neither foreseen nor grounded in the existing rules and regulations. There is also clearly no consensus in this CPR to change them.
- We therefore consider it is only legitimate if we proceed with the elections of the CPR Bureau as foreseen in accordance with relevant UNEA decisions and rules, respectful of regional rotation and balance and consider any possible systemic problems within the scope of the “CPR-based review”.

2

<https://wedocs.unep.org/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/35943/European%20Union%20and%20Member%20States%20comments%20-%20CPR%20Bureau%20cycle.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Agenda Item 6: Assessment and lessons learned from the online UNEA-5 session

Assessment of online session of UNEA-5

- The EU and its Member States thank the Secretariat for the report and presentation and further take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretariat, the Bureaus of UNEA and CPR, and all Member States for the successful organization of the online sessions of the OECPR and UNEA-5, in February 2021.
- The EU its Member States are of the view that the goals set for these online sessions were attained. The OECPR meeting has also demonstrated that virtual negotiations are demanding, but possible. We take note of the assessment that it is possible to negotiate online on certain targeted outcomes, as long as transparency, inclusivity, and equitable participation are ensured.
- The EU its Member States commend the high level of participation across all regional groups, which demonstrates the strong commitment of the international community to the environmental agenda and to UNEP. We would be interesting to hear how the level of participation compares with previous UNEA sessions.
- The EU its Member States take this opportunity to congratulate for the successful organisation of several Member States and stakeholders'-led events, that took place in the weeks ahead of the online session of UNEA-5, and that further contributed to enrich the discussions.
- The EU its Member States also take note that the virtual session of UNEA-5 was conducted fully in accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly.

Lead up to the resume session of UNEA-5, 28 February-2 March 2022

- After more than a year, and as we continue to face restrictions because of the pandemic, the EU and its Member States consider that it is timely to assess and keep different options open regarding the format of future meetings and consultations. This is crucial to ensure the normal continuity of the workflows of the governing bodies of UNEP and for the timely preparation of the resumed session of UNEA-5, in February 2022.
- The EU and its Member States recognise that virtual meetings present some challenges. As shown by the assessment, technical and connectivity problems affected representatives from all parts of the world, caused by various reasons. Technical improvements and training remain important in order to address the digital divide and to ensure equal participation by all, in particular if UNEA-5.2. is held in a hybrid format. It is also important to recognise the challenges posed by different time-zones, as well as the lack of personal interaction. It is no less crucial to ensure and increase the opportunities for participation of stakeholders.
- The EU and its Member States fully agree that online or hybrid meetings can be effective for informal and/or consultative meetings, and, when well prepared in advance, they can also be suitable for negotiations and decision making. In addition, it is important to recognize the added value of these modalities to facilitate a broader participation and engagement, to save costs and to reduce the environmental footprint.
- The EU and its Member States would like to ask the Secretariat about the possible scenarios in what concerns the reopening of the UN compound in Nairobi. This is in order to evaluate the possibility of hybrid or in-person meetings the upcoming months.

- Considering the current uncertainty, the EU and its Member States stress the importance of starting assessing possible alternatives to fully in-person meetings, particularly with regards to the upcoming annual subcommittee meeting in October, the Open-Ended CPR and as well as the resumed session of UNEA-5.
- The motives that prompted the two-steps approach to UNEA-5 are clear. The EU and its Member States recall that this approach was a compromise between those advocating for a full-fledge session in 2021, and others that preferred a full postponement of UNEA-5 to 2022. We have continued to demonstrate flexibility on the understanding that substantive issues will be addressed during the resumed session, whatever its format.
- We should also take into consideration the evaluation findings about the stakeholder participation and the challenges they have highlighted. Therefore, the suggestion by the stakeholder groups to have one dedicated speaking slot each during OECPR and UNEA should be considered when planning the UNEA-5.2.
- The EU and its Member States remain committed to achieving the ambitious expected results for the substantive session of UNEA-5 and are looking forward to the Joint Retreat of the Bureaus of UNEA and the CPR, on the 24th of June, to start paving the way forward for a successful resumed session.

Agenda Item 8: Other matters

- The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Member States who have just presented the very important initiatives to combat marine litter and plastic pollution, which all come timely and aim at common objective that we share.
- We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Chile and Portugal for proposing the Group of Friends, which we will certainly join.
- We also congratulate Germany, Ghana, Ecuador and Vietnam for the first Ministerial Conference on marine plastic litter and plastic pollution, and we look forward to engaging on that initiative.
- Lastly, we thank Peru and Rwanda for a draft resolution to be tabled for UNEA-5.2, which we consider as a good starting point for negotiating a Global Agreement on Plastics. We emphasise and support the ambition stated therein and are pleased to confirm the EU's and its Member States' intention to co-sponsor the resolution and play an active role in the process leading up to discussions at UNEA-5.2.