

United Nations Environment Programme
Committee of Permanent Representatives
155th Meeting – 28 September 2021

Agenda item 6
Preparations for the 8th Annual Subcommittee Meeting

Statement by the Latin American and Caribbean Group

Madam Chair,

Thank you for giving me the floor. It is my honor to deliver this statement of behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group.

As we prepare for the 8th Annual Subcommittee Meeting, GRULAC welcomes the recent information provided by the Director-General of UNON regarding the possibility to resume meetings in the compound as early as 4th October. While GRULAC remains aware of the evolution of the pandemic and is open to consider hybrid formats, we consider this development is encouraging, given the many tasks ahead of this Committee in the lead-up to UNEA-5.2 and to UNEP@50.

The Annual Subcommittee Meeting is an occasion for the membership to perform oversight and review the implementation of UNEP's programme of work across all subprogrammes. So that this exercise can be fruitful, at least two elements are essential. First, the agenda for the meeting needs to be crafted in a way that allows for interactive dialogue between the membership and Secretariat. We are of the opinion that this meeting is not the occasion for long presentations by the Secretariat. So, a second essential element for the success of the meeting is that all information to be examined be made available to the membership well in advance and that the deadline for the Secretariat to submit its progress reports, which is 4th October, be fully met. This is particularly important for smaller delegations, who need more time to process, in conjunction with their capitals, the highly technical information provided.

Madam Chair,

The 8th Annual Subcommittee Meeting will be an important milestone in the preparation of the second segment of the 5th UN Environment Assembly.

GRULAC wishes to convey its appreciation to the Secretariat for the document "possible key areas of importance for consideration at the resumed session of UNEA-5". It provided the membership with important elements to reflect on, as delegations prepare to discuss in the CPR the format of the resumed session of UNEA-5 – and, equally important, of the preparatory process, within the Committee, of the substantive outcomes of the Assembly.

Achieving an understanding on the format of UNEA-5.2 and of the preparatory process within the CPR is indeed important as our delegations form a position on the draft resolutions and decisions to be entertained. And even if we hold and prepare UNEA-5.2 in hybrid format, our expectations on substantive outcomes should take into consideration what a such a format can realistically deliver.

GRULAC wants UNEA-5.2 to be as ambitious as possible. That is to say that our group expects the Assembly to fulfill its role of "leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda", as set forth in Paragraph 88 of the document "The Future we Want". Also, ambition is not solely measured by the quantity of outcomes in a meeting, but also – and more importantly – by their ability to trigger the changes we need and to advance, in a balanced manner, in overcoming the environmental challenges faced worldwide.

At the same time, GRULAC wishes to stress that a hybrid negotiating process is not the same as an in-person negotiating process and that there are still uncertainties regarding the terms of hybridity. From our vantage point, for instance, this very Committee meeting – where only Bureau members and Chairs of Regional Groups have the opportunity to be present in the room – does not qualify as a proper hybrid meeting, but rather as a virtual meeting with in-room presence. The hybridism that could be considered as a basis for the Committee to prepare substantive outcomes of UNEA-5.2 must treat all delegations alike – a fundamental tenet of multilateralism –, without taking away of any delegation the possibility of participating in-person.

Among the lessons learned from UNEA-5.1, is that its success was determined by a consensual expectation regarding outcomes. GRULAC recognizes that a decision to hold and prepare UNEA-5.2 in a hybrid format will require a focused, yet ambitious, set of outcomes. In this context, our group recalls the recommendation that the Vice-Chair representing GRULAC be tasked with the coordination of the negotiating processes of draft decisions and draft resolutions. GRULAC is convinced that, through a transparent and inclusive debate, we will be able to forge the consensual understanding that will pave the way for the success of UNEA-5.2. GRULAC reiterates its consistent call for a wise use of the – already brief – intersessional period until UNEA-5.2 through the preparation, as early as possible, of its outcomes.

Thank you, Madam Chair.
