

USA Interventions

UNEP@50

October 15, 2021

Agenda Item 2 a)

As we have stated before, the United States very much welcomes the UNEP@50 celebration and the opportunity it brings to recognize the organization's many achievements over the last 50 years.

We remain concerned, however, that some of the proposed outcomes for UNEP@50 are too ambitious and not consistent with the commemorative spirit endorsed by Member States.

There are three inter-governmentally-agreed decisions that guide the preparations for UNEP@50. These decisions specifically call for the preparation of a commemoration and to prepare a proposal for a science-policy input, which we support.

Madame Chair, we have taken note that some delegations wish to further define the theme for UNEP@50 and to put the focus on means of implementation and other financial issues.

We also note the Secretariat's proposals regarding fair-share, VISC, and the establishment of new trust funds. However, the United States does not see the need to establish a special theme for UNEP@50. UNEA Decision 5/3 clearly states that the purpose of UNEP@50 is to "commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP." That is its purpose and no further clarification is needed.

The United States also does not support a meeting focused on funding, financing, or means of implementation. If delegations wished to clarify or better define the focus of UNEP@50, the place to do so was UNEA 5.1.

The U.S. delegation and others already made significant compromises regarding UNEP@50 including its two-day duration and status as a Special Session. UNEP's achievements over the last 50 years give us much to celebrate, and there is no need to expand the scope of this event beyond what is already agreed.

Thank you.

Agenda Item 2 b) and c)

Madame Chair thank you for the focused questions which should help Member States provide concise responses and may be a useful time management tool for future meetings. My delegation has noted several long interventions that don't always follow the agenda that was agreed at the start of the meeting.

With that said, please allow me to quickly respond to your questions.

The proposed UNEP@50 meeting structure is suitable for the meeting.

A chair's summary and/or summary of discussions of the plenary discussions and leadership dialogues would make sense. However, given that limited national participation is possible, and perhaps even personal opinions will be expressed, such dialogues should not be considered as the basis for mutually-agreed conclusions.

The United States does not see the need for an additional negotiated political declaration for UNEP@50. As the United States has said in previous meetings, we must be realistic about the quantity of negotiations that can be handled given the limited time and the less than ideal working conditions caused by COVID. To that end, we support the UNGA 73/333 declaration being the substantive outcome for UNEP@50.

Finally Madame Chair, we would like to respond to the comments by several delegations about the right to healthy environment. The United States has consistently said in the Human Rights Council and other fora, that there are no universally-recognized human rights specifically related to the environment, and we do not believe there is a basis in international law to recognize a "right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment." We do not see the recent Human Rights Council decision as altering the content of international law or establishing a precedent in other fora, including UNEA or UNEP@50.

Thank you.