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**United Nations Environment
Assembly of the United Nations
Environment Programme**

**Committee of Permanent Representatives to the
United Nations Environment Programme
157th meeting**
Nairobi, 1 February 2022

**Draft minutes of the 156th meeting of the Committee of
Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment
Programme, held on 30 November 2021**

Agenda item 1

Opening of the meeting

1. The meeting, which was held in a hybrid format, both online and with a limited number of representatives attending in person, was opened at 10.20 a.m.¹ on Tuesday, 30 November 2021, by Ms. Luísa Fragoso, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.
2. The meeting was attended by 88 participants representing 87 members and 1 observer mission.
3. The Chair welcomed the following new members to the Committee: Ms. Tatiana Gomes Bustamante and Ms. Lucianara Andrade Fonseca (Brazil); Mr. Zhou Pingjian (China); Mr. Juan Manuel Rodriguez Vazquez (Cuba); Ms. Henriette Geiger (European Union); Ms. Salma Qadoori Jabir (Iraq); Mr. Firas Khouri (Jordan); Ms. Jane Chigiyal and Mr. Jeem S. Lippwe (Federated States of Micronesia); Mr. Dragos-Viorel-Radu Tigau (Romania); Ms. Isatu Aminata Bundu (Sierra Leone); and Ms. Charlotte Marie Matusova (Slovakia).
4. She then bade farewell to the following departing members: Mr. Martin Gomez Bustillo (Argentina); Mr. Gustavo Baptista Barbosa (Brazil); Mr. Wu Peng (China); Mr. Ernesto Gómez Díaz (Cuba); Mr. Sarmad Ibrahim Al-Mashhadani (Iraq); and Mr. Ricardo Salas Castillo (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela).

Agenda item 2

Adoption of the agenda

5. The agenda was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda and the annotated provisional agenda (UNEP/CPR/156/1 and UNEP/CPR/156/1/Add.1).

¹ All time references are to East Africa time (UTC + 3).

Agenda item 3

Adoption of the draft minutes of the 155th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

6. The Committee adopted the minutes of its 155th meeting, held online on 28 September 2021, on the basis of the draft minutes of the meeting (UNEP/CPR/156/2).

Agenda item 4

Chair's summary of the eighth annual subcommittee meeting

7. The Committee took note of the Chair's summary of the eighth annual subcommittee meeting (UNEP/ASC.8/6).

Agenda item 5

Report of the Executive Director

8. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to the report entitled "Quarterly report to the 156th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives: July–September 2021," noting that it provided an update on significant developments during the third quarter of 2021 of relevance to UNEP.

9. In her oral report, the Executive Director of UNEP, Ms. Inger Andersen, said that the current meeting was being held just two weeks after the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the focus of which had been the urgent need to take science-based action on climate change. Member States had agreed on a global stocktaking exercise and on common time frames for reporting, an issue that had presented difficulties since the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015. Funding for adaptation had been doubled, and, for the first time, the use of coal had been explicitly mentioned in the Glasgow Climate Pact. The Paris Agreement rule book had been finalized, in particular as it pertained to article 6 on carbon markets. Progress had been made on methane reductions, supported by data from the UNEP publication *Global Methane Assessment: Benefits and Costs of Mitigating Methane Emissions*, and on deforestation, zero-emission vehicles, green shipping and other matters of relevance to tackling the climate crisis.

10. Nevertheless, the parties had failed to address the transition by economies away from growth that was dependent on fossil fuels; the vast gap in climate financing; and the lack of meaningful action on climate-related loss and damage. It had also been clear in Glasgow that people were impatient, angry and aware of the inequities of the climate crisis. Still, the Glasgow Climate Pact enabled humanity to keep striving to maintain planetary warming below the threshold of 1.5°C.

11. Climate science was better understood than ever before and it was widely recognized that it must guide policy. The gap reports produced by UNEP, including the *Emissions Gap Report 2021: the Heat Is On* and the *Adaptation Gap Report 2021: the Gathering Storm*, had been downloaded hundreds of thousands of times by conference attendees and people following the meeting around the world, and had delivered scientific data and analysis that had been widely cited during the meeting. However, updated nationally determined contributions and the mitigation pledges made prior to the meeting would shave a mere 7.5 per cent off global emissions by 2030, paling in comparison with the 55 per cent reduction required to limit temperature rise to 1.5°C. In reality, humanity was continuing to rush towards global warming of 2.2°C–2.7°C by the end of the century. Greater effort was required on adaptation, not only to support the most vulnerable communities and countries, but also for wealthy nations, which would increasingly find themselves in the eye of the gathering storm.

12. It was time to shift into emergency gear for people and the planet. In 2022, important multilateral environmental meetings would be held, including the resumed fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme, to be held in Nairobi in February 2022; "UNEP@50", the special session of the Environment Assembly that would be held on 3 and 4 March 2022 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of UNEP; and the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, "Stockholm+50: a healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity", to be held on 2 and 3 June 2022 in Stockholm. Those events offered an opportunity to reflect on 50 years of environmental cooperation, but also to consider ways of fostering greater dynamism and reinvigorating multilateralism to help overcome the obstacles to addressing the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and proliferating pollution and waste.

13. The outcome of the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly would be a political declaration that committed Member States to the emergency action required to address the three crises. She stressed the importance of ensuring that the limited number of resolutions likely to be adopted during the resumed session be strategic, impactful and scalable. To that end, she urged representatives to read the technical notes provided by the secretariat on the draft resolutions being presented for consideration and possible adoption by the Environment Assembly at its resumed fifth session.

14. Turning to plastic pollution, action on that issue would be a highlight of the upcoming fifth session. The growing momentum for meaningful action in that regard was encouraging. Action should be ambitious in view of the urgency of the problem. The immediate implementation of measures to address the daily impacts of plastic pollution on human and ecosystem health and on future generations was critical. A potential legally binding global instrument on plastic pollution should rely on a circular, life-cycle approach to addressing the problem, and she called on Member States to approve the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee and contribute the resources required to enable it to begin work without delay.

15. With regard to UNEP@50, the Second Committee of the General Assembly had adopted a resolution designating that event as the appropriate United Nations high-level meeting for the adoption of the political declaration mandated by General Assembly resolution 73/333 of 30 August 2019 (A/76/533/Add.7, para. 4). It was to be hoped that the political declaration would contribute to strengthening UNEP and its contribution to the environmental dimension of the sustainable development agenda in the years and decades to come. UNEP@50 could enhance the capacity of UNEP to catalyse environmental action, including by supporting the digital transformation essential to enabling Member States to gain access to the accurate, timely, high-quality data required to strengthen the science-policy interface.

16. Stockholm+50 would tap into the legacy of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972 and would provide an opportunity to harness and anchor emerging opportunities for a better future, forge a new social contract for nature and expand stakeholder engagement for a healthy planet. Indeed, UNEP@50 and Stockholm+50 were two sides of the same coin, the first focused on strengthening the science-policy interface and the second on reinvigorating multilateralism as a key tool to ensure a healthy planet and healthy people in a post-COVID-19 world.

17. Turning to the medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025 and the programme of work for the biennium 2022–2023, she said that UNEP looked forward to working with Member States on achieving a pollution-free planet with a stabilized climate and a thriving natural world, something that must be done together or not at all. A stable, well-funded UNEP was central to achieving the vision of the medium-term strategy. In that regard, she extended her deep appreciation to the 69 Member States that had contributed to the Environment Fund in 2021. Those contributions were not, however, enough. Although Environment Fund income had increased between 2017 and 2020, earmarked funds had increased at an even faster rate. Earmarking funding hampered the ability of UNEP to operate with flexibility and efficiency and to focus on outcomes rather than just results at the project level. She urged countries to support the growth of core funding and to increase flexibility in earmarked funding.

18. The medium-term strategy had been validated by the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN), which had examined ways in which UNEP could address the constraints to delivering on its normative and operational mandates. UNEP had embraced all the recommendations of the MOPAN assessment and would address its findings through the medium-term strategy and enhance efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the systems used to deliver results.

19. After months of reflection and internal consultations, those systems were being standardized with a view to ensuring a more coherent delivery of the UNEP project portfolio, under a clear accountability framework and within the broader United Nations system-wide reform. Several steps had been taken in that regard, including the introduction of quarterly business reviews that would hold directors accountable for reporting and for knowledge-sharing on project delivery, finances, human resources and auditing. The MOPAN assessment had also correctly highlighted funding challenges. UNEP intended to establish three thematic trust funds, on climate action, biodiversity action and chemicals and pollution action, aimed at pooling together funding from different donors for maximum impact on activities to address the triple planetary crisis.

20. She expressed her confidence that countries, businesses and people around the world were strengthening action on those crises, spurred by a growing awareness of the state of the planet and of the dangers of human exposure to environmental hazards. Prompt action, a burden to be shouldered together, was a matter of intergenerational justice and solidarity, which compelled UNEP to act for all.

21. In the ensuing discussion, many representatives thanked the Executive Director and the secretariat for the comprehensive quarterly report. A number of representatives expressed appreciation for the new medium-term strategy, and one representative expressed satisfaction with the positive assessment by MOPAN of the overall strategic direction of UNEP, which showed that UNEP was well prepared to deliver on its mandate. In that regard, he said that he would welcome an update on how the shortcomings noted in the MOPAN assessment related to project management, results-based budgeting and the role of evaluations would be further addressed in the programme of work for the biennium 2022–2023. One representative congratulated the Executive Director on her report and suggested that the work of civil society organizations should be better integrated into the work of UNEP and be mentioned in future reports.

22. Several representatives hailed the publication of the “gap reports” by UNEP and their important role in both supporting the drafting of science-based policy and feeding the international discussion on climate change. One representative noted that, while the *Emissions Gap Report 2021* had shown an improvement in emissions reductions, that improvement was the result of COVID-19-related lockdowns. Member States should not rely on the pandemic to reduce emissions, but instead should deliberate on the policies and actions to be taken.

23. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, thanked the Executive Director for the comprehensive coverage in the report of recent high-level meetings, including the meetings of the General Assembly, the 2021 annual meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the United Nations Food Systems Summit. At the summit, countries had agreed on five action areas to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including boosting nature-based solutions. Her delegation had been encouraged by the success of the high-level dialogue on energy held in New York on the margins of the seventy-sixth General Assembly, which had delivered significant outcomes on clean energy. The events highlighted in the report raised the profile of the environment on political agendas and the Committee should make the best of that to prepare for a substantive Environment Assembly that delivered on its priorities.

24. One representative welcomed the insightful comments of the Executive Director on the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly and the celebration of UNEP@50, which would inform the Committee in its discussions on those events, and another said that the fourth session of the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia-Pacific had been an opportunity for discussions in that region on the outcomes of the Environment Assembly session and the special session for UNEP@50. One representative said that his country looked forward to an ambitious resumed fifth session and to the celebration of 50 years of global environmental governance by UNEP. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that UNEP must be at the centre of the celebrations of its fiftieth anniversary, which should set it on the path for the next 50 years of unquestioned global environmental leadership. A substantive and engaging programme and an ambitious outcome to the meeting were essential to attract high-level participation to the event. The European Union would provide \$500,000 to support the participation of developing countries in the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly and in the celebrations of UNEP@50.

25. With regard to the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly, a number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed their support for the clustering or merging of draft resolutions, which would be important for the efficient conduct of the meeting of the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives to be held prior to the resumed fifth session. One representative stressed the importance of finding practical solutions to negotiating draft resolutions and ensuring the inclusivity of the second part of the fifth session, whose outcomes should include the adoption of an ambitious ministerial declaration and the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee to draft a new global agreement on plastic pollution. His country had paid its voluntary contribution to the Environment Fund according to the “fair share” principle, and, urging other countries to do the same, he said that they had found it to be a very cost-effective and valuable investment. A number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, underscored the importance of strengthening the environmental dimension of the One Health approach.

26. The representative of Norway, thanking members for their support, noted that the Norwegian Minister of Climate and the Environment, Mr. Espen Barth Eide, had been elected President of the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly.

27. One representative, thanking the Executive Director for the update on the contribution of UNEP to the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, said that his country had pledged to double climate financing and triple adaptation financing; work with business, industry and civil society towards a successful

transition to a renewable and sustainable future; and globalize its pension fund, the world's largest sovereign wealth fund and a leader in climate risk management. At the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties, the World Meteorological Organization, the United Nations Development Programme and UNEP had announced the creation of a systematic observation finance facility, whose purpose would be to improve weather forecasts in order to strengthen resilient development, in particular for least developed countries. In that regard, his country had announced the provision of financial support to the Facility, and he requested a briefing on any related work done by UNEP in the context of the nascent United Nations sustainable development framework. His delegation looked forward to learning how the United Nations system in Kenya would support the pledge made in Glasgow by Kenya on climate adaptation, clean cooking and renewable energy. He hailed the important work being done to strengthen the environmental dimension of the One Health approach and noted the establishment of the working group on marine litter and microplastics of Latin America and the Caribbean, requesting updates on the progress of both those initiatives, including on the collaboration between UNEP and the members of the Tripartite Plus Alliance, namely the World Health Organization, the World Organization for Animal Health and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). His country had paid its fair share to UNEP, and he expressed his delegation's appreciation to Member States that had also made their contributions.

28. A number of representatives, while acknowledging the gains made in UNEP staffing with respect to gender parity, requested continued attention to the matter of lack of balance in geographical representation. One representative said that it was clear that UNEP had taken on board the challenge of finding that balance. Encouraging continued effort, he welcomed the regular updates on outreach activities and the ways in which Member States could assist in that regard.

29. One representative said that the outcome of the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change had been encouraging, in particular the finalization of the Paris Agreement work programme and the increased momentum on more ambitious mitigation measures in line with keeping alive the target of remaining within 1.5°C of global warming. However, it was clear that much work remained to be done in the lead-up to the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties, which would be held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. Several representatives said that while ambition was important, many multilateral environmental instruments were not being implemented. Prompt action was more urgent than ever. One representative expressed satisfaction with the raising of the profile of the climate and biodiversity crises and said that it was time to bring the same level of attention to the pollution crisis.

30. Another representative said that, while meeting in a hybrid format was not ideal for all countries, his delegation would do its best to participate in order to maintain the momentum on environmental work. He thanked the countries that had worked diligently on research and on the management of the COVID-19 pandemic and the omicron variant. Underscoring the importance of science-based responses to the pandemic, he noted that some countries had failed to implement such responses. He encouraged Member States to work together on pandemic management, stressing that if any person or country was not safe from COVID-19, no one was safe.

31. One representative expressed his appreciation for the mention in the report of the World Circular Economy Forum 2021 and for the involvement of UNEP in the event. Held online in September, it had seen the participation of a broad range of stakeholders who had gathered to underscore the need to accelerate the transition to a circular economy. He suggested a correction to the report to state that the event had drawn nearly 9,000 attendees rather than "over 8,000". Another representative said that sustainable consumption and production patterns should be mainstreamed to seize the opportunities presented by the circular economy. His Government aimed to have an economy based on the principles of circularity by 2025.

32. One representative requested that an additional event be added to the quarterly report, namely the fourth session of the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia-Pacific, held in the Republic of Korea in September 2021. Another representative said that it was important to focus on the potential of the green economy to help countries build back better in the post-COVID-19 era; to tackle the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution; and to improve the welfare of all. Yet another representative encouraged the mainstreaming of gender and poverty reduction into the programming of UNEP.

33. One representative, stressing how much he valued the work of UNEP, expressed his appreciation to UNEP both for its participation in the global congress on sustainable development held in Moscow in September and for organizing a seminar for Russian geographers on scaling up environmental protection in Central Asia. He queried the use of the terms "environmental justice", "environmental rights", and "fair share" in UNEP reports, which, he said, lacked internationally

agreed definitions. He suggested that, given the lack of resources for the implementation of the main programme of work of UNEP, Member States should have an opportunity to discuss whether the relevant resources were actually available before reports were drafted. He also questioned UNEP involvement in resolving, preventing or settling conflicts and said that some documentation provided to Member States showed that UNEP paid attention to security and the environment in a political and military sense.

34. Responding to the comments, the Executive Director thanked representatives for their feedback on the International Day of Clean Air for blue skies, the World Circular Economy Forum 2021, and building back better through the green economy. Regarding the funding for the *Emissions Gap Report 2021*, it had been funded by Finland, Germany and Sweden, and the Nordic Council. Regarding the involvement of UNEP in conflict identification, prevention and resolution, she confirmed that doing so lay outside the mandate of UNEP. What lay within its mandate was to support the United Nations entities charged with those matters, through the provision of environmental expertise, science, analysis and assessment, which enabled them to fulfil their mandates, including in Somalia and the Sahel. With regard to the lack of funding for the work falling under the main mandate of UNEP, she urged countries to refrain from providing earmarked funding and, instead, to provide non-earmarked funding, which gave UNEP the flexibility and capacity to direct its work towards the priorities of the programme of work approved by Member States. Regarding the Systematic Observation Finance Facility, she said that there were extensive areas that lacked proper weather reporting, in particular in the Pacific region, and enhanced weather observation and predictability would enable countries to better plan for and manage the sequelae of climate change. Turning to the Tripartite Plus Alliance, she thanked Member States that had contributed to it and said that UNEP was engaged in discussions with its three members. FAO was exploring the possibility of having UNEP join the initiative, with a view to adding the dimension of environmental health to those of human and livestock health and converting the alliance to a quadripartite one. With regard to the results of the MOPAN assessment, results-based budgeting and enhanced project implementation were very much a focus of the new medium-term strategy. Regarding the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNEP would do its utmost to support Egypt and all related work. With regard to gender and geographical balance in staffing, she thanked representatives for their comments and support as UNEP worked to correct the skewed balance that had prevailed until recently. Although recruitments came one at a time, UNEP was determined to find the very best people irrespective of gender and from all Member States for a true reflection of universal participation in UNEP. Regarding science and the inequities of the COVID-19 pandemic, although those inequities were a fact, the science-policy work of UNEP was inclusive, and UNEP strove to make science available to all. Finally, she acknowledged the call for the meaningful involvement of civil society organizations in the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly.

Agenda item 6

Preparations for the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly, including stocktaking on the consultations for draft resolutions

35. Introducing the item, the Chair said that meetings, briefings and site visits had been conducted on the matter of COVID-19 safety during the upcoming resumed fifth session of the Assembly and the UNEP@50 celebrations, including with the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, members of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, representatives of the President of the Environment Assembly and representatives of the Government of Kenya. In that context, health and safety measures would remain in place and all due concern would be given to safety and security during in-person events.

36. The Executive Director said that UNEP operated within the prevailing guidelines of the host country and that a note with current guidance was being drafted and would be disseminated after its review by the Chair of the Committee and the President of the Environment Assembly. The membership of the Assembly was universal, and all were welcome, subject to possible restrictions on delegation size in response to local conditions and the corresponding Government measures taken. It was to be hoped that, with the restrictions in place mandating that all in-person participants be double vaccinated, masked and physically distanced, representatives of all Member States and a selection of stakeholders would be able to attend in person. Any accredited delegate or delegation could choose to participate online; the hybrid format would allow for larger delegations. She noted that the United Nations Office at Nairobi would continue to adhere to the guidelines of the Government of Kenya, including possible changes thereto.

37. In the ensuing discussion, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, reiterated his group's commitment to a successful and ambitious resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly, while he and another representative both highlighted the importance of maintaining an inclusive and transparent resumed fifth session. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed support for workload streamlining through the merging of similar resolutions and for presenting draft texts with ample time for their consideration. One representative said that the proper preparation of draft resolutions to deal with controversial sections ahead of time would ease the work of facilitators and prevent the undesirable situation of the consideration of a draft resolution having to be abandoned, as had occurred during the fourth session of the Environment Assembly. Two representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that efforts should be made to avoid scheduling parallel negotiating meetings, or at least to limit them to two at any one time, and that information on the structuring of groups should be sent out as early as possible. The representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries recommended the prompt nomination of co-facilitators for negotiating groups and a focus on adequate preparation for the hybrid negotiating process. Sufficient funds should be made available to finance the participation of representatives from developing countries. In that regard, one representative, noting that universal participation was crucial, said that his country was making a financial contribution for that purpose.
38. Two representatives, both speaking on behalf of groups of countries, said that they looked forward to the important work of finalizing the consultations on the draft plan of action for the implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), "The future we want".
39. A number of representatives expressed their support for the draft resolution on an international, legally binding instrument on plastic pollution submitted by Peru and Rwanda. One representative advised against merging the resolution with a draft working paper that had not been shared with all Member States and would still require revision. One representative of civil society, speaking on behalf of 600 civil society organizations, called for a legally binding global instrument on plastic pollution that covered the entire life cycle of plastics, including extraction of feedstocks, production, transport, use, disposal and remediation. The negotiation process should be predicated on a just and robust system for stakeholder participation and the agreement should ensure meaningful implementation at all levels under a human rights-based approach. He invited the Committee to a presentation on the call for action during the week of 13 December.
40. One representative said that his country was the co-sponsor of a draft resolution on the establishment of a science-policy panel for chemicals, waste and pollution. He invited representatives to participate in a series of webinars to gain a solid understanding of the topic before negotiations began.
41. The representative of Kenya thanked the diplomatic corps for attending the briefings organized by her Government and said that her country was eager to support the success of the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly and the celebrations of UNEP@50. She called for voluntary contributions for the events, also requesting that the secretariat review the proposed budget to ensure that it was on par with the vision of the universal, in-person events.
42. Responding to the comments, the Executive Director said that, during the annual subcommittee meeting, a note on the budget for the two events had been shared, revealing that the total budget was \$4 million, broken down into \$3 million for the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly and \$1 million for UNEP@50. A funding shortfall remained of \$2.2 million. She expressed deep appreciation to Finland, France, Germany, Hungary and Switzerland, and the European Union, for the significant pledges they had since made, which had narrowed the gap to \$1.1 million. She called for generous contributions to meet the priority need of sponsoring representatives from least developed countries and small island developing States according to the usual procedure, with sponsorship for the head of delegation plus one more representative. In-kind donations would also be welcome, including of rapid lateral flow COVID-19 tests to assist event participants to self-report in order to gain daily access to events, or of a very large tent.
43. A representative of the secretariat said that a budget note would be shared in short order, with details on how funding gaps had been filled and what gaps remained. Information would be provided on the health protection expenses that were already included in the budget and those that were not.
44. The Deputy Executive Director said that in-kind contributions were particularly welcome in the light of lengthy procurement processes.

45. The Chair said that a meaningful and successful resumed fifth session was achievable, although the Committee should remain mindful that flexibility could be required with regard to in-person participation, depending on the evolution of the pandemic. A note on formats and modalities for the session would be circulated as soon as possible.

46. Mr. Erasmo Martínez, Vice-Chair of the Bureau of the Committee and coordinator of the working group on draft resolutions and decisions to be considered by the Environment Assembly at its resumed fifth session, said that, during group meetings, 17 proposals had been made for draft resolutions and a number of related presentations had been delivered. Several drafts had been created of the proposal to cluster resolutions, a living document that was continuously being improved to better organize the work. With the addition of draft resolutions to follow up on decisions and resolutions adopted by the Environment Assembly at previous sessions, the total number of draft resolutions to be presented at the resumed fifth session could be as many as 22, which was far too many given the need to make progress on other weighty matters before the Assembly for its consideration. He appealed for the rationalization of the work through the merging of draft resolutions and for all groups to nominate their facilitators as soon as possible. A meeting would be held on 14 December during which seven draft resolutions would be considered.

47. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed her appreciation for the clustering document and the methods of work used to devise it. She suggested placing resolutions that could be merged into one cluster to facilitate the merger process and requested clarification on whether line-by-line negotiations would be undertaken during the meeting on 14 December, requesting that, if that were the case, the number of draft resolutions presented be reduced. One representative said that a footnote should be included in the clustering document to indicate the informal nature of the names of the clusters.

48. Responding to the comment, Mr. Erasmo said that high ambitions had been set for the December meeting in the hope of making as much progress as possible, in a spirit of flexibility, and that consideration of the draft resolutions would be undertaken on a line-by-line basis.

49. The Committee approved the clustering document as amended, which would serve to guide the relevant work going forward. With regard to the nomination of facilitators for the negotiating groups, the Chair urged all regional and political groups to submit their nominations as soon as possible.

50. Turning to the Executive Director's proposal for an action plan on the implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of Rio+20, the Chair thanked the secretariat for the background note and the three technical notes it had prepared, which had been made available for the consideration of the Committee.

51. The Executive Director expressed confidence that the action plan would bolster collective efforts to enhance environmental governance. It had been developed pursuant to the mandate given to the Executive Director in Environment Assembly decision 4/2 and following extensive consultations with Member States and relevant stakeholders through no fewer than six subcommittee meetings. The implementation of the action plan would be an ongoing process, into which new developments would be integrated in a spirit of flexibility. In view of the documentation deadlines, if the draft resolution for the action plan, which was contained in the same draft resolution as the proposal for the provisional agenda, date and venue of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly, were not approved at the current Committee meeting, the adoption of the action plan on the implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of Rio+20 would likely need to be postponed until the sixth session of the Environment Assembly. The alternative would be to propose an entirely new draft resolution to be presented at the resumed fifth session. She reassured the Committee that Member States would be able to make further contributions to the action plan on an ongoing basis and requested the forbearance of the Committee in not reopening the related consultations.

52. In the ensuing discussion, one representative said that it would have been preferable to resume the consultation process on the action plan where it had been halted in 2020. Two representatives expressed full support for the action plan.

53. The Executive Director said that, in a spirit of compromise and based on the extensive consultations held on the matter, she would submit the report on the action plan as final.

54. The Chair said that the contributions of Member States would continue to be taken into consideration, including in the preparation of the concept notes for draft resolutions to be submitted to upcoming subcommittee meetings.

Agenda item 7

Preparations for the special session on the commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme

55. Introducing the item, the Chair said that several meetings of the subcommittee had been held to prepare for the special session of the Environment Assembly and event preparations had also been considered at the eighth annual subcommittee meeting. An informal contact group had been created to consider possible themes for the special session.

56. Ms. Selma Haddadi, Vice-Chair of the Bureau of the Committee and coordinator of the preparations for the special session, reiterated that the Second Committee of the General Assembly had adopted a resolution designating that event as the appropriate United Nations high-level meeting for the adoption of the political declaration mandated by General Assembly resolution 73/333 (A/76/533/Add.7, para. 4). The political declaration would be the main political outcome of the special session, along with a Chair's summary. During the subcommittee meetings, the question had been raised as to how to better contextualize the political declaration within the celebration of UNEP@50. In that regard, it had been proposed to either prepare a decision to which the political declaration would be annexed or add text in the declaration itself.

57. A contact group had been convened to consider the theme of UNEP@50. Without prejudice to the resolution adopted by the Second Committee, the contact group recommended that the Committee endorse the Chair's summary as an outcome of UNEP@50 and proposed the following theme for the special session: "Strengthening UNEP for the implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

58. Regarding the provisional agenda and draft structure of the event, during the most recent subcommittee meeting, held on 23 November, representatives had expressed support for the provisional agenda and had made constructive suggestions regarding the draft structure, which had been duly amended. During the subcommittee meeting, representatives had also provided input on the three priority areas proposed by the secretariat to ensure that UNEP@50 served to strengthen UNEP, namely the World Environment Situation Room, the science-policy interface and universal financial commitment, including through the establishment of three thematic funds. Discussion had focused on the ways in which UNEP could support Member States in the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development and on how to bridge capacity gaps in the science-policy processes that underpinned global environmental governance, including through more balanced geographical representation. Representatives had also highlighted the importance of ensuring the highest level of participation in the special session, at the level of heads of State, if possible. The financial requirements of the secretariat for the organization of such a major event had repeatedly been brought to the attention of Member States and it was to be hoped that the required resources would be mobilized. Topics to be addressed at the subcommittee meeting on 7 December included an update by the secretariat on the communications strategy for the event, a presentation by the task force of major groups and stakeholders on the report entitled "The UNEP we want" and any other matters requiring the guidance of the Committee. It was to be hoped that consensus could be reached during the current meeting on the theme and outcome of the event.

59. The Executive Director thanked the coordinator for the briefing and said that significant progress had been made in the preparations for UNEP@50. An updated agenda for the event had been presented to representatives for their approval, although suggested changes to the structure of the event had not been incorporated owing to their additional cost, which would only have increased the existing funding shortfall. While additional suggestions were welcome, it was to be hoped that the theme and outcome would be approved to enable the event preparations to continue as rapidly as possible. The landing page of the event was continuously being updated and a toolkit had been made available online to support Member States and stakeholders in organizing local events for a truly global celebration. In that regard, the participation of regional offices had been greatly appreciated.

60. Mr. Ado Lõhmus, Vice-Chair of the Bureau of the Committee and coordinator of the formal consultative meetings on the high-level political declaration, thanked Member States for their active participation in those meetings. Noting that the first reading of the draft political declaration had concluded on time, he said that Member States had agreed to hold a third consultative meeting during the third week of February 2022. The co-facilitators were consulting with regional and political groups and would issue compromise text for the declaration not less than 14 days before the consultative meeting in February.

61. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Kenya said that her delegation had taken note of the themes proposed by Switzerland, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, and the

Group of African States. During the briefing convened by the Government of Kenya the day before the Committee meeting, her Government had proposed the theme “UNEP@50: securing the planet, the past, the present and the future”. She called on Member States to make contributions to ensure full, in-person participation in UNEP@50, in particular for least developed countries.

62. The coordinator of the contact group on the theme for UNEP@50 said that, in the light of the proposal by Kenya of another theme, the Group of Asia-Pacific States would need to meet again to discuss the matter further. One representative said that his delegation needed to consult further to determine its stance on the alternate theme that had been proposed. Another representative stressed the importance of ensuring inclusivity by discussing matters such as the theme of the special session within a structure such as the contact group. One representative said that UNEP@50 was a commemoration of UNEP, which should be its focus, and asked to what extent “securing the planet” related to the activities of UNEP. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the compromise proposal for the theme of the session put forward by the contact group encapsulated many of the discussions held over the previous two years, including the proposal to create a clearing-house mechanism under UNEP to serve as a one-stop shop to assist Member States in implementing multilateral environmental agreements. Another representative said that his delegation had been unable to attend the meeting called by the Government of Kenya and asked whether the proposal for the new theme made at that meeting was being presented for the consideration of the Committee or whether it would be formally presented in another manner.

63. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that, while his group remained open to the proposed changes to the political declaration that would be brought forward during the third consultative meeting, it would be important to retain the text already negotiated in the second round of consultations, in particular sections reflecting the views of regional groups. With regard to strengthening the role of UNEP in the context of the science-policy interface, UNEP@50 would provide an opportunity to enhance geographical balance both in the staffing of the secretariat and in the participation of academia from the global South in all UNEP processes. Many representatives, including two speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed support for the theme put forward by Switzerland, “Strengthening UNEP for the implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the new theme proposed by Kenya had come too late to allow for its consideration. Another representative asked whether the Chair’s summary and political declaration would be the only outcomes of the special session, what the word “adoption” meant in that context, and how the concept of high-level participation was being defined. Yet another representative asked whether the report of the special session and the Chair’s summary would be two separate documents.

64. One representative stressed that, while the political declaration must recognize in a balanced manner that justice, global environmental governance and the rule of law could be modernized and strengthened, it was equally important to strengthen and enhance the efforts to provide the requisite means of implementation, in particular since their absence continued to impede the ambitious environmental action required across the board. He reiterated a call made during subcommittee meetings by the Group of African States, which he said had been supported by many delegations, for the secretariat to undertake a gap analysis report on means of implementation across multilateral environmental agreements. If that proposal could not be acted upon in time for UNEP@50, it should become part of future work. Another representative expressed concern that the proposal to contextualize the political declaration within the UNEP@50 special session by annexing it to a decision or by adding paragraphs to the declaration would lead to a lack of balance in the relative importance of UNEP@50 and Stockholm+50, which were equally important.

65. Two representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, asked why the multi-stakeholder dialogue had been removed from the agenda and requested that it be reinstated. With regard to the structure of the event, the representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries said that her delegation supported the adoption of the political declaration on the first day. One representative noted with concern that some high-level statements would be delivered in a session that would be conducted in parallel with the high-level dialogue, which could affect inclusive participation, in particular for smaller delegations. One representative said that if parallel sessions could not be avoided, they should be scheduled earlier in the day. Another representative said that the matter of whether high-level participation for UNEP@50 and Stockholm+50 meant ministerial participation or participation by Heads of State should be left to the discretion of Member States.

66. Responding to the comments, the coordinator of the preparations for the special session said that both the Chair’s summary and the political declaration would be outcomes of the special session and that the report of the session would be adopted at the session according to the usual procedure. If necessary, the legal implications of adoption could be addressed at the subcommittee meeting to be

held on 7 December. With regard to the holding of parallel sessions, the secretariat had done its best, within the budget constraints and in the light of the duration of the special session of just two days, to avoid parallel sessions, but it had not been possible to eliminate them completely. The structure could be adjusted to once again include the multi-stakeholder dialogue and the secretariat would be guided by the wishes of Member States in that regard. Clarifying that Member States would decide whether their representation was at the ministerial level or higher, she said that a concept note with further information on the organization of panellists and other topics would be made available to representatives before the subcommittee meeting on 7 December.

67. The Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, Ms. Joyce Msuya, said that inclusivity and transparency had been the guiding principles of the preparatory process and that she, the Executive Director and the secretariat would work with the Government of Kenya regarding the manner in which to reflect the outcome of the meeting it had called the previous day. She reiterated the call for contributions to ensure the success of the special session.

68. A representative of the secretariat said that the multi-stakeholder dialogue had been removed at the request of the major groups and stakeholders to give greater prominence to the presentation of the report entitled “The UNEP we want”, which had originally been scheduled to be undertaken during the dialogue. The secretariat had taken note of the requests for the reinstatement of the dialogue.

69. The Chair said that she would meet with the Executive Director and the Deputy Executive Director to discuss the proposal made by Kenya, which would be considered at the subcommittee meeting on 7 December along with the structure and agenda of the special session, among other things. She reiterated the call for the nomination of co-facilitators from regional groups as soon as possible. Representatives would receive written updates on the annotated agenda and the procedures for the negotiation of the draft resolutions and decisions very soon. The third consultative meeting on the draft political declaration would be held from 16 to 18 February 2022.

Agenda item 8

Report of the subcommittee

70. The Committee took note of the report of the subcommittee as set out in document UNEP/CPR/156/3.

Agenda item 9

Other matters

71. No other matters were raised.

Agenda item 10

Closure of the meeting

72. The meeting was declared closed at 5.20 p.m. on Tuesday, 30 November 2021.
