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**Committee of Permanent Representatives
to the United Nations Environment Programme
169th meeting
Nairobi, 20 March**

Draft minutes of the 168th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme, held on 17 December 2024

Agenda item 1

Opening of the meeting by the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

1. The meeting was opened at 10.15 a.m. on Tuesday, 17 December 2024 by Firas Khouri, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP.
2. The meeting was attended by 78 participants representing 64 members and 1 observer mission.
3. The Chair welcomed the following new members to the Committee: Kahina Lounis (Algeria), Sahak Sargsyan (Armenia), Marcelo Vázquez Bermúdez (Ecuador), Filipino Tarakinikini (Fiji), Geir Oddsson (Iceland), Ariel Arviv (Israel), Matsuura Hiroshi (Japan), Syarafina Adilah Ahmad Nasir (Malaysia), Amadou Hassane Mai Dabou (Niger), Vsevolod Tkachenko (Russian Federation), Eunice Kigenyi (Uganda), Eliet Nyangai Magogo (United Republic of Tanzania), Moravia Peralta Hernandez (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela).
4. He then bade farewell to the following departing members: Cristian Espinosa Cañizares (Ecuador), Satyendra Prasad (Fiji), Antonios Sgouropoulos (Greece), Thordur Bjarni Gudjonsson (Iceland), Dvora Dorsman Yarkoni (Israel), Ken Okaniwa (Japan), Qusai Rashed Alfarhan (Kuwait), Mapopa C. Kaunda (Malawi), Enrique Javier Ochoa Martínez (Mexico), Zakariaou Adam Maiga (Niger), Marcelo Eliseo Scappini Ricciardi (Paraguay), Dmitry Maksimychev (Russian Federation), Isatu Aminata Bundu (Sierra Leone), Felista S. Rugambwa (United Republic of Tanzania).

Agenda item 2

Adoption of the provisional agenda of the 168th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

5. The agenda was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/CPR/168/1).

Agenda item 3

Adoption of the draft minutes of the 167th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

6. The Committee adopted the minutes of its 167th meeting, held on 12 September 2024, on the basis of the draft minutes that had been circulated. The minutes, as adopted, are set out in document UNEP/CPR/168/2.

Agenda item 4

Report of the Executive Director to the 168th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

7. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to the document entitled “Quarterly Report to the 168th Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives: July–September 2024”.

8. The Executive Director of UNEP, Inger Andersen, began by noting that membership of the Committee had grown to 150, a clear reflection, she said, of the vibrant state of multilateralism in Nairobi. She welcomed Soomi Ro, the new Director of the Division of Corporate Services, whose extensive experience in administration across the United Nations system would further UNEP efforts to improve its efficiency, effectiveness and impact. She thanked the Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, for serving as acting Director of the Division for 15 months, as well as performing the duties associated with the role of Deputy Executive Director. She also thanked Ulf Björnholm, Deputy Secretary of Governing Bodies, who was leaving UNEP, for his contribution to the organization, and wished him well in his future endeavours.

9. An intense period of activity for UNEP had followed the 167th meeting of the Committee, including the Summit of the Future, held on 22 and 23 September, as part of the seventy-ninth session of the General Assembly; the meeting of the Group of 20, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 18 and 19 November; the fifth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 25 November to 1 December; and the sessions and meetings of the conferences of the Parties to the three Rio conventions, namely the twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Baku from 11 to 22 November; the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity held in Cali, Colombia, from 21 October to 1 November; and the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification held in Riyadh from 2 to 13 December.

10. Those events had brought encouraging successes in global efforts to tackle the three planetary environmental crises – the crisis of climate change; the crisis of nature, biodiversity and land loss; and the crisis of pollution and waste; but also some disappointments in global efforts to tackle the triple planetary crisis. She understood the frustration of some Member States and shared the concern of citizens around the world at the lack of progress in certain areas, including with regard to financing, and the ambition and pace of the action being taken. Nevertheless, even amid turbulent geopolitical circumstances, key decisions had been taken.

11. At the Summit of the Future, Member States had adopted the Pact for the Future, a milestone in the history of the United Nations that would raise collective ambitions. In the Pact, Member States had agreed, among other things, to modernize the peace and security agenda; to accelerate reform of the international financial architecture to better serve developing countries in their pursuit of sustainable development; to strengthen climate action, including transitioning away from fossil fuels; and had made commitments on plastics, chemicals, biodiversity and desertification. The Pact also included commitments on governance of artificial intelligence, a subject on which UNEP had recently released a well-received issues note on the environmental impact of the full life cycle of artificial intelligence. UNEP stood ready to support the implementation of the Pact, including by incorporating relevant elements into the medium-term strategy for the period 2026–2029 and the draft programme of work and budget for the biennium 2026–2027.

12. At the seventy-ninth session of the General Assembly, UNEP had participated in the high-level meeting on antimicrobial resistance, whose political declaration included the commitment to reduce by 10 per cent, by 2030, the deaths associated with bacterial antimicrobial resistance, compared to the baseline of 4.95 million deaths from that cause worldwide in 2019. UNEP would continue to play a leading role on the matter, alongside the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the

World Health Organization and the World Organization for Animal Health, including through the One Health approach.

13. At the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Cali, Colombia, from 21 October to 1 November, lengthy discussions had resulted in decisions being adopted that would facilitate the participation of people of African descent, Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the implementation of the Convention, in particular through the implementation of its article 8 (j). The Cali Fund for the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits from the Use of Digital Sequence Information on Genetic Resources had been created, under which companies that used genetic codes to develop products would share benefits arising from their use in a fair and equitable manner. Noting that the meeting had ended before other decisions could be agreed, she said that a resumed meeting would be held in Rome in February 2025.

14. On the sidelines of the sixteenth meeting, the first projects had been approved under the Kunming Biodiversity Fund, which provided critical financial and technical support to the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre had launched the Protected Planet Report 2024, which showed that 18 per cent of terrestrial and inland water and 8 per cent of marine and coastal areas were now protected. Despite progress, she stressed the need to accelerate efforts to achieve target 3 of the Framework of protecting at least 30 per cent of such areas by 2030. She thanked the Government of Colombia for hosting the sixteenth meeting.

15. At the twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, parties had agreed, after a decade of work, the building blocks of how carbon markets would operate under the Paris Agreement, including standards on a centralized carbon market under the United Nations, in accordance with the mechanism established by Article 6, paragraph 4, of the Paris Agreement. Developing countries would now be able to benefit from net flows of finance and receive support for capacity-building to enable them to establish themselves in the markets. Agreement had also been reached on a transparent review process that would help with the essential task of ensuring the environmental integrity of carbon credits.

16. Climate finance had been the central focus at the twenty-ninth session, and she acknowledged the widely felt dissatisfaction with the sums agreed. Nevertheless, parties had agreed to the new, collective quantified goal on climate finance, which would increase finance to developing countries threefold to \$300 billion. Parties had also agreed to engage all actors, including both public and private, to scale up finance for developing countries to \$1.3 trillion by 2030.

17. At the twenty-ninth session, repeated references had been made to the *Adaptation Gap Report 2024* and the *Emissions Gap Report 2024* produced by UNEP, which highlighted the work needed to maintain global temperatures at no more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by 2100. The reports indicated that, among other actions, CO₂ emissions must be reduced by 42 per cent by 2030, which was a huge drop, she said, especially given that, in 2023, global emissions had increased by 1.3 per cent. She recalled that the countries of the Group of 20 were responsible for 77 per cent of historical CO₂ emissions, which conferred a greater responsibility that was widely recognized. If the 1.5°C target was to remain within reach, the nationally determined contributions due to be submitted by parties in February 2025 must reflect significantly increased ambition. The work of UNEP on the International Methane Emissions Observatory, highlighted at the twenty-ninth session, showed the significant potential of reducing methane emissions. Indeed, addressing just 2 of the 1,200 leaks notified by the Observatory over the past two years would help prevent the release of greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions of 1,000,000 cars each year. Good progress had been made, but much heavy lifting remained, and she thanked the Government of Azerbaijan for its efforts in hosting the session.

18. In Busan, the fifth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, had been adjourned. Key advances had been made on a structured framework for and the articles of the future instrument, as reflected in the text of the Chair of the intergovernmental negotiating committee of 1 December, which the committee had agreed to use as a foundation for concluding the negotiations. In that document, 29 of the 32 articles had been finalized. To reach agreement on products, supply, financing and scope, political agreement would be needed, and she urged Member States to find ways to resolve the differences between them before the opening of the resumed fifth session. Sticking to entrenched positions would not bring about the agreement, as called for by the Environment Assembly at its fifth session, by entities across the United Nations system, by business, calling for global rules, by the Member States that had agreed the Pact for the Future, including specific backing for a deal to end plastic pollution, and by the leaders of the Group of 20 in their recent

declaration. UNEP, which was collaborating with the United Nations Capital Development Fund and the International Finance Corporation on facilitating private sector investments in solutions across the entire life cycle of plastics, remained committed to securing an ambitious, fair and transparent instrument in advance of the seventh session of the Environment Assembly, and would support Member States in that effort. She thanked the Government of the Republic of Korea for hosting the fifth session.

19. The sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, had been held in Riyadh from 2 to 13 December. At the sixteenth session, the Riyadh Action Agenda had been launched; commitments had been made of \$12 billion in loans and grants for land restoration and drought resilience initiatives; and the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership had been established, which sought to leverage public and private finance in support of 80 of the countries that were most vulnerable to drought. While an open-ended working group to negotiate an instrument on drought had not been established, the Conference of the Parties at its sixteenth session had raised the visibility of drought, land restoration and the Convention itself. She thanked the Government of Saudi Arabia for hosting the sixteenth session.

20. To address the three planetary crises – the crisis of climate change, the crisis of nature, biodiversity and land loss and the crisis of pollution and waste, stronger financing was needed, and the Environment Assembly, at its seventh session, under the theme “Advancing sustainable solutions for a resilient planet”, would again seek to promote joined-up action, including by holding a day fully devoted to discussion of the importance of cooperation with multilateral environmental agreements. She urged Member States to begin reflecting on their contributions to the seventh session.

21. Thanking Member States for their financial contributions to the work of UNEP, she said that, as at the end of November 2024, a total of 89 Member States had contributed just under \$90 million to the Environment Fund, whose approved budget for 2024 was \$100 million. She expressed particular gratitude to the 55 Member States that had contributed their full share. Reiterating that time remained to close the funding gap of \$10 million before the year’s end, she noted that contributions from eight more Member States would mean that over half of all the States Members of the United Nations had contributed, which would be another milestone. While she encouraged non-earmarked funding through the Environment Fund, she encouraged Member States seeking to provide earmarked funding to consider the UNEP Planetary Funds, on climate, nature and land, and pollution, which now stood at \$30 million, and which were delivering impressive impacts. She thanked the Governments of Belgium, Czechia, Finland, Norway and the Philippines for their pledges and contributions.

22. Noting that the seventh Global Environment Outlook report would be launched at the seventh session of the Environment Assembly, she said that the summary for policymakers would be made available in all six official languages of the United Nations. While UNEP would like to translate the full report into all six official languages, the funding required to do so had not yet been secured. She encouraged Member States to consider contributing extrabudgetary or in-kind resources to facilitate that endeavour. She also encouraged members to complete the Joint Inspection Unit online questionnaire in relation to the review conducted by the Unit of the management and administration of UNEP.

23. She concluded by saying that, in 2024, the world had moved forward on some issues, but stalled on others. With the clock ticking towards the 2030 target of the Sustainable Development Goals, a strengthened UNEP would continue to strive to achieve those Goals.

24. In the ensuing discussion, many representatives, including several speaking on behalf of groups of countries, thanked the Executive Director for the quarterly report.

25. Many representatives, including several speaking on behalf of groups of countries, stressed the importance of addressing desertification, land degradation and drought. Several representatives, including a number speaking on behalf of groups of countries, expressed concern at the continuing lack of meaningful action on the matter, despite repeated calls for greater urgency. One representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries said that land degradation, which had dire consequences for climate, biodiversity and livelihoods, affected 40 per cent of land worldwide, with 100 million hectares of productive land degraded each year, while increasing droughts were expected to leave three-quarters of the global population facing water scarcity by 2050. Another representative, also speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that 65 per cent of land in Africa was affected, putting at risk the livelihoods of 400 million people. Urging UNEP to give equal consideration to all environmental challenges, he said that it was necessary to look beyond the triple environmental planetary crisis and to give equal priority to each of the three Rio conventions. One representative said that the crises of desertification, land degradation and drought should be reflected in the work of

UNEP, including its medium-term strategy for the period 2026–2029 and its programme of work and budget for the biennium 2026–2027.

26. At its tenth special session, in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment had adopted the Abidjan Declaration on raising Africa's ambition to reduce desertification, land degradation and drought, which, one representative pointed out, could not be implemented unless financial institutions, development partners, UNEP and other stakeholders provided technical capacity-building and financial support to Member States to combat drought, enhance the resilience of people and ecosystems, and foster sustainable land management. Another representative called for enhanced UNEP support for the implementation of Africa's climate action plan, particularly with regard to renewable energy, sustainable agriculture and ecosystem restoration. One representative thanked UNEP for its contribution to the success of the tenth special session, while another thanked the Executive Director for her participation in the session, which showed the interest of UNEP in understanding the continent's priorities. Welcoming the call of the Executive Director at the tenth special session for united action on land under the three Rio conventions, one representative said that, to be able to carry out such work, Africa must be provided with appropriate financing, access to advanced technology, digitalization and capacity-building. Without such assistance, critical minerals could not be addressed in a way that favoured circularity, she said, and UNEP was well-placed to foster a win-win relationship between importing and exporting countries, ensuring that minerals were managed in a responsible and sustainable manner that enabled resource-rich countries to receive the capacity they needed to gain added value from their minerals, and thereby stimulate their economies.

27. Several representatives welcomed the work of the Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals of the Secretary-General, and its report entitled "Resourcing the energy transition: principles to guide critical energy transition minerals towards equity and justice", which represented the implementation of Environment Assembly resolutions 5/12 and 6/9. Work on traceability, said one representative, should serve not as an impediment to legitimate trade, but should advance fairness, transparency and human rights while combating illegal trade and other criminal activities, including those conducted by States, such as smuggling and pillage of natural resources. In that regard, the representative welcomed the co-organization by UNEP of the African Regional Consultative Forum on Critical Minerals and Just Transition in Johannesburg, South Africa, on 21 and 22 August, while another said that the briefing paper that had emanated from the Forum had provided relevant information and guidance for actors in that field. Another representative, also emphasizing the importance of traceability, stressed the importance of the relationship between the extraction of critical minerals, the environmental consequences of that extraction and regional conflict. The environmental sustainability of mineral use must be improved, said one representative, in order to ensure that the energy transition did not add to pollution and the pressure on biodiversity. Several representatives said that, at the round table on the matter co-hosted by UNEP in Geneva, on 12 July 2024, important opportunities had been identified for further discussion on how international trade could promote sustainable and inclusive development, alongside environmental protection in relation to critical minerals, particularly in developing countries. One representative, who said that critical minerals were an issue of particular importance to his country, asked for more information on the work of UNEP in the area.

28. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed regret at the adjournment without agreement having been reached of the fifth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. Several other representatives said that the progress made had been encouraging. It was vital to retain high levels of ambition, said a number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, while several others emphasized their continuing commitment to the process. One representative said that her country had provided earmarked funding for projects on plastic pollution in Cambodia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Zimbabwe in 2024 and, in 2025, would support projects worth \$3.9 million. One representative noted the absence of a briefing on the fifth session at the current meeting.

29. Several representatives welcomed the participation of UNEP in the Summit of the Future. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the Pact for the Future should be implemented as soon as possible. Another representative said that, in the text of the Pact, it was noted that progress on most of the Sustainable Development Goals was too slow or had gone into reverse, which risked leaving millions of people behind.

30. Many representatives commended UNEP for its work since the previous meeting of the Committee, including the impressive number of publications released and its efforts on clean air, peace and security and environmental lawmaking. One representative praised UNEP for its

engagement with the high-level political forum on sustainable development, while another welcomed the momentum created by the event, co-organized by UNEP during the high-level week of the seventy-ninth session of the General Assembly, in preparation for the fifth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. Several representatives requested information on the policy uptake of such reports and meetings, saying that, in addition to listing publications and meetings, reporting the impact of such activities was vital to transparency and accountability. Several representatives said that future quarterly reports should include more lessons learned.

31. Some representatives emphasized the importance of the work of the science-policy foundational subprogramme of UNEP. The work of UNEP on environmental lawmaking was commended by one representative, specifically with regard to its support for and monitoring of multilateral environmental agreements and its support for the development of environmental law through the Fifth Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law.

32. The contribution of UNEP to developing the *One Health Joint Plan of Action (2022–2026): Working together for the health of humans, animals, plants and the environment* was commended by one representative, who said that preserving biodiversity and the integrity of ecosystems was essential to restricting the outbreak and reappearance of zoonoses and epidemics. One representative suggested future briefings of the subcommittee on One Health and antimicrobial resistance.

33. Turning to the seventh session of the Environment Assembly, one representative expressed regret that the concepts of equity and a just transition were not included in the theme of the seventh session of the Environment Assembly, despite support from regional groups and various delegations. Another representative said that his country would continue supporting the secretariat in the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Environment Assembly at its sixth session and thanked the secretariat for its efforts to ensure that Member States, at the seventh session, would adopt decisive resolutions that could halt and reverse the triple planetary crisis.

34. Many representatives, including several speaking on behalf of groups of countries, welcomed the upward trend in contributions to the Environment Fund, commending Member States that had already contributed and encouraging those that had not yet contributed to do so. One representative said that the positive funding trends showed that the success of UNEP was being recognized. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, requested regular updates from the secretariat on the allocation of funding to different thematic areas. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, requested further information on the resource mobilization strategy, in particular with regard to institutional outreach to philanthropic entities. In that regard, one representative said, more flexible funding could help UNEP to deliver in a more strategic and effective manner on both current and future medium-term strategies, and he encouraged UNEP to further strengthen the proof of concept for the planetary funds in order to attract more flexible funding in the future. While \$30 million represented a good start for the planetary funds, one representative requested more detailed information on the allocations of the funding to UNEP headquarters and to regional offices, and on the contributions from philanthropic organizations. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, encouraged Member States to contribute softly earmarked funding, with the representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries saying that the scope of the planetary funds should be broadened to include desertification.

35. Many representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, thanking the secretariat for the updated information on staffing, urged it to continue and accelerate efforts to achieve equitable geographical representation among its staff in the professional category. One representative, thanking the secretariat for the comparative information on staffing, noted with satisfaction that two nationals of developing countries had been appointed to leadership positions, but lamented the fact that no professionals had been selected from the Latin American and Caribbean region, despite that region being the second most poorly represented in the higher professional categories. The problem of high-level positions in certain divisions being monopolized by certain regions could be ameliorated by Member States publicizing such openings in their home countries, said one representative, as well as by fair and equitable selection processes. One representative urged UNEP to take measures to protect staff who were LGBTQ+ persons.

36. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, cautioned against the use of wording that had not been agreed within the United Nations system: people were not born vulnerable, he said, but became so due to the conditions of their environment.

37. Many representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, commented on the medium-term strategy for the period 2026–2029 and the programme of work for the biennium 2026–2027. One representative said that the forthcoming medium-term strategy and draft programme

of work should build on the work of the current strategy and programme of work and should take into account the priorities of developing countries, the needs of Member States and should be informed by the implementation systems of established frameworks, including those of the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. The next medium-term strategy should focus on areas including climate adaptation, waste management, infrastructure and equitable access to green technology. One representative requested further information on how the lessons learned and opportunities from the third quarter of 2024 would influence the development of the medium-term strategy and programme of work; another emphasized the importance of Member States providing reliable funding in order for UNEP to deliver its mandate.

38. Many representatives, including several speaking on behalf of groups of countries, commended UNEP for its work in supporting countries to address the consequences of conflict and natural disaster, including in Gaza, Sudan and Ukraine. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, requested an update on the situation of the Wada'a dam in Sudan, whose construction had been led by UNEP. The representative of France said that his country had contributed €1 million to the monitoring and assessment work of UNEP on the environmental destruction and contamination in Ukraine. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, commended UNEP for its work on the rapid damage needs assessment in Gaza, while one underlined the importance of such reports remaining consistent with the mandates of UNEP and of Environment Assembly resolution 6/12 on environmental assistance and recovery in areas affected by armed conflict. One representative commended UNEP for its work in co-chairing the Gaza debris management working group. The representative of Ukraine called on UNEP to continue providing support to his country, given the severe consequences of the war in his country.

39. One representative welcomed the engagement of UNEP with the Security Council on environment, peace and security and requested information on whether that had strengthened the position of Nairobi as the centre of environmental action, while another representative supported him in saying that it should be. One representative said that UNEP had continued to cement its position as the world's leading authority on multilateral environmental issues thanks to its contributions to a range of processes, including through normative work and support for developing countries.

40. With regard to the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, a number of representatives echoed the Executive Director in expressing satisfaction with the adoption of decision 16/6, which recognized the role of people of African descent in conserving biodiversity and implementing the Convention. Another representative welcomed the adoption of decision 16/16 on ecologically or biologically significant marine areas, which was the fruit of several years' work. Several representatives expressed their continuing support for biodiversity protection, including through the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative. One representative lamented the failure, at the sixteenth meeting, to reach agreement on resource mobilization.

41. One representative urged the secretariat to convene, prior to the 2025 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, a session to be co-hosted by Costa Rica and France to discuss a comprehensive vision for UNEP on ocean issues. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, requested information on how UNEP was preparing for the United Nations Water Conference, to be held in 2026.

42. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, underlined the value of the UNEP *Adaptation Gap* and *Emissions Gap* reports. The *Emissions Gap* report, said one, should help decision makers take the bolder action necessary to achieve the target of maintaining global temperature rises within 1.5°C of pre-industrial levels, given that, as the tenth anniversary of the Paris Agreement approached, present nationally determined contributions, if implemented, would result in warming of 2.5°C. With regard to the *Adaptation Gap* report, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed gratitude for the assistance UNEP had provided to African countries in translating their nationally determined contributions into actionable climate goals. The representative of Brazil, whose country would host the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change in Belem, in November 2025, recalled that Member States were due to submit their nationally determined contributions, which should contain individual targets to 2035, and that those targets should align with global efforts to keep temperature rise within 1.5°C of pre-industrial levels.

43. One representative said that they were encouraged by the focus of UNEP on integrating biodiversity concerns into the broader development agenda, and urged the secretariat to continue to work to enhance the synergies between biodiversity protection and poverty alleviation.
44. A number of representatives welcomed the report *Navigating New Horizons: A global foresight report on planetary health and human well-being*, with one requesting that future such reports be prepared with more active consultation with Member States. One representative drew attention to the *Global Waste Management Outlook 2024* report. One representative commended UNEP for its efforts to tackle food losses and waste, as well as the protection, restoration and sustainable management of water resources, in terms of both advocacy and policymaking.
45. One representative, taking note of the issues note produced by UNEP entitled, “Artificial intelligence (AI) end-to-end”, drew attention to the opportunities presented by the growth of artificial intelligence, as well as its negative impacts. In order to understand those impacts, a full life-cycle assessment would be needed, particularly with regard to the effects of the higher number of data centres, which consumed large amounts of water and energy, which would be examined in greater detail at the Artificial Action Summit, to be held in Paris on 10 and 11 February 2025.
46. Several representatives expressed gratitude for the support provided by UNEP to regional initiatives and forums, including the forums of ministers of the environment of Africa and of Latin America and the Caribbean. One representative said that her country was interested in exploring, with the assistance of UNEP, possibilities for South-South collaboration, which could provide benefits through the sharing of knowledge, technology and best practices. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed gratitude for the support of UNEP for United Nations resident coordinators and country teams and, welcoming the development of tailored support for them in Europe, which would help with the incorporation of environmental agendas into national development processes, one representative sought clarification of whether other regions, including Africa, could benefit from the same support. One representative said that the participation of UNEP in regional meetings of ministers of the environment helped to ensure that any commitments made at those meetings were translated into concrete actions.
47. One representative highlighted the adoption by the General Assembly at its seventy-ninth session of resolution 79/142 on World Lake Day, which had been proposed by Indonesia with 73 co-sponsors. Noting that the text of the resolution made reference to Environment Assembly resolution 5/4 on sustainable lake management, the representative expressed his gratitude to UNEP, saying that the adoption of the resolution showed that work in Nairobi influenced the dynamics of the General Assembly. The representative urged Member States and stakeholders to engage in celebration of the Day, and to assist UNEP in the celebratory efforts.
48. Several representatives said that they awaited the publication of the seventh Global Environment Outlook report with interest. One representative stressed the importance of the report in keeping policymakers informed of achievements in relation to agreed goals.
49. Several representatives drew attention to recent natural disasters, including Cyclone Chido, which had affected South-Eastern Africa, the severe flooding in the region of Valencia, Spain, and the series of tropical cyclones that had affected over 15 million people in the Philippines. A number of representatives said that the disasters exemplified the problems resulting from the growth and acceleration of climate change. One representative indicated the importance of collaborative regional approaches to increase resilience against climate impacts. One representative welcomed the decision by UNEP to join the Global Alliance Against Poverty and Hunger, while another expressed gratitude to UNEP for the support it had provided to coastal communities in Malaysia.
50. Several representatives highlighted the importance of UNEP work on air pollution, with one requesting further information on the process of deciding on the activities to celebrate the Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies, on 7 September, and on action to support the Africa Clean Air Programme. Another representative commended UNEP for its work to implement Environment Assembly resolution 6/10, on promoting regional cooperation on air pollution to improve air quality globally, which addressed the type of pollution that most affected human life. One representative highlighted the importance of the work of UNEP towards a pollution-free planet.
51. Young people must be empowered, said several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of the major groups and stakeholders, to apply their creativity and energy to climate action and to participate in policymaking. In that light, several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of the major groups and stakeholders, highlighted the importance of the Green Jobs for Youth Pact, to which one representative said that his country would contribute additional funding. Many representatives, including one speaking on behalf of the major groups and stakeholders, thanked

UNEP for its work to organize events focused on young people, and encouraged the secretariat to continue that work.

52. On environmental certifications, one representative asked for further information on how UNEP ensured transparency, noting that small and medium-sized enterprises were often prevented from accessing them due to cost.

53. One representative, said that the obligations deriving from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals were not legally binding, and, as such, each country had the right to interpret and pursue them in the manner that they saw fit.

54. Noting that UNEP was working on the reform and repurposing of environmentally harmful subsidies, one representative sought clarification of ways in which such subsidies were to be identified and eliminated.

55. The Executive Director thanked representatives for their comments and for highlighting the areas of UNEP work that they found to be particularly important and beneficial.

56. She reassured members that the UNEP programme on desertification was vibrant, including 60 projects on land degradation in 140 countries, 21 stand-alone projects and 22 blended land degradation and desertification projects, as well as some that were blended with climate change. The projects were being carried out in a range of locations, including 23 in Africa. Noting that funding for the projects amounted to \$300 million, she said that, for reasons of funding optimization, certain projects might be logged in the category of climate, for example, while including restoration work. She agreed that it was important to increase the visibility of those projects and emphasized that at no point had UNEP neglected its responsibility for the Convention to Combat Desertification. The portfolio of UNEP in that field was strong.

57. On human resources, she said that UNEP recruitment was fair, inclusive and transparent, emphasizing that efforts to reach out to potential candidates in the Latin American and Caribbean region would continue. Thanking the representative who had raised the matter of LGBTQI+ staff members, she acknowledged that it was a concern that was difficult to manage in countries where the law did not align with the expectations of the United Nations.

58. On the planetary funds, she corrected her earlier statement, confirming that \$30 million had been contributed to date, and thanked Belgium and Finland for being early contributors. It was still too early to expect funding from philanthropic organizations, but the secretariat would analyse whether UNEP should increase its engagement with such organizations and would prepare a briefing on the matter.

59. With regard to UNEP involvement in recovery from armed conflict, she drew attention to the work of UNEP in Sudan, including the environmental impact assessment of the city and state of Khartoum. The assessment had considered the impact of war in areas including Jazirah; had begun work on assessing the recently breached Arba't dam; and had recently received funding from the European Union to begin a project in Dinder on food systems and natural resources management. In Ukraine, UNEP continued to support the tracking and monitoring of the environmental impact of the war and was involved in the establishment of a coordination mechanism for fostering a green recovery.

60. UNEP would continue to work with colleagues in the State of Palestine, but gaining access was currently impossible. On the time frame for the rapid damage and needs assessment in Gaza, she confirmed that UNEP was working with the United Nations Development Programme to address the major problem of conflict-related debris management, including a debris-management pilot project under way in Khan Younis in Gaza. UNEP also remained in close contact with the Environmental Quality Authority of the State of Palestine.

61. The unit working on conflict and disasters had responded to eight emergency situations in recent years, including in Barbados, Cabo Verde, Ethiopia, Mauritius, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. UNEP remained on standby to support any request with regard to the environmental impact of Cyclone Chido. She expressed her condolences to those affected by the disaster, and noted that while catastrophes had always occurred, they were now occurring with increased intensity and frequency, which scientists had linked to climate change.

62. With regard to the impact of UNEP outputs and activity, she noted that such information was beyond the scope of the quarterly report, but could be found, together with lessons learned, in the impact assessments carried out under the programme of work. The quarterly report could only ever reflect a short summary of results, she said, as the programme now encompassed activities amounting to over \$2.45 billion. She confirmed that the uptake of UNEP work by other United Nations entities

had grown, and while UNEP could not instruct them, the organization could raise their awareness. Through the United Nations Environment Management Group, which she chaired, and which included 50 United Nations entities, a common approach had been achieved on biodiversity, plastics, and dust and sandstorms. She urged members to encourage their colleagues who sat on the governance boards of other bodies to work to improve their environmental awareness.

63. She confirmed that the secretariat was aware of the proposals on the table with regard to the minerals that were critical to the energy transition, including the conversations between Member States on traceability. UNEP would be guided by the work of the Secretary-General on minerals and the environment, but it was up to Member States to develop a transparency and traceability system similar to that which existed for other precious materials. Proposing that the seventh session of the Environment Assembly could provide a good opportunity for Member States to consider the matter, she remarked that it would be extremely interesting to see how value could be added in countries of origin, how the areas inhabited by Indigenous Peoples could be addressed and what standards should be applied.

64. She congratulated Indonesia for its successful work on the resolution on World Lakes Day, and said that UNEP would be ready to help with the annual celebrations of the Day, and urged Member States to contribute in that regard.

65. Underlining that common country analyses were conducted at the time when countries began planning their sustainable development frameworks, she said that they were prepared in accordance with available resources.

66. Thanking the representative who had proposed that UNEP should hold a pre-session event prior to the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference, she said that UNEP would be happy to provide such a briefing upon request by Member States.

67. With regard to environmental certifications, she emphasized that UNEP acted at the request of Member States, and she gave several examples of cases in which certifications had helped, rather than hindered, small and medium-sized enterprises. With regard to harmful subsidies, she said that UNEP responded to the requests for information made by Member States.

68. Noting that the secretariat would be happy to provide further briefings to the subcommittee on its health-related work, as requested, she thanked the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection for its considerable support to UNEP work on nature and health, which helped UNEP to support Member States in handling complex diseases that could migrate from the natural to the animal and possibly human environment.

69. The representative of the Russian Federation, speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that meetings of the Committee, whose focus was environmental matters, were not the appropriate place for statements related to conflict.

70. The representative of Ukraine, also speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he had not sought to politicize the work of UNEP, but to highlight the environmental damage resulting from the conflict.

Agenda item 5

Development of a medium-term strategy for the period 2026–2029 and a draft programme of work and budget for the period 2026–2027

71. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to the summary of budget envelope options for the programme of work for the biennium 2026–2027 and the synthesis report of the informal Member States' dialogues on the development of the medium-term strategy for the period 2026–2029, as set out in documents UNEP/CPR/168/6 and UNEP/CPR/168/7.

72. The Executive Director thanked members and major groups and stakeholders for their involvement in the informal dialogues on the medium-term strategy for the period 2026–2029, held in October and November. The inclusive and transparent process had enlightened the secretariat about the priorities of Member States, which would help in the development of the first draft. Specifically, it was clear that the strategy should be aspirational and achievable; it must incorporate accountability and should build on the existing strategic framework; clarity was needed around the three priority subprogrammes and four foundational programmes; involving stakeholders, maintaining the interest of Member States and prioritization were critical; the private sector must be mobilized to become part of the solution; emphasis should be given to the Global South, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States; and coordination should be improved with

multilateral environmental agreements, including with regard to support from UNEP for countries to implement such agreements, including through funding, capacity-building, technical assistance and assistance to meet their national reporting obligations. All members had mentioned the importance of secure, stable and adequate funding, and she expressed the hope that those words would be followed with action.

73. She confirmed that explicit mention would be made, when describing the programmes, to land degradation, desertification and drought, and water scarcity. The strategic framing would be important and, with that in mind, she proposed that nature and land loss could be the second strategic objective. The analysis of the seventh Global Environment Outlook report would provide valuable information on the matter.

74. Noting that the secretariat had presented budget envelope options for the programme of work for the period 2026–2027 at the meeting of the subcommittee held on 3 December, she thanked members for their observations on the matter. She briefly described the three options, each of which presented differing proportional contributions by the five major funding sources, namely the regular budget of the United Nations, which accounted for 5 per cent of the overall UNEP budget; the Environment Fund; the earmarked funds; the programme support funds; and the global funds, such as the Global Environment Facility.

75. The secretariat recommended option C, which would enable UNEP to deliver on the ambition set by Member States for the new medium-term strategy and programme of work. Under option C, the regular budget contribution would remain at \$24.6 million per year, or \$49.2 million over the biennium, and the contributions from the other sources would increase by 10 per cent. Under that scenario, total funding would amount to \$1.28 billion. Acknowledging that the figure sounded large, she recalled that the assigned portfolio of UNEP was presently \$2.45 billion and, as such, option C was entirely within the scope of the organization. Confidence in UNEP was growing, she said, as the increase in contributions showed, and she encouraged all Member States to push to reach their indicative contributions, while recognizing their differing abilities to pay.

76. In the ensuing discussion, all the representatives who spoke thanked the Executive Director for the briefing. Many representatives, including some speaking on behalf of groups of countries thanked the secretariat for organizing the informal dialogues on the medium-term strategy, and one said that consultations should continue throughout the process of developing the strategy. Several others underlined the importance of a transparent, open and inclusive process. One representative said that formal discussions should also be held to achieve the greatest impact.

77. Some representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, requested more information on how the synthesis report would feed into the development of the zero draft of the medium-term strategy. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that they looked forward to receiving the zero draft in time to be able to provide feedback. One representative emphasized that the medium-term strategy should be results-based.

78. A number of representatives speaking on behalf of groups of countries said that the synthesis report did not capture some of the priorities they had expressed during the dialogues. Several representatives, including some speaking on behalf of groups of countries, said that it was important to include desertification, land degradation, drought, water scarcity, floods, food security, and sand and dust storms, which were acute issues for developing countries and should be given equal consideration to other matters, as they accentuated the issues of poverty and food insecurity. The proposed inclusion of desertification, land degradation and drought within the category of nature did not adequately reflect the importance of those concerns, said one representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries, as the issues merited targeted attention. The lack of attention to drought and desertification had resulted in insufficient action, including the absence of funding lines on those issues from the Global Environment Facility, said one representative. One representative recalled that the groups that were most vulnerable to drought and desertification were Indigenous Peoples, riverine communities and local populations.

79. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, reiterated her group's reservations about the use of the term "triple planetary crisis", which, she said, could lead to the understanding that the relevant areas were prioritized to the detriment of others. One representative sought clarification of whether the replacement, in the seventh Global Environment Outlook report, of the term "triple planetary crisis" with "global environmental crisis" would affect the index and table of contents of the medium-term strategy.

80. Nature loss was not the same as biodiversity loss, said one representative, and land degradation did not necessarily result in or from biodiversity loss. Indeed, she suggested that rather than

“biodiversity loss”, it would be better to work under the heading “biodiversity”, in order to better reflect the name of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

81. Priorities and objectives for inclusion in the medium-term strategy should be identified according to the needs of Member States, said one representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries, and should address critical and emerging issues, including those identified in the performance review and assessment of the implementation system of the Convention to Combat Desertification, the nationally determined contributions and technology needs assessments of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the reports on land degradation and restoration of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

82. It was important for the forthcoming medium-term strategy to include a focus on climate adaptation and waste management infrastructure, said one representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries. A number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that it should include equitable access to green technology.

83. In relation to key message 3 of the synthesis report, in particular the section on the contribution of UNEP to shaping the relationship between peace, justice, and inclusive societies for sustainable development, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the medium-term strategy should be connected to the role played by UNEP in achieving the environmental aspects of Sustainable Development Goal 16, on peace, justice and strong institutions. A number of representatives said that the next medium-term strategy should be adaptable to emerging environmental disasters and conflicts. One of them cautioned that conflict must not be addressed in such a way as to securitize environmental issues, while the other said that the strategy must be able to adapt to new concerns such as those around artificial intelligence.

84. In relation to key message 5, one representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries said that, when referring to the inclusion of vulnerable groups disproportionately affected by the energy transition, only language that had been agreed within the United Nations system should be used, as humans were not inherently vulnerable. The same representative requested that people of African descent be included in the list of vulnerable groups, as they had been in the texts of the Pact for the Future and decision 16/6 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. One representative underlined the importance of a human rights-based approach being followed throughout the medium-term strategy and programme of work, and called for specific mention to be made to persons with disabilities. One representative said that the synthesis report did not adequately highlight the interconnected nature of environmental management, sustainable development and poverty eradication, particularly in regions where local communities relied on natural resources for their livelihoods. It also failed to adequately address the interests of informal workers and marginalized communities, such as waste pickers.

85. Several representatives said that the next medium-term strategy should promote synergies among multilateral environmental agreements and avoid duplication of efforts, including by improving collaboration with other United Nations entities, and by improving the coordination with United Nations resident coordinators and country teams, in order to ensure that the strategy was responsive to the needs of Member States and fit for national-level implementation. One representative said that such an approach would be in accordance with the requests of the Environment Assembly in its resolutions 6/4 and 6/6.

86. One representative said that water should be a cross-cutting issue in the next medium-term strategy and proposed several texts for reference in its development, including Environment Assembly resolutions 4/12, 4/16, 5/4 and 6/13, the declaration of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change at its twenty-ninth session, the work on water of the Group of 20, the outcomes of the 2023 United Nations Water Conference, and the recent resolution of the General Assembly on World Lake Day. Some representatives suggested that, for greater clarity, the secretariat refer to “water challenges” instead of “water insecurity”. One representative said that, to ensure a holistic and efficient approach that could deliver results, it was important to ensure that a link existed between Environment Assembly resolutions and their implementation and the medium-term strategy.

87. One representative requested further information on the status of the situational analysis.

88. Many representatives contributed to the discussion of the summary of budget envelope options, with several expressing their preference for a particular option or options. Several representatives expressed support for a realistic but ambitious programme of work and budget, stressing their importance in ensuring that UNEP remained a leading global environmental authority.

89. One representative said that the global inflation rate predictions of the International Monetary Fund did not provide a sound basis for anticipating the effects of inflation on UNEP programmes,

which were not evenly distributed around the world. Another representative asked whether the secretariat could demonstrate the effects of inflation on the work of UNEP over the past year. A number of representatives requested further information on the basis for the expected increase in revenue. Several representatives said that it was not realistic to propose that the budget be increased given that contributions to the Environment Fund had never previously reached the approved budget of \$100 million.

90. Several representatives expressed support for budget envelope option A, which, they said, best reflected the budgeting realities of many governments and took into consideration the considerable additional resources that UNEP could obtain by growing the number of contributors to the Environment Fund. Several representatives underlined the importance of applying a clear resource mobilization strategy to ensure that countries that were already providing their share of support were not overburdened, and sought clarification regarding the strategies UNEP intended to use to encourage increased contributions. One representative urged UNEP to include in the medium-term strategy and programme of work wording that would encourage Member States that had not yet done so to contribute their fair share, in order to broaden the base of contributors and enhance predictability. One representative supported following zero real growth for the Environment Fund and regular budget, as in option A, but allowing increased contributions from the other sources of funding.

91. Several representatives requested more detailed information on the proposed budget increases in options B and C. One of them requested further detail on the reasons for the preference of UNEP for option C and asked what tangible impact the increase would have on planning. One representative sought clarification on the ways in which developing countries would be affected under budget envelope option A; which areas of work would be prioritized under option B to ensure that developing countries would not lose crucial support to achieve their environmental objectives; which option would enable the most equitable distribution of funds between vulnerable regions; and the risks of not approving option C, which was the most ambitious scenario.

92. One representative asked whether the recent changes to the salaries of UNEP staff based in Nairobi would impact the Environment Fund. Another asked whether the proposed increase of resources in the Environment Fund was expected to eventually lead to higher income from the Global Environment Facility and the Green Climate Fund and, if that was the case, what mechanisms had been established to facilitate access to such funding. Another representative asked the secretariat to provide information that supported the assertion that the proposed approach represented a reasonable estimate for the biennium. With regard to the earmarked and global funds, one representative asked for more information on the proposed change to the method of calculating funding needs, which the secretariat proposed to base on average expenditure rather than the budgets for the period 2020–2024.

93. One representative urged UNEP to take into consideration the sovereignty of States and the differences in their legal and regulatory systems, and the need to respect national priorities. In particular, the definition of “environmental rule of law” needed clarification, as it could be seen as an infringement of national sovereignty, while the relationship between human rights and environmental objectives required greater elaboration, given the diversity of legal systems.

94. The Executive Director agreed that water was a broader category than was sometimes assumed and thanked the representative who had mentioned potentially relevant documents.

95. She reiterated that UNEP did a great deal of work on desertification and drought, albeit under a range of headings for reasons to do with securing funding. The funding received by the organization from the Global Environment Facility and Green Climate Fund fell largely under the categories of climate and biodiversity; however, UNEP work on adaptation and biodiversity were in effect work on land. It would not be possible to create an eighth programme for desertification and drought alone, but the secretariat would ensure that the activities were identified under clear headings in order that members could see the work that was taking place. She asked for members’ understanding on the matter.

96. On broadening the contributor base, she said that the hard work of UNEP to increase both numbers of members and of substantive contributors had led to the growth in funding, and confidence was growing among donors. She reiterated that, at the time of the establishment of UNEP in 1972, it had been estimated that the Environment Fund would need annual funding of \$100 million, which was the sum that UNEP was inching towards in 2024, rather than the equivalent amount accounting for inflation of \$700–800 million per year. She expressed confidence in the accuracy of the estimates, noting that the secretariat had not wanted to leave itself unable to receive or encourage increased resources.

97. The Executive Director said that several factors had led to higher salary expenses. One factor had been the increase by 30 and then 33 per cent of the salaries of General Service staff based in Nairobi, effective from November 2023, followed by a further increase of 4.9 per cent in November 2024. The post adjustments of Professional staff based in Nairobi had also risen to 54 per cent. As a consequence, the proportion of the Environment Fund allocated to staffing costs had risen from 64 per cent in 2020 to a projected 76 per cent in 2025, which had only made UNEP more prudent in staff recruitment. The secretariat would share relevant information on donors at an appropriate time.

98. In the case that budget envelope options B or C were approved, a larger budget would be available for discretionary activities, meaning that funding could be allocated to areas beyond staffing, including enabling a faster response to issues raised by Member States than would be possible with earmarked and global funds. She confirmed that, informally, the secretariat had received reasonable assurances from the Global Environment Facility and the Global Climate Fund that the projected income for the biennium from those sources would be sufficient to meet the budget. In response to the question about the change in the method of calculating the budget, she said that the new approach to the earmarked funding provided a more realistic picture, a matter on which other United Nations bodies also agreed.

99. Confirming that UNEP worked closely with regional representatives using the regional collaborative platforms, she noted that a recent meeting with United Nations resident coordinators in African countries had been held in Nairobi after the period under review.

100. On the use of the term “global planetary crisis”, it was important to reflect the indivisibility of the crises affecting the planet, but also to examine them as individual phenomena in order to organize information and ensure accountability.

101. With regard to the situational analysis, it had been decided that, before publication, it would be beneficial to reflect on recently concluded events, including several meetings of conferences of the parties.

102. Thanking members for their comments, she said that the secretariat had taken them into account and would look more closely at the options before presenting them to Member States during a second round of consultations. It was important to take inflationary pressures into account, but if Member States decided on a more conservative option, UNEP would adhere to that.

Agenda item 6

Preparations for the seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

103. Introducing the key developments relevant to the preparations for the seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly on behalf of the President of the Assembly, Nasra Salim Mohamed Al Hashmi (Oman) drew attention to the President’s letter of 12 December 2024, in which the theme of the seventh session had been defined as “Advancing sustainable solutions for a resilient planet”, and the draft road map for an iterative, open, transparent, participatory and inclusive intergovernmental consultation process on the draft ministerial declaration of the seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly as set out in document UNEP/CPR/168/8.

104. In the ensuing discussion, several representatives provided comments on the road map.

105. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the proposed process for developing the ministerial declaration, noting that taking the views of stakeholders, young people and civil society into account was vital to garnering maximum support for the declaration. A representative of the major groups and stakeholders said that capacity-building sessions and additional participatory mechanisms, such as regional consultation hubs, online forums and thematic dialogues, should be considered as ways of improving involvement in the process of producing the draft ministerial declaration. One representative asked for further information on how the lessons learned from the sixth session, as endorsed by the Committee at its 167th meeting, would be incorporated into the process of developing the ministerial declaration. Many representatives, including several speaking on behalf of groups of countries, stressed the importance of basing the process on lessons learned. One representative proposed that consultations with regional groups be added to the intergovernmental consultations in the road map. A representative of the major groups and stakeholders requested, in the name of trust and accountability, that a summary be published of how feedback was considered and integrated at each phase of the iterative process.

106. Several representatives expressed dissatisfaction with the proposed procedure for developing the ministerial declaration. Some noted that the practice, at the fifth and sixth sessions, of adopting

ministerial declarations that had not been negotiated had led to reduced ownership by Member States, as had been shown by the number of explanatory statements issued after the approval of the ministerial declaration of the sixth session. Several representatives recommended returning to the practice of negotiated ministerial declarations, including, if necessary, line-by-line negotiations, as the only way to ensure that all views were reflected. A number of representatives underlined the importance of agreeing as much of the ministerial declaration as possible in advance of the high-level segment and avoiding discussions involving ministerial-level officials. One representative expressed support for involvement at the ministerial level in resolving any outstanding issues in the ministerial declaration, if necessary, as was the common practice in other similar forums. A number of representatives said that the ministerial declaration was not, technically, a negotiated text, but was subject to the prerogative of the presidency.

107. Several representatives said that the text of the declaration should be agreed prior to the start of the seventh session, in order to maximize the time available for the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives to consider other matters related to the seventh session.

108. One representative highlighted the importance, in accordance with the lessons learned from the sixth session, of making effective use of the intersessional period and facilitating the meaningful participation of all Member States in Environment Assembly sessions. He emphasized that the launch of the seventh Global Environment Outlook report should be used to draw attention to its guidance on effective responses to the global environmental crisis.

109. One representative proposed that the President of the seventh session consider issuing a President's statement in place of a ministerial declaration. The presidency would be well-placed to provide an accurate summary of the seventh session, and more time would thus be made available for Member States to focus on the substantive outcomes of the session, including resolutions and decisions. Another representative expressed alarm at the proposal.

110. A number of representatives speaking on behalf of groups of countries said that the declaration should focus on the global environmental agenda in a concise, forward-looking, ambitious and action-oriented manner. One said that it should include reference to the Convention to Combat Desertification, while another, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that it should be aligned with the theme of the seventh session and developed on the basis of the scientific assessments.

111. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the theme of the seventh session, noting that it was easy to communicate and inclusive. Several other representatives expressed dissatisfaction with the theme, however, stressing that it did not reflect all the concerns that had been expressed, in particular regarding the concepts of justice and equity, and the just transition. One representative said that, in deciding upon the theme, it had been important not to include terms that might be used in different ways by different countries.

112. One representative asked for the background document on the theme of the seventh session to be revised to reflect the proposals made by his country and other Member States at the joint meeting of the bureaux of the Environment Assembly and of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, held on 11 December, or to be removed from the web page of that meeting.

113. One representative requested that the deadline for the submission of written inputs on key issues to be included in the zero draft of the ministerial declaration be postponed to at least the end of February 2025 in order to allow for the summer recess in the southern hemisphere.

114. One representative asked for information on how the resumed fifth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, and the diplomatic conference of plenipotentiaries for the purpose of adopting the instrument and opening it for signature, and the signing of the new instrument would fit in with the preparations for the seventh session.

115. The Executive Director said that discussions were ongoing regarding the resumed fifth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee, which would not be convened until there was sufficient confidence that the negotiations would be concluded at that session. It was too early to give a precise idea of the date of that resumed session or of the diplomatic conference, but it was to be hoped that the process would conclude in 2025.

116. A representative of the secretariat, referring to the request regarding the background document on the theme for the seventh session, drew attention to the fact that meeting documents were uploaded to the portals of such meetings in two categories: pre-session and post-session. The background document was a pre-session document for consideration at the joint meeting of the bureaux of the seventh session of the Environment Assembly and of the Committee of Permanent Representatives,

held on 11 December 2024, and specifically mentioned that it was intended to guide the discussion of the bureaux at that meeting; as such it was not intended to reflect the views expressed by Bureau members at the joint meeting. It would remain on the web portal, she said, for reasons of transparency.

117. She emphasized that the presidency of the seventh session had taken the lessons learned from the sixth session into account when developing the road map, in particular the need for an action-oriented document that was closely linked to the theme of the seventh session and the theme of the annual meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, as applicable; and the recommendation that it should be an iterative, open, transparent, participatory and inclusive intergovernmental process based on inputs by Member States and that the Committee should consider the nature and process of developing the draft ministerial declaration. The road map was intended to guide Member States and would be adjusted as the process moved forward. She took note of the suggestion regarding regional group consultations and drew attention to the indication, in the road map, of the importance of enabling delegates that were based in their national capitals to participate, noting that arrangements would be made to facilitate their participation.

Agenda item 7

Consideration of relevant evaluation reports and audits

118. Owing to time constraints, the Committee decided to consider the agenda item at a forthcoming meeting of the subcommittee.

Agenda item 8

Report of the subcommittee

119. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to the documents entitled, “Draft report of the subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives” (UNEP/CPR/168/3/Rev.1), “Draft recommendations of the Committee of Permanent Representatives at its eleventh annual subcommittee meeting” (UNEP/CPR/168/4) and “Draft recommendations proposed by members of the Committee at subcommittee meetings for consideration by the Committee at its 168th quarterly meeting” (UNEP/CPR/168/5/Rev.1).

120. Several members of the Committee, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, called for all the draft recommendations to be implemented in an equal manner. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, called for the reinsertion of a draft recommendation, which no longer appeared in document UNEP/CPR/168/5/Rev.1, and which had addressed the significant gaps in the use of digital solutions in developed and developing countries, including for the purposes of data collection and reporting. Another representative said that, while he welcomed further discussion of the recommendation at a future meeting of the subcommittee, it was important to understand the origin of the proposed recommendation and to ensure that it aligned with the mandate of the Committee. One representative said that a clear basis for the recommendation had been established in paragraph 5 (h), (i) and (j) of the ministerial declaration of the fourth session of the Environment Assembly, on the use and development of environmental data and monitoring systems. He said that the mandate was also established under articles 43, 44 and 45 of the Global Digital Compact.

121. The Committee decided to defer discussion of the proposed recommendation to the subcommittee meeting to be held prior to the 169th meeting of the Committee. The Committee adopted the draft recommendations as set out in document UNEP/CPR/168/4 and adopted the draft decision set out therein. Decision 168/1 is set out in the annex to the present draft minutes. The Committee adopted the draft recommendation as set out in document UNEP/CPR/168/5/Rev.1, and adopted the draft decision set out therein. Decision 168/2 is set out in the annex to the present minutes. The Committee endorsed the draft report of the subcommittee as set out in document UNEP/CPR/168/3/Rev.1.

Agenda item 9

Any other business

122. One representative expressed regret that discussion on the draft recommendation on the review of thematic programmes had been postponed not to the following subcommittee meeting, but to a subsequent one to be held prior to the 169th meeting of the Committee

Agenda item 10**Closure of the meeting**

123. The meeting was declared closed at 6.25 p.m. on Tuesday, 17 December 2024.

Annex I

Decision 168/1: Recommendations of the Committee of Permanent Representatives at its eleventh annual subcommittee meeting

The Committee of Permanent Representatives,

Recalling the draft recommendations proposed by delegations at the eleventh annual subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme, held in Nairobi from 8 to 12 July 2024,

Recalling also decision 167/1 of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, adopted at its 167th meeting, on 12 September 2024,

Noting the discussions of the subcommittee at its meetings on 29 October 2024 and 5 November 2024,

(a) Review of thematic programmes of the United Nations Environment Programme in its programme of work¹

1. *Requests* the secretariat to report to the Committee on the identification of challenges and opportunities associated with enhancement of the provision and mobilization of resources for climate adaptation, pollution, biodiversity loss and the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework;

2. *Also requests* the secretariat, when developing the seventh Global Environment Outlook report, to strive, in accordance with paragraph 5 of resolution 5/3 of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme, to avoid duplication of work with existing assessments and other science-policy processes, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, the International Resource Panel, the future science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution, whose establishment was called for in Environment Assembly resolution 5/8, and subsidiary bodies of relevant multilateral environmental agreements;

3. *Welcomes* the changes proposed in the programme performance report of the United Nations Environment Programme for the biennium 2022–2023 to further strengthen delivery of the medium-term strategy of the Programme for the period 2022–2025 through the thematic programmes “Pollution and Health”, “Towards Zero Waste” and “Circularity in Sectors”, and requests the secretariat to implement those changes with full respect for the mandate of the Programme;

4. *Requests* the secretariat to present, during the development of the programme of work and budget for the biennium 2026–2027 and the medium-term strategy for the period 2026–2029, a vision for the implementation of the recommendations contained in the evaluation synthesis report for the biennium 2022–2023 on the foundational subprogrammes on science-policy and environmental governance and on giving consideration to the provision of capacity-building to developing countries, for discussion by the Committee of Permanent Representatives;

5. *Reiterates* the request of the Environment Assembly, in its decision 6/7, that the draft medium-term strategy for the period 2026–2027 be prepared through open, transparent and inclusive consultation with Member States and fully taking into account the views of Member States;

6. *Requests* the secretariat to include in future programme performance reports an overview of challenges, opportunities and lessons learned for all subprogrammes and management and financial matters. Lessons learned should be strategic and analytic and relate to both context and partners, as well as to programmatic and institutional lessons relevant to the improvement by the United Nations Environment Programme of its operations and performance;

7. *Recommends* that the secretariat improve the integration and linking of information on policy work, results, available financial resources and expenditure in future programme performance reports;

¹ Highlights of the discussions at the eleventh annual subcommittee meeting are set out in the final chair’s summary of the meeting (UNEP/CPR/ASC/11/9/Rev.2).

8. *Also recommends* that the secretariat continue to brief the subcommittee on the geographical distribution of United Nations Environment Programme staff and include in reports of the Executive Director to the Committee explicit information on changes in the ratios of representation for at least the three previous years;

9. *Requests* the secretariat to brief the subcommittee on the development of an updated gender strategy, as well as on the implementation of the recommendations regarding gender contained in the evaluation synthesis report for the biennium 2022–2023;

10. *Also requests* the secretariat to brief the Committee on progress in the implementation of Environment Assembly resolutions 6/7 and 6/14, including options for consideration by the Committee on the integration of the resolutions into the medium-term strategy for the period 2026–2029 and the programme of work and budget for the biennium 2026–2027;

(b) Management and administration of the United Nations Environment Programme

11. *Further requests* the secretariat to follow up on the decision of the Committee to include evaluations and audits as a standing item on the agenda of the quarterly meetings of the Committee and to present, in preparation for those meetings, the relevant audit and evaluation reports, including related management responses, to the subcommittee for review and possible recommendations;

12. *Requests* the secretariat to prioritize the implementation of all outstanding recommendations contained in audits, investigations and evaluation reports;

13. *Also requests* the secretariat to develop concrete steps to improve performance-related indicators in regard to the executive direction and management subprogrammes of the United Nations Environment Programme and present them to the subcommittee at a future meeting;

14. *Reiterates* the encouragement expressed by the Committee in paragraph 4 of decision 164/1;

(c) United Nations Environment Programme evaluation reports

15. *Takes note* of the evaluation synthesis report for the biennium 2022–2023 and strongly recommends that the secretariat strengthen the likelihood of impact, the achievement of project outcomes and the sustainability dimensions of projects in the programme of work and budget for the biennium 2026–2027 and subsequent programmes of work;

16. *Recommends* that the secretariat strengthen its institutional learning through the implementation of the recommendations of evaluations during the development of new policies and project designs, and that it present proposals for how it intends to do so during the consultations on the medium-term strategy for the period 2026–2029;

(d) Coordination within the United Nations system on the environment through the United Nations Environment Management Group

17. *Highlights* the importance of regular briefings on the work of the United Nations Environment Management Group at future subcommittee meetings;

(e) Road map for the development of a medium-term strategy for the period 2026–2029 and a draft programme of work and budget for the biennium 2026–2027

18. *Requests* the secretariat to fully reflect the implementation of the outcomes of the Environment Assembly in the draft medium-term strategy;

19. *Also requests* the secretariat to include in the draft medium-term strategy a full range of environmental challenges;

20. *Welcomes* the results of the lessons learned from new evaluations and audits and, recalling Environment Assembly decision 6/7, paragraph 9, and Environment Assembly resolution 4/18, paragraph 8, requests the secretariat to include an explicit focus on the linkages between poverty and the environment in the draft medium-term strategy, for discussion by the Committee;

21. *Requests* the secretariat to indicate clearly and early in the process how lessons learned from the implementation of the current medium-term strategy and programme of work will be taken into account in the development of the medium-term strategy for the period 2026–2029 and future iterations of the programme of work;

22. *Recommends* that the secretariat highlight in the road map the regional consultations on the medium-term strategy and programme of work;

23. *Also recommends* that the secretariat continue to enhance the consideration of the role and viability of regional forums of ministers of environment and environmental authorities in the work of the United Nations Environment Programme, specifically when considering the development of the medium-term strategy for the period 2026–2029 and future programmes of work, in accordance with Environment Assembly resolution 6/3, paragraph 1 (a);

24. *Requests* the secretariat to present to the Committee information on how it will refine its engagement with the private sector² in the context of the United Nations Environment Programme resource mobilization strategy;

25. *Recommends* that the secretariat schedule more meetings at the level of the subcommittee, including informal meetings aimed at forging consensus on a robust and efficient road map.

² United Nations Environment Programme, *Harnessing the Private Sector for Solutions to the Three Planetary Environmental Crises: 2023 Report to the Committee of Permanent Representatives on Private Sector Engagement* (Nairobi, 2024). Available at <https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/45896>.

Annex II

Decision 168/2: Recommendations of the Committee of Permanent Representatives at its 168th quarterly meeting

The Committee of Permanent Representatives,

Recalling paragraph 2 of its decision 167/2 on improving the identification, formulation and recording of decisions and conclusions of the Committee of Permanent Representatives,

Noting the discussion held during the subcommittee meetings of the Committee on 19 September 2024 and 3 December 2024;

Outcome from the third authors meeting for the seventh Global Environment Outlook report and on the development of the summary for policymakers of the seventh Global Environment Outlook report¹

1. *Requests* the secretariat to align the seventh Global Environment Outlook report to the core functions of the Global Environment Outlook process established in paragraph 5 of Environment Assembly resolution 5/3, namely to evaluate the effectiveness of the global policy response, evaluate future perspectives for all five environmental themes addressed in previous Global Environment Outlook assessments, and evaluate the drivers of environmental change and the interactions across these environmental themes;

2. *Requests* the Executive Director, pursuant to paragraph 13 of Environment Assembly resolution 5/3, to consult more regularly with the Committee of Permanent Representatives on important elements of the Global Environment Outlook process.

¹ Highlights of the discussion under item 2 of the agenda of the subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives held on 19 September 2024, namely “Secretariat briefing on the outcome from the third authors meeting for the seventh Global Environment Outlook and on the development of the GEO-7 Summary for Policy Makers” can be found in the Chair’s summary of that meeting.