

The Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly  
Wednesday, 10 August 2016  
5:15 to 6:50 pm  
UNEP Executive Boardroom

### **MEETING SUMMARY**

#### **1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda.**

H.E. Mr. Edgar Gutiérrez Espeleta, President of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and Minister of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica, chaired the meeting. He welcomed all the participants.

The meeting was attended by the following members of the Bureau:

- **Czech Republic (VP)** Mr. Lukas Pokorny, representing H.E. Mr. Vladislav Smrž, Deputy Minister, Ministry of the Environment, *by audio link*
- **Gabon (VP)** H.E. Mrs. Josephine Flore Mistoul Yame, Minister of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources, representing H.E. Mr. Emmanuel Issoze Ngondet, Minister of Foreign Affairs, *by video link*
- **Iraq (VP)** H.E. Mr. Jassim Humadi, Acting Minister of Health and Environment, *by video link*
- **Nigeria (VP)** H.E. Mrs Amina Mohammed, Minister of Environment, *by video link*
- **Philippines (VP)** H.E. Mr Ramon J.P. Paje, Senior Advisor to the Climate Change Commission., *by video link*
- **USA (VP)** Mr. John Matuszak, Senior Advisor, Office of Environmental Quality and Transboundary Issues, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, Department of State, *by video link*
- **Belgium (Rapporteur)** H.E. Ms. Roxane de Bilderling, Ambassador and Permanent Representative.

Other representatives

- **Chair of the CPR**, H.E. Ms. Julia Pataki Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Romania
- Mr. Jamal Abdullah Khudhair Dulami, DPR Iraq, Nairobi
- Mr. Friday O. Okai, Charge d' Affaires a.i., High Commission of Nigeria, Nairobi
- Mr. Oluwadare Oni, High Commission of Nigeria, Nairobi
- Atty. Jonas R. Leones, Undersecretary from Philippines, , *by video link*
- Ms. Majella Cristy U Pua-Diezmos, DPR Philippines, Nairobi
- Mr. Joel B. Hansen DPR of USA, Nairobi
- Mr. Louis Leandre Ebobola, Director General, Ministry of Environment, Gabon, *by video link*
- Mr. Vincent Willekens , DPR Belgium, Nairobi

The Secretariat was represented by the UNEP Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director, Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Governing Bodies. Ms. Elizabeth Mrema, Director for Division on Environmental Law and Conventions, and Ms. Jacqueline McGlade, Director of the

Division of Early Warning and Assessments made presentations under agenda items 3 and 4 respectively.

The meeting adopted the agenda and the President thanked everyone for their hard work and support that contributed to the success of UNEA-2.

## **2. Assessment of the Second Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEA-2)**

At the invitation by the President, the Executive Director, Mr. Erik Solheim introduced the item on the assessment of UNEA-2. He stated that the overall judgment was that UNEA had been a successful meeting. However, ultimately success should not be measured by the passing of 25 resolutions but by their implementation and relevance to ordinary people. On UNEA-3, he underscored 3 main areas for consideration;

- Enhancing the visibility of UNEA-3.
- Putting in place a structure of the Assembly that allows more focus on real debate with Member State contributions to the core issues.
- Identifying key deliverables and pinpointing major environment and political priorities for UNEA-3

In her briefing to the meeting, the Chair of the CPR agreed with the Executive Director and provided an update on the assessment by CPR members, which was done in a positive and constructive manner. The recommendations, which would help address procedural, administrative and managerial challenges included:

- Greater cooperation between the CPR and UNEA bureaus.
- Regular consultations within regional and political groups not only in the intersessional period but also during UNEA sessions. In this regard she was of the view that the retreat proposed by the President was a good idea.
- Early decision on the structure and organization of the High Level Segment (HLS) and Committee of the Whole (COW). On the Committee of the Whole, this should include nomination of the chairs and co-chairs before UNEA-3 to facilitate smooth transition.
- Creative solutions to enhance transparency and inclusiveness of the Member States without resident representation in Nairobi. This could include through regional fora.
- Need to devise an approach to non-environmental contentious issues.
- Early negotiation of the outcome document focusing on key political issues to enhance the visibility of UNEA.
- Need for a communication strategy to enhance UNEA's visibility at the national, regional and global levels.

In the light of the above recommendations, the chair proposed an informal working group of the CPR to work on possible amendments to the Rules of Procedure. It would help strengthen UNEA as a universal body. She also called for more comments on the draft recommendations, which would be considered at the 136<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the CPR.

### **Comments by Bureau Members**

The meeting discussed at length the assessment of UNEA-2 and recommendations for UNEA-3. Recommendations and issues raised included the following:

- Support for one or two key deliverables.
- Need to clarify the roles of the CPR and the UNEA Bureau.
- Some members felt that negotiations in the inter-sessional period were not very favorable since even countries represented in Nairobi reopened draft resolutions.
- Avoid proliferation of working groups and informal groups which adversely affected

participation of small delegations.

- Consider non contentious resolutions in the plenary of Committee of the Whole.
- Ministerial dialogues should be more interactive.
- On the Rules of Procedure, members asked for the possibility of briefing notes providing explanations on decision making especially voting procedures ahead of UNEA-3.
- Support for the establishment of an informal open ended working group to undertake full review of the Rules of Procedure.
- Institution of deadline for submitting draft resolutions. There was a suggestion for submission of resolutions in January and the deadline in July to allow time for negotiations and to work on the guidelines for the meetings.
- Enhance public awareness about UNEA. This could include dedicated channel on UN website on UN TV.
- One representative was of the view that the assessment of UNEA-2 should be done with participation from capitals and not just by the CPR.
- Politically charged resolutions should not be avoided as the strength of UNEA would be gauged by its capacity to reach consensus on or handle contentious issues. Drafting groups could be established to handle contentious issues.
- The adoption of non-contentious resolutions could be done as early in the HLS to generate positive momentum.
- There was need for a higher level of participation of the ministers in contentious negotiations to help prevent dragging out the process
- The need to look into how the Assembly does business especially in how the plenaries are held. There should be more interaction among the regional groups
- Better results can be achieved by breaking down the silos and the focus should be on how UNEA can coordinate different strands of sustainable development, addressed in other global meetings.
- More time does not necessarily translate into better results on reaching consensus on matters like the Outcome document.
- Importance of low hanging fruit that can help ministers and national delegations communicate what they got from UNEA-2.

The President thanked the members of the Bureau for their frank and in depth discussion and requested them to submit their comments in writing as they would provide inputs for the discussions in October.

### **3. Outcome of the High-Level Political Forum**

Introducing this agenda item, the President informed the meeting that the governing bodies of UNEP were well represented in New York by the UNEA President and the CPR Chair. He however expressed concern about the limited opportunities for the ministers of Environment to participate in the political dialogue and emphasized the need for more efforts to ensure the visibility and relevance of environmental issues in sustainable development at the High Level Political Forum.

The Executive Director concurred and suggested more direct contacts and outreach with representatives in New York on how UNEA can be better positioned at the HLPF. The issue went beyond speaking slots to political impact so that UNEA could be more visible at HLPF future sessions.

At the Executive Director's invitation, the Director for Division on Environmental Law and Conventions, Ms. Elizabeth Mrema gave a summary of the two day UNEP workshop that took place in New York. The back drop for the discussion was how UNEA could be seen as the leading global environmental authority whose presence was felt in the ECOSOC and UNGA. Some of the issues discussed included;

- Differentiate UNEA from Governing Council. Difference was not yet visible beyond an increase in numbers.
- Need to break silos and in the spirit of integration, demonstrate that UNEA can look at sustainable development issues other than the environment. This should include the engagement of other ministries like those of finance and planning
- Ensure that UNEA is seen as a political authority and not a negotiation forum
- Ensure that UNEA actually contributes to the environmental dimension in the 2030 agenda with focus on lessons of moving from MDGs to SDGs
- Enhancing the governance of the UNEP governing bodies by increasing accreditation to the CPR.
- Enhance role of UNEP in UN system wide coordination on the environment
- Strengthen cooperation between UNEP and MEAs
- Reflect on the future we want for UNEA on partnerships and whether or not new partnerships should be brought on board

The Chair of the CPR made additional comments on the interlinkages between UNEA and UNEP. On the role of UNEP, its normative function, voice and focus on implementation should be enhanced. UNEP's capacity to deal with universality should be enhanced.

#### **4. Update on Global Environment Outlook-6 (GEO6) in light of UNEA-3 preparations**

The Executive Director introduced this agenda item and the highlighted the need to celebrate the growing interest in the Global Environment Outlook.

Introducing this item, Ms. Jacqueline McGlade, Director of the Division of Early Warning and Assessments informed the meeting that in order to ensure the quality of the GEO-6 report, it would not be in time for UNEA-3 in 2017. A progress report would be presented at UNEA-3 and the final report would be launched in 2019 at UNEA-4. She highlighted the need for decision on this matter given that fact that UNEA decision 1/4 requested that GEO-6 be presented to the United Nations Environment Assembly no later than 2018. She assured the Bureau that the progress report would contribute to the dialogue at UNEA-3 by providing global direction and identifying key critical issues.

A member of the bureau who was on the high level panel expressed support for launch of the GEO-6 report in 2019. A progress report and basic information would be useful and a dialogue at UNEA-3 could inform the 2018 summary for policy makers. He cautioned against having a separate GEO-6 report for UNEA-3, adding that the progress report should not be a glossy document but an opportunity for discussion at UNEA-3 on practical experiences on issues like incorporating the environment in the implementation of the 2030 agenda at national level.

#### **5. Date for the next meetings of the UNEA Bureau**

The proposed dates remained Thursday 27 and Friday 28 of October 2016 in Nairobi in the form of a retreat. However, the president was of the view that it should be 3 day meeting with 1 day dedicated to discussing the role of UNEA in the 2030 agenda. The secretariat was to prepare a draft agenda together with supporting documents for the meeting.

The Chair requested Bureau members to provide inputs in writing on the roadmap to UNEA-3 within the next 2 weeks.

#### **6. Other matters.**

The President drew the attention of members to important forthcoming meetings like the COP 13 of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) and HABITAT III, which were opportunities for publicizing UNEA and raising its profile. He requested for the collaboration of Bureau members in volunteering to represent UNEA at the important meetings. The Secretariat was requested to circulate the tentative list of the important global meetings on the road to UNEA-3. One member pointed out that representation on its own did not necessarily translate into the reflection of UNEA in decisions. In this regard, he emphasized the need for advocacy with national representatives

at these meetings.

The Secretariat informed the meeting that it would circulate a notification from Gabon, on the replacement of the Vice President of the UNEA Bureau, H.E. Mr. Emmanuel Issoze Ngondet, Minister of Foreign Affairs, by H.E. Ms. Josephine Flore Mistoul Yame, Minister for Environmental Protection and Natural Resources.

## **7. Closing.**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.