

**8th Annual subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives
(Hybrid, 25-29 October 2021)**

Agenda Item 3: Programme performance review of UNEP's Programme of Work 2020-2021

EU Comments

General Comments:

- The EU and its MS wish to thank the Executive Director and UNEP for the timely submission of the presentation on the updated PPR, following the 2020 PPR report and the progress made to date.
- We welcome the clear structure and focus of the presentations, however, a narrative report documenting in a systematic way the progress on the implementation of the Programme of Work and Budget after 18 months (3/4th) into the biennium would have better informed the discussion of the Annual subcommittee. For future ASC meetings, the EU and its Member States would recommend structuring the PPR discussions around a more detailed narrative report, in particular for the ASC meetings that take place in the 3/4th of the biennium. We would furthermore welcome if more attention could be provided on how the lessons learned can be applied in the future, to address the mismatch between the outputs/outcomes and results in terms of environmental impact.
- The EU and its MS congratulate UNEP for the good results reported and notes with appreciation that most targets have been fully or partially met. Where targets have not been met (it indicates 86% achieved and 14% partially achieved) the EU and its MS would welcome clarifications in order to better understand the main reasons, as well as the key challenges faced by UNEP in the past half year, while fully acknowledging the UN's system-wide response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts.
- For several expected accomplishments the 18-month targets have been exceeded significantly, which may point to the need to adjust to a more ambitious and results-oriented framework, as we have noted in earlier briefings. These targets are often related to objectives and activities that UNEP will also pursue in the future MTS and POW, so the EU and its MS feel that for those areas of work ambition levels could perhaps be adjusted/increased and we welcome the steps taken to work towards a more ambitious, realistic and results-oriented indicator framework for the POW2022-2023.
- In particular, we welcome the presentation provides lessons and identifies steps for the future. The EU and its MS are of the view that this ASC should distill key lessons learned from the PPR, in order to build on the experience and work from the past, looking ahead for the future.
- The EU and its MS congratulate UNEP's COVID-19 response, which included a medical and humanitarian emergency phase, investing to build back better, a transformational change for nature and people and modernizing global environmental governance.
- We welcome that UNEP has taken the UN reform process as an opportunity to strengthen the environmental pillar of sustainable development through strengthening partnership with other UN agencies on the ground. We are aware that this is a continuing process, and we are keen to learn how UNEP's efforts in this regards have led to greater impact on the ground and how this may have been affected by COVID-19.

- We also note with interest UNEP's ambition to contribute to the Country Common Analyses and work with the UN Resident Coordinator and UN Country teams. Therefore, the EU and its MS would appreciate a bit more context from UNEP on their experience, key lessons learned on its strengthened/more explicit role in the Country Common Analysis and UNSDAF so far, and what can be done to further strengthen this, with a view to strengthen the environmental dimension of the development assistance of the UN-system.
- Implementation of the new MTS is starting in a few months. UNEP's 2022-2025 strategy acknowledges that environmental crises have to be addressed if the international community is to succeed in eradicating poverty, protecting people and ensuring sustainable development. The EU and its MS welcomed at the time that the new MTS makes clear reference to socio-economic inequality and inequity and underlined the importance of UNEP's work reflecting this.
- The document refers to a review of how UNEP contributes to poverty eradication through its work. This in-depth review of UNEP's performance in affecting dimensions of poverty concluded that there is a need to better identify linkages with poverty in UNEP project design and implementation and for greater clarity of where poverty fits within the organization's strategic documents. The EU and its MS feel that this review offers valuable lessons to improve UNEP's work, in particular to strengthen its partnerships with other UN organisations. Moreover, we are keen to learn on how UNEP will address the recommendations by the reviewers during implementation of the next programme of work.
- Regarding "**gender integration**", the EU and its MS would like to congratulate UNEP on its efforts to strengthen gender integration. Nevertheless, more concrete examples of gender results under the sub-programmes would be appreciated, and we would encourage to integrate gender sensitive approaches as part of their projects and activities, as well as in internal policies and procedures.

Specific Comments:

- On the subprogramme "**Climate Change**", the EU and its MS recognize the role UNEP could play in assisting MS in addressing the need to bring adaptation projects to the stage where they bring real protection against climate impacts such as droughts, floods and sea-level rise.
- We welcome UNEP's work on climate finance readiness and support for countries to access climate finance. These activities encompass 'catalytic' initiatives and support to strengthen countries' institutional capacities, governance mechanisms, and planning and programming frameworks. Partnerships with other UN organizations (through UN reform) and stakeholders offer great opportunity to raise impact of this work.
- We also welcome further clarification on what are the next steps for UNEP in the next POW, to follow up on the lessons from the current PoW (on the level (lack) of climate ambition and investments to decarbonize our economies, and contribute to addressing the implementation gaps by the relevant stakeholders (government, private sector, civil society).
- On the subprogramme "**Resilience to Disasters and Conflicts**", the EU and its MS want to congratulate the targets achieved. Identifying risks and priorities for recovery with a shared view to reduce disaster and conflict risk would contribute to ensure sustainable use of natural resources.

- We also welcome that the work on the environmental dimension of disasters and conflicts will be mainstreamed under the new MTS/POW. We welcome an overview of the key lessons learned from the internal and external review processes and how these will be addressed in the implementation of the MTS and request the Secretariat to make sure that these lessons and their implications be shared with the relevant divisions that will work on the matter.
- On the subprogramme “**Healthy and Productive Ecosystems**”, the EU and its MS support UNEP’s efforts towards a cross-sector and transboundary collaboration, as well the inclusion of ecosystems in economic decision-making. Moreover, the EU and its MS would commend keeping up with the good work regarding communication, outreach and education for sustainability.
- At the same time, we note the negative trends in biodiversity loss and ecosystems. The EU and its MS would like to ask UNEP for clarification. based on the lessons learned from this PoW, what will be the most important changes UNEP will make in the implementation of the new POW that will help to mainstream ecosystem approaches across sectors.
- We welcome the work of the Poverty Environment Action for the SDGs, which is mentioned here as well as in the section on Environmental Governance. This flagship program of UNEP and UNDP is nearing the end of its first phase, being the successor of the Poverty Environment Initiative. We are keen to hear more about how UNEP will use lessons learned from this program throughout the implementation of the next programme of work and to respond to the critical recommendations of the in-depth review on its contribution to Poverty Eradication.
- On the subprogramme “**Environmental Governance**”, the EU and its MS support UNEP’s view that there is a need to increase implementation in partnership with other key organizations, and in particular in enhancing the use of the instruments, guidelines and data developed by UNEP. Thus, the EU and its MS would like to see a scale up on outreach to member states and other like-minded parties to facilitate increased uptake of UNEP’s tools.
- On the subprogramme “**Chemicals, Waste and Air Quality**”, the EU and its MS congratulate the targets achieved. Nonetheless, the EU and its MS emphasize the science-policy interface’s need for urgent strengthening at the international level and we welcome UNEP’s concrete suggestions on how to take this forward. We highly appreciate UNEP’s work on providing data to monitor our efforts to tackle marine litter and pollution.
- On the subprogramme “**Resource Efficiency**”, the EU and its MS underline the importance of the international resource panel. Additionally, the EU and its MS support further alignment of public and private finance, promoting the UN Reform and impactful partnerships. We welcome further clarifications on how this will be concretely followed up under the new MTS/POW. We further welcome the work on sustainable finance principles with financial institutions. The figure on “Spending with positive green characteristics (mid-2021)” gives a clear idea on the continued need to increase efforts in this regard.
- On the subprogramme “**Environment Under Review**”, the EU and its MS recognize UNEP’s ongoing effort in supporting countries to ensure the environmental dimension of SDGs through UNCT and regional offices, while continuing to work on SDG capacity development on methodologies, monitoring and reporting. We furthermore recognize the impact of UNEP’s SPI function through the publication of relevant (flagship) reports and encourage monitoring of the uptake of those reports.

- Regarding “**Overview Resources & Management**”, the EU and its MS appreciate UNEP’s new structure & coordination, the new income streams, as well as a strengthened communication and outreach. We would welcome a more in-depth briefing to the CPR, in particular on the resource mobilization strategy and the role of the new thematic TF to be established.
- **Closing remarks:**
- The EU and its MS welcome the information provided on this report and would like to underline the opportunity to focus on the lessons learned and continue working together towards a committed and ambitious future.