

United Nations Environment Programme
Committee of Permanent Representatives

8th Annual Subcommittee meeting (25-29 October 2021)

Agenda item 4(a) - Preparations for the resumed session of UNEA-5: Consideration of key areas of importance in accordance with mandates from previous UNEA resolutions.

Australia intervention

- The exceptional circumstances of UNEA-5.2 make it incumbent upon all Member States to ensure that the Assembly has a manageable and streamlined agenda.
- Australia believes that UNEA-5 should be greater than the sum of its parts; our global community should look to the Assembly as having a focussed, coherent set of resolutions that add genuine value to environmental multilateralism and enables UNEA's key role in advancing sustainable development.
- Consequently, UNEA-5.2 should consider key areas of importance for the global environmental agenda in which it can make the most effective contribution.
- The valuable work of the Ad Hoc Open Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter has shown that the current patchwork of instruments and initiatives is insufficient to stem the flow of plastics into the marine environment.
- It is clear that no single country or region can solve this problem alone. That is why Australia has joined others in calling for a new global agreement on marine litter and plastic pollution.
- We believe that as a matter of priority, the next session of the Assembly should establish an international negotiating committee to develop a new global agreement on marine litter and plastic pollution.
 - The new agreement should be based on circular economy principles and be consistent with the waste management hierarchy.
 - It should also complement and coordinate closely with existing instruments and initiatives, and draw on the expertise and lessons learned nationally, regionally and internationally.
- While a partial return to in-person meetings this month has certainly been a welcome development, there remain logistical challenges that the CPR must address to ensure that preparations for UNEA-5.2 are undertaken in an inclusive and time-effective manner.
 - Since the beginning of the pandemic and our consequent move to virtual meetings, there have been ongoing challenges in having experts from capitals in our geographical region contribute to discussions in real-time.
- For the remainder of the intersessional period, Australia would welcome approaches to preparations for the Assembly, including on draft resolutions, that allow Member States to make full use of written procedures. Where appropriate, we call on delegations to take logistical considerations, including time zones, into account particularly when seeking input on a regional basis.

- Finally, we appreciate the unprecedented nature of these logistical challenges, and the need to ensure that any decisions prioritise the health and safety of participants. However, we urge the Secretariat to consider the impact that physical distancing measures may have on the ability of delegations to cover the breadth of negotiations at the Assembly and preceding Open-Ended CPR meeting.
- To ensure that delegations can make appropriate preparations leading into February, we would welcome a clear a set of timeframes with regards to the decisions that will be made on health and safety arrangements at the Assembly.