

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

Agenda item 5
Preparations for UNEP@50

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 on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group. At the outset, allow me to share with the Committee that Barbados has opened a resident diplomatic representation in Nairobi, elevating to 9 the number of GRULAC Embassies in this capital, enhancing the universality of this body, elevating the voice of the Caribbean subregion and further strengthening the only UN headquarters in the Global South.

Madam Chair,

GRULAC takes this opportunity to thank the Executive-Director for the presentation just made, as well as for her initiative to convene meetings with the regional groups on this issue earlier this month. We recall that UNEA Decision 4/2 mandated the Executive-Director to prepare, in consultation with Member States, the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of UNEP.

We also recall that the Committee, in its extraordinary meeting held on 28 June, which elected the current Bureau, recommended that the Vice-Chair representing the African Group be tasked with the facilitation of the preparations of the Special Session of UNEA-6 to be convened to mark this celebration. As recognized by the Executive-Director, this is a Member-State driven process, and some important issues still require guidance from Member States – including on the outcomes of the Special Session. We look forward to understand the expectations of all regional groups and will engage constructively on this matter.

Madam Chair,

As mentioned by the Executive-Director, echoing an understanding that is cross-regional, this event presents itself as an opportunity to “take stock of the past, reflect on the present and envision the future”. GRULAC cannot agree more. As our group reflects on “the UNEP we want” for the next five decades, it seems clear for us that we expect UNEP to have an increased role in assisting Member-States, in particular those in the developing world, in the implementation of their international environmental commitments.

From our vantage point, one of the themes for UNEP@50 could be “Towards the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development”. This would reflect a forward-looking call from our delegations for ambitious action and would be aligned with the Decade of Action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals.

Madam Chair,

As we commemorate the many achievements reached over the past fifty years, it will be important to pay particular attention to the foundational mandates of the Programme, such as the science-policy interface.

GRULAC took note of the proposal to “upgrade” the World Environment Situation Room through the creation of a physical and interactive presence at UNEP in Nairobi. While our group does welcome this initiative, we would have appreciated having received detailed information on its content. From GRULAC’s vantage point, it will be important to enhance the participation of the academia from the Global South in UNEP’s scientific processes.

GRULAC also notes that, over the past years, the activities of the Science Division have been severely underfunded, while other subprogrammes – which do not correspond to a foundational mandate of UNEP – are very well funded. GRULAC therefore welcomes all initiatives aiming at encouraging donors to soften the earmarking of their contributions, allowing UNEP more discretion in directing its resources according to the Programme of Work approved by the Assembly. Our group would like to understand, in this regard, how the proposal to establish the three thematic funds on the planetary crises would address the critical needs of funding the science-policy interface.

GRULAC would also seek clarification on what “reinforcing” the Voluntary Indicative Scale of Contributions would mean, considering that our efforts are underpinned by the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, taking into account national capacities and exploring innovative options for Member States who have not yet contributed according to the voluntary indicative scale of contributions.

The strengthening of UNEP and its headquarters is another issue that emerges as very pertinent in the Special Session. GRULAC considers it important that UNEP@50 serves as a platform for all of us to recommit to Nairobi-based multilateralism, as well as to making the Secretariat more geographically representative, in line with the obligation enshrined in Article 101(3) of the UN Charter.

Thank you, Madam Chair.
