



INTERVENTIONS BY

H.E. HIGH COMMISSIONER MNINWA MAHLANGU

SOUTH AFRICAN PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UN

ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

AT THE JOINT RETREAT OF THE BUREAUX OF UN ENVIRONMENT

ASSEMBLY AND OF COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT

REPRESENTATIVES

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NAIROBI

Check against delivery

Item 2: Assessment of the online UNEA-5 (UNEA-5.1)

Thank you to the secretariat for providing an assessment of the online UNEA-5 part one.

The African Group wishes to commend the excellent leadership and deft stewardship exhibited by the Norwegian UNEA Presidency. Allow me to take this opportunity to also express the Group's appreciation to the Chair of the UNEP CPR, Amb Fernando Coimbra of the Federal Republic of Brazil, as well as his Bureau for the important work conducted during the CPR and the fifth Open-Ended CPR.

The African Group also 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.

While we were able to move the administrative, budgetary and procedural matters forward, online deliberations have 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 line with the AMCEN decision of last year and the recent views expressed by the AMCEN Bureau when it met last month.

In this regard, this reality should be maintained as we prepare for UNEA-5 part two so as to ensure that the outcomes remain inclusive, participatory and adopted by consensus.

Item 3: Preparations for the resumed meeting of the fifth session of UNEA (UNEA-5.2)

Mr President,

The challenges with online platforms are known to all and have been expressed previously. We are also cognisant of innovative ways that may come and collectively

agreed to as a way to forge ahead with discussions on the issues of the environment.

On the structure and format for UNEA-5 part two in 2022 as presented by the secretariat, the African Group would need time to consider the proposals internally as the Group, and in line with the AMCEN decisions. Furthermore, we look forward to discussing with other regional groups within the CPR in order to again collectively agree on an approach that would lead to a successful UNEA-5 part two.

This is notwithstanding that substantive resolutions, decisions and the Ministerial Declaration will be better negotiated through an in-person meeting in order to allow for common understanding of the debates/discussions as well as outcomes agreed upon by consensus.

Item 4: Outcome of the consultation on General Assembly resolution 73/333

At the outset we wish to thank the co-facilitators of this process for the consultations they have had with regional groups and individual member States in finding a way to move the discussions forward.

While discussions are on-going including through the recent informal workshops, clarity on the Political Declaration is required - on things such as having a collective understanding of who it is for? For What Purpose Now? For What Purpose Going Forward?

Allow me to highlight the pertinent observations that have been made by African member States on this process:

1. The mandate for the UNGA 73/333 process is clear, and must remain within the confines of the substantive recommendations contained in the decision. Re-opening contentious issues which arose during the meetings of the open-ended working group established pursuant to UNGA 72/277 would not be conducive to reaching a consensual outcome.
2. On the basis of the principle of 'no virtual negotiations', the informal workshops being held at this stage must not be seen as a negotiation and any

recommendations arising must also not be seen as substantive inputs to the final output of this process but rather as a chance to exchange ideas and enrich the discussions.

3. Any recommendations pertaining to follow-up mechanisms or compliance frameworks are a non-starter for the Group, as the entire process for UNGA 73/333 was never intended to result in a legally binding instrument or agreement. In this regard, there should be no undue commitments on this process.
4. The Group looks forward to further discussions on the predictable means of implementation during the upcoming informal workshop, and during the upcoming 'formal' meetings, while noting that there must be balance in the final output to reflect the centrality of means of implementation in enhancing environmental law and governance, including finance, technology transfer and capacity building, and while noting that the current building blocks document remains lacking in the means of implementation content. The historical principles, including of common but differentiated responsibilities, should be maintained in this process.
5. There is of course a need to reaffirm the roles of UNEP and UNEA, including the CPR as the intersessional body. Furthermore, implementing paragraph 88 of the "future we want" outcome document in its entirety and in a balanced manner remains imperative.
6. Lastly, there should overall be better understanding by all member States on the modalities and roadmap on this process, particularly as we continue to deliberate on whether this Political Declaration should form part of the outcomes for UNEP@50.

Item 5: Preparations for the commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP@50)

The African Group welcomes the outcome on the hosting of the Special session to commemorate the anniversary of UNEP as outlined in the decision of UNEA-5 part one. We further take note of the updated document by the secretariat on the commemoration of UNEP@50.

The Group has had informal internal discussions on the approach. Our discussions were also focused on how to ensure proper coordination regarding representation in light of the fact that UNEA-6 Bureau can formally be endorsed in 2022. Nonetheless, it is encouraging that the outcomes of the debate on UNEP CPR Bureau have provided a way forward. As may have been noted, Algeria will be coordinating on behalf of the Group.

Mr President,

As we move towards the substantive discussions and sharing of ideas on UNEP@50, the African Group re-affirms its commitment to the commemoration and furthermore calls for a meaningful commemorative event. In this regard, we call for substantive support and collective ownership from all regional groups in order to make this commemoration a success.

We believe that preparations will now begin in earnest and we seek for good outcomes all with the aim of strengthening UNEP as the authority on the issues of the environment. We furthermore, look forward to deliberations on this matter within the CPR.

End!