

Draft African Group's Statement at the 8th Annual Subcommittee of the UNEP CPR 25/10/2021

**Madam Chair,
Excellencies,
Madam Executive Director,
Dear colleagues,**

At the outset, the African Group wishes to thank you, Madam Chair, the Bureau of the CPR and to the Secretariats of UNEP and UNON, and of course our host country Kenya, for paving the way for this meeting to be held in a hybrid format. It is indeed a welcome development, and an encouraging step towards normality in multilateral diplomacy here in Nairobi.

As the African Ministers of Environment reaffirmed during the latest session of AMCEN, online negotiations dealing with substantive matters present a challenge to the African region due to the serious problems of the digital divide, time zone differences and other issues related to virtual engagements which have resulted in member states not being able to consult and fully participate in an equitable manner. Whilst cognizant of these serious challenges, African Ministers of the Environment also recognized that in order to ensure the continuity of our work, we should also consider a hybrid approach combining in-person and online participation, but do so with a clear and minimum criteria, aimed at ensuring inclusive, transparent, equal, full and meaningful participation for all, all while we strive to resume fully in-person engagements as soon as it is safe and possible to do so.

In this vein, the African Group requests the UNEP Secretariat to provide - as soon as is practicable - clarity on the expected modalities of participation at the resumed session of UNEA 5 in February 2022 and UNEP@50 Special Session, bearing in mind the need for inclusivity and a 'level playing field' for all delegations and the importance of engaging in-person for negotiations dealing with substantive matters.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

As far as the Programme Performance Review is concerned, the African Group takes note with appreciation of the progress achieved by UNEP's subprogrammes from January 2020 to June 2021, and looks forward to the detailed reports to be presented during this Annual Subcommittee. The Group also wishes to take this opportunity to call for further efforts by UNEP to provide support to African countries - upon request - towards implementation of their environmental commitments, policies and priorities.

In addition, the Group reiterates its call for more equitable geographical distribution in both at the Headquarters and regional offices of UNEP - and in particular for senior level positions - in-line with UNEA decision 5/2 which stated "that further action should be undertaken by UNEP in its recruitment strategy with due regard to the principle of equitable geographical distribution".

Madam Chair,

The African Group wishes to express its appreciation to the President of UNEA for circulating a **"zero draft" of the ministerial declaration**. The Group looks forward to further engaging on this draft declaration in an inclusive and participatory manner and for the final outcome to balance between the concerns and priorities of all Member States. This call is made with a request for a clear roadmap on the process about how this substantive document will be negotiated leading to its adoption in UNEA-5.2.

In this regard, The Group underscores the need for this declaration to highlight the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on developing countries' efforts to achieve sustainable development and eradicate poverty, as well as impeding their efforts to tackle the various environmental challenges. In light of this, and in the context of a starkly uneven global recovery, more emphasis will be needed on the aspect of support to developing countries, and of not backtracking on existing commitments - including on means of implementation - as we address the various environmental challenges in a manner which takes into account the different national

realities, capacities and levels of development and the cardinal principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities”.

Moreover, the Group stresses the importance of **only using terms which have been intergovernmentally agreed** in the Ministerial Declaration and avoid terms which do not, as of yet, have agreed definitions. **Madam Chair,**

The African Group wishes to reiterate its intention to table **three draft resolutions at the resumed session of UNEA 5, namely on “green recovery”, “circular economy”, and “biodiversity and health”**. The Group is pleased to announce that it is currently in the process of preparing the draft concept notes and draft resolutions, and meanwhile wishes to highlight the following preliminary points pertaining to each of them, without prejudice to what will be shared at a later stage.

1. **On the “green recovery”**, the African Group recognizes the importance of appreciating the progress made by member States in their efforts to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and encourage them to prioritize the institution of green and sustainable recovery measures that can deliver mutual benefits and co-benefits for social, economic, and environmental resilience whilst developing enabling policies, investments and reforms that can contribute to socio-economic recovery through green approaches, financing, innovations, technologies and cooperative arrangements, among others to promote awareness, capacity-building and cooperation.
2. **On the “circular economy”**, the Group highlights the importance of ensuring that the concept of the circular economy includes a comprehensive approach to address pollution and waste based on the full life cycle of materials from design and production to waste prevention and management, while ensuring coherence and coordination with activities undertaken by existing regional and international instruments and giving due consideration to the centrality of means of implementation - including finance, technology transfer and capacity building. Moreover, member states should be encouraged to integrate the circular economy into national and regional development plans, supporting

access to affordable green financing and sustainable markets, with a particular focus on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

3. On “**biodiversity and health**”, the African Group recognizes - in this era of COVID-19 - the need to raise greater international awareness on the linkages between biodiversity loss and the increase in zoonotic diseases, and the risks posed to human, animal and environmental health, recognizing the need to carry out a global assessment of these linkages between biodiversity and health drawing on the relevant evidence and best available science-based knowledge.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The African Group also wishes to take this opportunity to support the **draft resolution presented by Rwanda and Peru on marine litter and plastic pollution** and welcome efforts to establish an intergovernmental negotiating committee at UNEA 5 to prepare and negotiate a global agreement to combat marine litter and plastic pollution. Furthermore, the Group calls for this agreement to take a comprehensive approach to address the full lifecycle of plastics, from production and design to waste prevention and management, while ensuring coherence and coordination of activities undertaken by existing regional and international instruments, and create a supporting structure for implementation in developing countries, as well as taking into account the gap between developing and developed countries in terms of scientific knowledge, capacity, technological advances, technical and financial support in the fight against marine waste and plastic pollution.

As far as the **CPR-based review** is concerned, the Group wishes to express its appreciation to the two co-facilitators for their guidance and direction in the discussions throughout this process and is encouraged by how far this process has gone and all the valuable work that has been generated and is convinced that its finalization is closely within reach. In this regard, the Group reiterates its previous calls for moving forward on the basis of consensus and echoes its position that there is no clear evidence that the proposal to change or rename some of the meeting

would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the UN Environment Assembly and its subsidiary bodies

In addition, it is of the Group's view that we should not simply dismiss the issue of "overlap" between the two bureaus as a non-issue and should instead have an opportunity to discuss this matter on the basis of the relevant UNEA 5 decision and by taking into account the lessons learned from the current set-up of the CPR bureau vis-a-vis the "division of labor" - which has thus far proven a success - and possible ways to incorporate this experience as a potential way to address overlaps in the future as and when they arise.

Excellencies,

The African Group takes note of the **various initiatives by member states to table draft resolutions**, and recognizes the need to ensure a manageable, minimalistic and streamlined workload for UNEA 5.2, without detracting from the rules of procedure and the sovereign right of all member states to table draft resolutions. The African Group also wishes to emphasize the importance of ensuring inclusivity, fairness and balance in the outcomes of UNEA 5.2 by giving due consideration to initiatives from all regional groups and member states.

In addition, the Group also wishes to reiterate its call for Africa to **serve its full and effective term of the presidency of the sixth session** of the UN Environmental Assembly, as called for during the latest AMCEN meeting.

Madam Chair,

On UNEP@50, as outlined on previous occasions, the Group considers the commemoration of UNEP @50 an opportunity to take stock of the past, reflect on the present and envision for the future. In this regard and in line with the AMCEN decision on having a theme for this commemorative event, the African Group once again calls on adopting the theme of "UNEP@50: Towards Implementation of the Environmental Dimension of Sustainable Development for the Future we want" - as proposed by

GRULAC and built upon by the African Group. In addition, the African Group would like to stress its willingness to engage on the possible outcome of UNEP@50 on the understanding that a clear roadmap regarding this process is agreed within the CPR and that the process is member-states owned and driven.

Furthermore the outcome of this commemorative event must be strong, focused, impactful, forward-looking and inclusive and emphasise on the strengthening of headquarter functions in Nairobi, means of implementation and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. As such, the Group is of the view that a “chair’s summary” for the commemoration would not be sufficient. In addition, the African Group also wishes to further explore the idea of the Secretariat undertaking a gap analysis with regards to the means of implementation of environmental instruments, as previously proposed.

Finally, Madam Chair,

On the **Stockholm+50 commemoration**, the Group seeks clarity on the roadmap and process moving forward to prepare the CPR’s inputs to the Stockholm+50 event in a manner which is inclusive, participatory and transparent, all whilst also being member-states driven.

I thank you.