

Meeting of the Bureau of the UN Environment Assembly
16 May 2024
16:00 – 18:00 (GMT+3)
Online meeting

Agenda Item 2: Introduction to the work of the Bureau of UNEA

This note, entitled “Role and responsibilities of the President and the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly”, serves as a background document for consideration under agenda item 2 - Introduction to the work of the Bureau of UNEA. It is based the UNEA rules of procedure, on the final outcome of the Consensual Process for Review by the Committee of Permanent Representatives, and on established practices.

The Bureau members are invited to take note of the information provided and ask for any further clarifications, as needed, with a view to ensure broad understanding of the role and responsibilities of the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

Role and responsibilities of the President and the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly

1. Summary

The role of the President and the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly is formally regulated under the [UNEA rules of procedure](#) (ROP). It is also guided by the [final outcome of the Consensual Process for Review by the Committee of Permanent Representatives](#) and by established practice. In summary, the roles and responsibilities of the UNEA President and the Bureau can be reflected as follows:

- The UNEA Bureau consists of a **President, eight Vice-Presidents and one Rapporteur**, elected during the final meeting of a regular session of UNEA. All Bureau Members are elected by name as a representative of his/her Government and hold office until their successors are elected, normally at the closure of the next regular session. The current composition of the UNEA Bureau is available [here](#).
- During the intersessional period, if a Bureau member resigns or is unable to exercise her or his functions, the Member State or the regional group to which that member belongs shall nominate a replacement for the remainder of the term. In such a case, the nomination is then placed on a silence procedure for one month (rule 19).
- The **UNEA President controls the proceedings and the maintenance of order** at the Assembly meetings, directs discussions, ensures observance of the rules of procedure (including with regards to voting), accords the right to speak, announces decisions, and rules on points of order. The President can also represent the Assembly in intergovernmental meetings.
- The **UNEA Bureau assists the President** in the general conduct of business. If the President is no longer in a position to perform his/her functions, the Bureau will designate one of the Vice-Presidents as acting President.
- An overview of the governance structure of the United Nations Environment Programme, including the UNEA Bureau and other governing bodies, is available in [Annex 1](#).

2. The role of the UNEA President

The primary source for the powers of the presidency can be found in the rules of procedure of the Environment Assembly ([UNEP/EA.3/3](#)), as follows (rules 32, 33, 34, 35):

- The President shall declare the opening and closing of each meeting of the Assembly, shall direct the discussion, ensure observance of these rules, accord the right to speak, put questions to the vote and announce decisions.
- The President shall rule on points of order and, subject to these rules, shall have control of the proceedings of the Assembly and over the maintenance of order at its meetings.
- The President may propose to the Assembly the limitation of time to be allowed to speakers, the limitation of the number of times each representative may speak on any question, the closure of the list of speakers or the closure of the debate.
- The President may also propose the suspension or the adjournment of the meeting or of the debate on the question under discussion.
- The President shall call upon speakers in the order in which they signify their desire to speak.
- The President may call a speaker to order if the remarks of the speaker are not relevant to the subject under discussion.
- When debate is limited and a speaker has spoken her or his allotted time, the President shall call the speaker to order without delay.
- During the course of a debate, the President may announce the list of speakers and, with the consent of the Assembly, declare the list closed.
- The President represents the Environment Assembly in relevant intergovernmental meetings, such as the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (see [UNEA resolution 3/3](#)), in particular, to convey key outcomes of UNEA or to facilitate preparations for an upcoming UNEA session; the President may also designate another Bureau Member to perform such functions.

According to established practice, the President also prepares a draft UNEA ministerial declaration, with a focus on the theme of the upcoming session (see section 3). The preparatory process requires a broad consultative process to ensure the broadest possible ownership, where the Presidency holds the pen and issues several iterations based on comments and inputs shared by Member States in writing. The process involves regular communication with all Member States and stakeholders, inviting them to contribute to several iterations of a draft, which may include starting with key elements and followed by a “zero draft”, a first full draft, various revised drafts and a final draft. The process does not require a line-by-line negotiation. Informal consultations are usually held with the members of the CPR and the environmental focal points. Consultations may also involve other international meetings, such as MEA meetings, as well as informal bilateral meetings in conjunction with international meetings. The President may also wish to convene consultations during the Environmental Ministerial Fora, as needed. While the full ownership of the draft lies with the President, the Secretariat provides support throughout the process. A dedicated open web portal will be set up to reflect all drafts and written inputs (as an example, see <https://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/unea6/inputs-ministerial-declaration-unea-6>.)

3. The role of the UNEA Bureau

The Bureau shall assist the President in the general conduct of business of UNEA, in accordance with rules 17 and 18 of the rules of procedure. On this basis, the Bureau is expected to consult with members of their respective regional groups to:

- Carry out the tasks entrusted to it by the Environment Assembly and the President.
- Review meeting credentials.
- Prepare for upcoming UNEA session, including by
 - providing guidance on the identification of an overarching theme for the session (*Note: UNEA-6 has requested the Bureau, in consultation with the CPR, to define a theme for UNEA-7 no later than 12 months in advance of the session, i.e. by December 2024*);
 - advising and providing input on the preparation of the provisional agenda, draft programme of work of the session, and scheduling of items;
 - facilitating the negotiation of draft resolutions and decisions for consideration by UNEA, including through the selection of facilitators;
 - recommend the allocation of items to subsidiary bodies of the Environment Assembly;
 - provide guidance on the organization of relevant informal meetings related to UNEA.
- Coordinate with the Bureau and the Chair of the CPR to ensure that the work of the Committee is coherent, complementary and in support of the decision-making process of UNEA.
- The Rapporteur is mainly responsible for reviewing and clearing the report on the proceedings of the session of the Environment Assembly.

4. Bureau meetings

The UNEA Bureau meets, when necessary, as decided by the Bureau members. Meetings are presided over by the UNEA President and shall generally take place in Nairobi but may also meet at a location outside Nairobi, for example, hosted by the UNEA President. Regardless of the venue, all members, including the President, may attend the meetings fully online. In practice, Bureau meetings are predominantly held online, with some representatives who are based in Nairobi joining in person at the UN Environment Programme premises. The Bureau conducts its business in English.

Depending on the agenda, the President, after consultation with the other members of the Bureau, may invite observers from Member States or members of UN Specialized Agencies as well as from organizations.

Meeting invitations are sent at least 14 days in advance, and related documents are as a general rule made available online at least 10 days in advance.

In accordance with a decision taken at the second Joint Meeting of the Bureaux of UNEA and of the CPR on 22 May 2017, the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives is invited to participate in an *ex officio* capacity in all UNEA Bureau meetings.

In line with rule 32 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly on quorum, the President may declare a meeting open when at least one-third of the Bureau members are present. For a decision to be taken, a majority of the members must attend. As per established practice and without prejudice to rule 49 of the rules of procedure, the Bureau takes its decisions by consensus.

A draft roadmap of meetings of the Bureau, including joint meetings, is prepared and regularly updated by the secretariat in consultation with the UNEA President and the CPR Chair, for information and consideration by the Bureau. All meetings, including Bureau meetings, have a dedicated open webpage, with agenda, background documents and a meeting summary. In addition, all meetings of UNEP's governing bodies are listed in an online roadmap of meetings, available here: <https://www.unep.org/resources/other-evaluationreportsdocuments/roadmap-un-environment-programme-governing-bodies>. Upcoming meetings are also listed here: <https://www.unenvironment.org/cpr/meetings>.

5. Joint Bureaux meetings

To facilitate consultations between the UNEA and CPR Bureaux, joint Bureaux meetings are regularly organized and co-chaired by the UNEA President and the Chair of the CPR. Meetings may take place in Nairobi or at a location outside Nairobi, for example, hosted by the UNEA President. Regardless of the venue, all members, including the President and the Chair, may attend the meetings fully online.

Some joint meetings take the form of a “retreat”, often with a specific topic to be discussed; these meetings are typically longer (1-2 days) and may be hosted by the President.

Relevant decisions are taken separately by each Bureau, in accordance with the mandates provided by UNEA and/or the CPR (e.g. regarding the selection of a theme) and established practice.

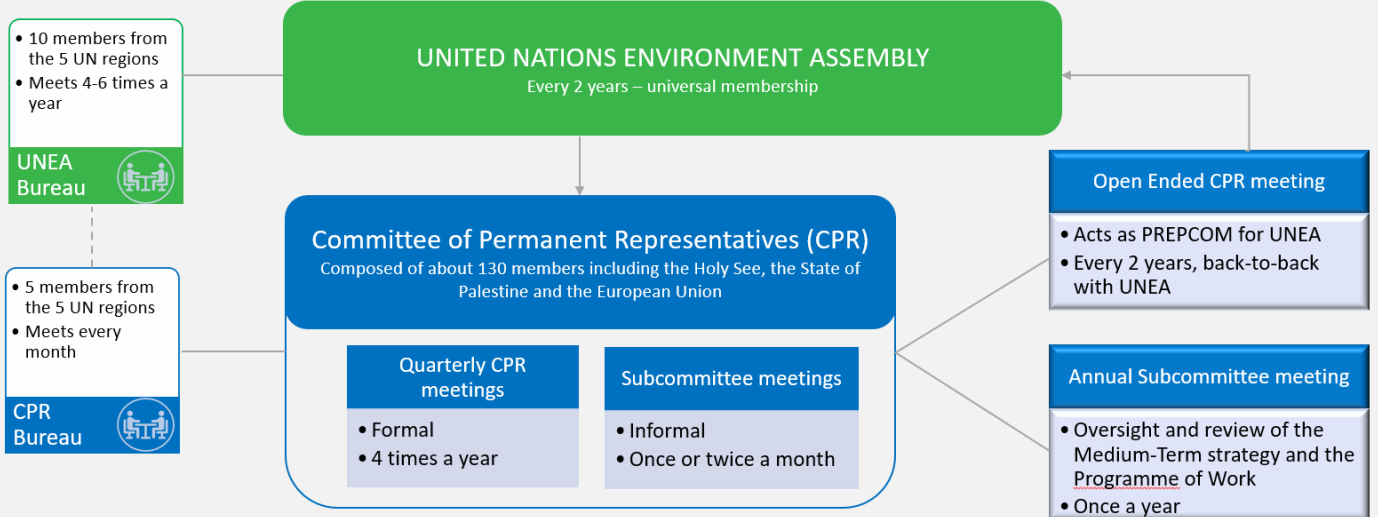
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Annexes:

1. Governance structure of the United Nations Environment Programme.
 2. Relevant resolutions and decisions relating to the role and function of the UNEA President and the Bureau.
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ANNEX 1: Governance structure of the United Nations Environment Programme

UN Environment Programme Governance Structure



ANNEX 2: Relevant resolutions and decisions relating to the role and function of the UNEA President and the Bureau

I. Governing Council decision 13/2. Establishment of a Committee of Permanent Representatives

The Governing Council,

Recalling its decision 11/2 of 23 May 1983 on the periodicity and duration of Council sessions,

Conscious of the need to establish for the intersessional period prior to the fourteenth session of the Council a more formal and regular system of consultation among Governments and between Governments and the Executive Director,

Bearing in mind the positive results achieved by the meetings of permanent representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme during the past two years, in particular as regards preparations for Council sessions,

Taking into account the fact that an increasing number of Governments have permanent missions accredited to the Programme,

1. Decides to establish, in accordance with rule 62 of its rules of procedure, an open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives, consisting of permanent representatives to the Programme and/or Government-designated officials, to consider and make recommendations to the Council on the matters mentioned in decision 11/2, paragraph 3, and to take action on any other matters specifically entrusted to it by the Council;
2. Further decides that the Committee will meet regularly with the Executive Director or his representative on the first Wednesday of February, September and December each year, and will also meet six weeks prior to the opening of the fourteenth session of the Council and whenever deemed necessary by the Committee or by the Executive Director;
3. Invites Governments that have not accredited a permanent mission to the Programme to designate a focal point to whom information and documentation pertaining to the meetings of the Committee can be conveyed;
4. Requests the Executive Director to take the necessary measures, in accordance with rule 62, article 3 of its rules of procedure, for the implementation of the present decision, within available resources, by providing to the Committee services and facilities of the same kind as those he has provided in the past to meetings of permanent representatives;
5. Decides to review the present decision at its fourteenth session

The Governing Council,
13th meeting
23 May 1985

II. Governing Council decision 19/32. Governance of the United Nations Environment Programme

8. *That the Committee of Permanent Representatives shall consist of the representatives of all States Members of the United Nations and members of its specialized agencies, and the European Community, accredited to the United Nations Environment Programme, whether based in Nairobi or outside;*

9. *That the Committee of Permanent Representatives shall elect a Bureau composed of a Chairperson, three Vice-Chairpersons and a Rapporteur, for a period of two years, taking into account the principles of rotation and equitable geographical representation;*

10. *That the Committee of Permanent Representatives shall hold four regular meetings a year. Extraordinary meetings may be also convened by its Chairperson, after consultation with the other members of the Bureau or at the request of at least five members of the Committee. The Committee of Permanent Representatives may establish subcommittees, working groups and task forces as deemed appropriate to carry out its mandate;*

III. Governing Council decision 27/2: Implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

1. *Recommends to the General Assembly that the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, an intergovernmental body established pursuant to article 22 of the United Nations Charter, be renamed as the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme;*

2. *Decides that the governing body of the United Nations Environment Programme will convene its sessions in Nairobi on a biennial basis, starting in 2014, and will carry out its mandate as set out in General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972 and all other relevant resolutions that reinforce its mandate as well as the 1997 Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme, the 2000 Malmö Ministerial Declaration, the 2010 Nusa Dua Declaration and paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development as endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 66/288;*

4. *Decides to discontinue the Global Ministerial Environment Forum;*

5. *Decides that each session of the governing body of the United Nations Environment Programme will conclude with a two-day high-level segment as an integral part of the governing body of the United Nations Environment Programme, which will take strategic decisions and provide political guidance and will perform inter alia the following functions:*

(a) *Setting the global environmental agenda;*

(b) *Providing overarching policy guidance and defining policy responses to address emerging environmental challenges;*

(c) *Undertaking policy review, dialogue and exchange of experiences;*

(d) *Setting the strategic guidance on the future direction of the United Nations Environment Programme;*

(e) *Organizing a multi-stakeholder dialogue;*

(f) *Fostering partnerships for achieving environmental goals and resource mobilization;*

6. *Decides that the Bureau of the governing body of the United Nations Environment Programme shall be composed of 10 members to reflect the universality of the governing body, in accordance with*

equitable geographical distribution, and will assist the governing body and perform the functions as set out in the rules of procedure of the governing body;

*9. Decides that **an open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives** will be the intersessional subsidiary body of the governing body of the United Nations Environment Programme and, in addition to its mandate [Governing Council decision 19/32, paragraph 7] and in open and transparent manner, will perform the following functions:*

- (a) Contributing to the preparation of the agenda of its governing body;*
- (b) Providing advice to its governing body on policy matters;*
- (c) Preparing decisions for adoption by its governing body and overseeing their implementation;*
- (d) Convening thematic and/or programmatic debates*
- (e) Promoting effective ways and means to facilitate participation of the non-resident members of the Committee, particularly from developing countries*
- (f) Performing any other functions delegated to it by its governing body;*

12. Decides that the Committee of Permanent Representatives will consider the frequency, schedule and programmatic focus of its meetings to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness and will improve upon its working methods;

IV. UNEA decision 2/22. Review of the cycle of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme

1. Decides to hold its regular sessions in odd numbered years commencing with its third session in 2017;

2. Also decides that the above-mentioned cycle shall also apply to the open-ended meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to be held in accordance with Governing Council decision 27/2;

V. UNEA decision 3/2. Provisional agenda, date and venue of the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

*3. Decides to hold the sessions of the United Nations Environment Assembly, following the fourth session of the Environment Assembly, **during the last week of February**, unless otherwise decided by the Environment Assembly, at its headquarters in Nairobi, consistent with rule 4 of the rules of procedure;*

VI. UNEA decision 5/4 Provisional agenda, date and venue of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

2. Decides to hold the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Headquarters in Nairobi.

*3. Decides that the sixth session of UNEA will take place from **26 February to 01 March 2024**. Also decides that, in accordance with paragraph 10 of Governing Council decision 27/2 of 22 February 2013, the sixth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives will take place from **19 to 23 February 2024**, and requests the Committee of Permanent Representatives to discuss in consultation with the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly and decide on the format and agenda of the meeting.*

4. Requests the Committee of Permanent Representatives, in consultation with the **Bureau** of the United Nations Environment Assembly, **to contribute to the preparation of the annotations to the provisional agenda set out in paragraph 4.**

5. Requests the **Bureau** of the United Nations Environment Assembly, in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives, **to define a theme for the Environment Assembly no later than twelve months in advance of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly**
Strongly encourages **Member States to submit draft resolutions** for consideration by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its sixth session preferably **at least ten weeks in advance of the sixth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives**, taking into account the theme of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly and the limited time and resources available for the negotiation of the resolutions during the sixth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives and the sixth session of the Environment Assembly, without prejudice to the rules of procedure, in particular rule 44;

VII. UNEA decision on the provisional agenda, date and venue of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

1. Decides, without prejudice to the provisions of rule 1 of procedures of UNEA **to hold the seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly** at the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme, in Nairobi, **from 8 to 12 December 2025**, and recognizes that these dates have been agreed on an exceptional basis, as they do not allow for holding the seventh session of the UNEA on biennium and have impacted the term of the office of its bureau;

2. Also decides that, pursuant to paragraph 10 of Governing Council decision 27/2 of 22 February 2013, **the seventh meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives will take place from 1 to 5 December 2025** and requests the Committee of Permanent Representatives to discuss, in consultation with the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and decide on the format and agenda of the seventh session of the Assembly;

4. Requests the Committee of Permanent Representatives, in consultation with the **Bureau** of the United Nations Environment Assembly, **to contribute to the preparation of the annotations to the provisional agenda set out in paragraph 3 above;**

5. Requests the **Bureau** of the United Nations Environment Assembly, in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives, **to define a theme for the seventh session of the Environment Assembly no later than 12 months in advance of the seventh session.**