



STATEMENT BY THE

SOUTH AFRICAN PERMANENT MISSION TO

THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP)

AT THE COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES (CPR)

SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING ON SPECIAL SESSION ON THE

COMMEMORATION OF THE CREATION OF UNEP (UNEP@50)

15 OCTOBER 2021

NAIROBI

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Madam Chair,

Thank you for giving me the floor to deliver a statement on the preparations for the special session on the commemoration of the creation of UNEP, also known as UNEP@50 and congratulations to you on chairing this important meeting.

My delegation aligns its intervention with the statement delivered on behalf of the African Group.

At the recent 18th session of AMCEN held in September 2021, the role played by UNEP as the global authority on the environment was appreciated and a call was made for the theme on the commemoration to have a clear focus on implementation and strengthening of the UN headquarter functions in Nairobi. In this regard, my delegation is in support of the theme on the commemoration as initially proposed by GRULAC at the 155th CPR meeting and updated by the African Group through its earlier intervention as “UNEP@50: Towards Implementation of the Environmental Dimension of Sustainable Development for the Future we want”.

We believe that such a theme is in line with my delegation’s vision on the outcome of UNEP@50 in that it will deliberate on the means on implementation, capture the important balance of the three pillars for sustainable development, and inspire best practices on how UNEP can assist member States in implementing their environmental commitments. We also believe that the theme suggested by the African Group links very well with the adopted theme for UNEA-5 and complements the one for Stockholm+50 international meeting. Furthermore, we see that the theme will further stimulate interventions and discussions for the implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document on the “Future we want” as outlined in the secretariat’s note.

Madam chair,

(a) Secretariat note on the preparations for the special session

My delegation thanks the secretariat for the work done in taking the discussion forward as outlined in their note. The updated document can be used as a good basis and we appreciate how it demonstrates the importance of geographical representation and balance in the envisaged engagements and views to be collated throughout the process. My delegation further agrees that stakeholders should be engaged in an adequate manner while preserving the sanctity of the intergovernmental process. While we agree that UNEP@50 should focus on how to further strengthen UNEP’s foundation based on science and governance, we wish to emphasise that strengthening of implementation should also inform

the special session because the socio-economic implications to the depleting state of environment shows us that we need to act with urgency and ambition.

In this regard, we join others in requesting for additional information on the proposed thematic funds and the environmental data centre.

(b) Draft structure for the special session

Now addressing the draft structure for the special session, we wish to propose for one of the high-level Leadership Dialogues to be in the area of implementation, in line with the proposed theme for the Special Session. My delegation is of the view that we cannot look back and forward to the years of UNEP without a just transition and ensuring that no Member State is left behind. Madam chair, in addition to what has been proposed in section D – on strengthening UNEP’s capacity for implementation – as per the secretariat’s note, and of course in agreement with the outlook of the secretariat that the special session will also be informed by the proposed “action plan for the implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development”; we therefore wish to add elements from the draft Action Plan. This work already undertaken by member States is imperative as it is inextricably linked to the strengthening of UNEP as the global authority and thereby contributes towards the strengthening of the UN Headquarter in Nairobi.

Lastly Madam Chair, we have taken note of the communication plan and Side events – and call for the key messages in this regard to be aligned to the suggested theme for UNEP@50. Also, the side events could be used as a way of also sharing outreach activities undertaken at national, regional and global levels in creating awareness for more ambitious future actions for UNEP@50.

(c) Possible political outcome of the special session

Madam chair,

My delegation welcomes the proposed outcome as it relates to the establishment of a global environmental data centre for Nairobi and providing a fresh outlook on the future in the science-policy interface. The African Group has always called for the envisaged outcome of UNEP@50 to cover its interest in the area of strengthening UNEP and the only UN headquarters in the Global South and having Africa’s voice heard in the science-policy-interface by strengthening Africa’s participation in scientific research, including preparation of scientific reports.

In line with this position, my delegation wishes to call for an ambitious, realistic and, most importantly, just outcome that will not only elevate the environmental dimension of sustainable development but also meet our social obligations to our people and enable our economies to move forward on a much higher trajectory. Where we get to as member States also depends on the support we get for our ambitious transition. My delegation wishes to underscore that increased ambition cannot be achieved without the support from developed countries living up to the promises made in the past to provide financial support to developing countries. This is not about charity; however, it is about fairness and mutual benefit hence the need for predictable means of implementation.

With regards to the proposal to consider the outcome of UNGA resolution 73/333 as that of UNEP@50, it may be recalled that the AMCEN, during its recent session took note of this process and called for its outcome to focus on ensuring means of implementation and strengthening of the UNEP and its headquarters in Nairobi, in accordance with paragraph 88 (g) of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The Future We Want".

My delegation is of the view that if a Political Declaration is to be prepared under UNGA 73/333 for consideration as an outcome for UNEP@50, some of the key elements to be taken on board should include, means of implementation and the Rio principles, in particular of Common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), with an aim of strengthening environmental law and the UN HQ in Nairobi. In this regard, my delegation remains committed to finalising this discussion in a consultative, transparent and inclusive manner; while taking note of the draft resolution currently under consideration in New York on the matter.

Finally madam chair, my delegation wishes to get clarification on the consultation process for the Special Session given the theme and the possible ideas for the outcome of the event. We need to be clear as how we will engage going forward, including through some sort of a roadmap outlined. Also, on the matter of the budget, the secretariat had in its initial Strategic Plan on UNEP@50 indicated that additional resources may be required. Kindly provide an update in line with paragraph 8 of the UNEA 4 decision 2.

I thank you!