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**United Nations Environment Assembly  
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**Annual Sub Committee meeting of the  
Committee of Permanent Representatives  
to the UN Environment Programme**

**Fourth Meeting**

Nairobi, 6–9 March 2017

Agenda Item 6 of the agenda

**Chair's summary for the 4th Annual Sub Committee meeting of  
the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the UN  
Environment Programme.**

## **I. Opening of the Meeting**

1. The Fourth Annual Subcommittee Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives took place from the 6 - 9 March, 2017 in Nairobi, Kenya. The meeting was attended by **67** Members, including 4 members who did so virtually; 2 permanent observers and 1 other entity. The meeting also counted with the participation of accredited non-governmental organizations representing the Major Groups and Stakeholders.

## **II. Adoption of Agenda**

2. The meeting adopted the provisional agenda as contained in the document UNEP/CPR/SC 2017/2
3. On Wednesday, 8 March, 2017, the United Nations Secretary General, H.E. Antonio Guterres, paid a courtesy call on the Fourth Annual Sub-Committee Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives at 3:45 p.m. Several Ambassadors and High Commissioners based in Nairobi and accredited to the United Nations Environment Programme were in attendance.
4. In addressing the gathering, the Secretary General congratulated the efforts of the Committee of Permanent Representatives in producing a successful meeting. He also acknowledged the choice of “Pollution” as a theme of the Third UN Environment Assembly. He pointed out the need to look at broader environmental issues in a holistic and integrated way, especially in the context of increasing poverty in the world.
5. The Chair of the Fourth Annual Sub-Committee invited the Secretary General to the UN Environment Assembly that is scheduled for December 2017.

## **III. Budget and Programme Performance including implementation of the Assembly’s resolutions**

6. Participants appreciated the preparations undertaken by UN Environment Programme and welcomed the statement by the Executive Director who pointed out that there are unprecedented global engagements and commitments to collaborate in the field of environment and promoting sustainable development.
7. Participants also recalled with appreciation the progress made in the preparations towards the 2017 Environment Assembly scheduled for 4 – 6 December 2017, and welcomed efforts to engage the civil society and private sector in these preparations.
8. Members appreciated the initiative with reference to the use of ‘UN Environment’, which was meant to ease communication with the general public. Participants also took note of the clarification that use of this name does not change the identity and/or mandate of the organization, and the offer by the Secretariat would prepare an information note on this issue.
9. Members welcomed UN Environment Programme’s annual performance review and the important results that have emerged to date. They also recognized the significant efforts that have gone into programme delivery. Participants also welcomed the note by the Secretariat on the status of the implementation of resolutions adopted at the second session of the Assembly.

10. In considering the status of the implementation of resolution adopted by the Assembly, members underscored the importance of taking into account budget considerations when deciding on resolutions during the Assembly, given the now palpable implications of the inadequacy of budget on the implementation of Assembly resolutions.
11. Members invited UN Environment Programme to provide more detailed information on how resources are allocated in geographical and sub-programmatic areas, and emphasized that disaggregating the data currently presented shall enable members to understand for what projects their contributions are used.
12. Participants also expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN), a network of 18 contributing countries, which launched their report of its evaluation of the organization during this session of Fourth Annual Sub-Committee meeting. The assessment highlighted strengths of UN Environment Programme and pointed out several areas that need improvement.
13. Members noted the mismatch between budget allocation and actual resources mobilized. They further expressed concern that although the Regular Budget was remitted as forecast, contributions to the Environment Fund had performed below expectation (just under 50%) of the approved budget and underscored the importance of universal contributions to the Environment Fund, given its importance for ensuring that the organization delivers on its mandate and its Programme of Work as agreed by the Environment Assembly. Participants requested the Executive Director to draw the attention of all members to this reality with a view to increase the number of contributing countries to the Environment Fund and to regularly report to the Committee of Permanent Representatives on progress made on this regard.
14. Members noted that extra-budgetary resources, which are multi-year funds, came from mainly two sources: the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and earmarked contributions by bilateral partners. They expressed satisfaction on UN Environment Programme's efforts in leveraging sufficient extra-budgetary sources to support specific aspects of Programme of Work and highlighted that the success of such efforts reflect the trust from stakeholders in the effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme.
15. Members also requested the secretariat to update its resource mobilisation strategy and to develop strategies that can attract private sector engagement and participation to support delivery of the Programme of Work.
16. The meeting appreciated the presentations on case studies shared by the Permanent Representatives of Brazil, Costa Rica, Iraq, Uganda, among others.

**i. Implementation of UN Environment Programme's work on Climate Change**

17. Members positively noted the progress on the implementation of the Climate Change programme, and expressed appreciation for the presentation on the case study on Energy District in Banja Luka as informative.
18. Members encouraged UN Environment Programme to seek and champion partnerships to deliver on climate change work within the UN system, and increase its support to Least

Developed Countries (LDCs) to access climate funds. They also encouraged engagement of civil society in equal measure as has been emphasized for the private sector, taking into account regional balance.

## **ii. Implementation of UN Environment Programme's work on Conflicts and Disasters**

19. Members positively appreciated the progress with the implementation of the Disasters and Conflicts programme. They noted that improved risk reduction, response and recovery are increasingly important in the face of the environmental implications of natural disasters, industrial accidents and armed conflicts in the world today.
20. Members encouraged UN Environment Programme to work closely with other UN agencies and partners to promote environmental transparency in the extractive sector in fragile states, to improve the environmental performance of peacekeeping operations, to align its disaster risk reduction work with the Sendai framework, and to work to implement the assembly resolution 2/15 the protection of the environment in times of armed conflict, and by expanding collaboration with the International Law Commission and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

## **iii. Implementation of UN Environment Programme's work on Ecosystems Management**

21. Members expressed overall satisfaction on progress achieved in the implementation of the sub-programme on ecosystem management. They noted the increased number of countries, which are integrating the ecosystems approach in land management and in their development strategies. Members also appreciated increased number of countries developing action plans for wastewater and marine litter management.
22. They further encouraged UN Environment Programme to focus and give more emphasis to river basins, water quality, land degradation and the engagement of private sector. They noted that integrated ecosystem management will call for cooperation between sectors and members, especially where synergies can be developed amongst different partners.

## **iv. Implementation of UN Environment Programme's work on Resource Efficiency**

23. Members positively appreciated the work done based on Resource Efficiency, which highlighted the vision, objective and theory of change towards contributing to the 2030 Agenda. They acknowledged that resource efficiency embraced principles of inclusive green economy, which is embedded in the Ten-Year Framework Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP SCP). Participants also cautioned against the fragmentation of initiatives. A call for stepping-up the involvement of the private sector in the work of the Programme on resource efficiency was widely supported.
24. By acknowledging good lessons drawn from the Case Study on Sustainable Rice Platform, Members encouraged UN Environment Programme to seek coherence and synergies between resource efficiency components in the spirit of South-South co-operation.

## **v. Implementation of UN Environment Programme's work on Environmental Governance**

25. Members highly appreciated the normative work done under the environmental governance programme. In particular, they recognized the role that science-policy nexus has played in influencing phasing out of lead in paint and great reduction of single-use of plastic bags and litter. They encouraged investment in scaling-up capacity building efforts through environmental education and training.
26. Members were not lost on the fact that environmental law and institution strengthening were a critical dimension in mainstreaming environment into development. They were cognizant of the need for political goodwill and enhanced community participation in natural resource management. For that reason, they emphasized the need to apply environmental governance principles and partnership in 'Greening the UN system' especially in peace-keeping operations; participation of local communities in natural resources management; and improved understanding of what constitutes environmental crimes and the rule of law.
27. Members acknowledged that many environmental conventions have made significant progress because of UN Environment Programme's support and encouraged the Programme to strengthen the use of country focal points to support capacity on domestication and enforcement.

## **vi. Implementation of UN Environment Programme's work on Chemicals and Waste**

28. Members appreciated the work done on the implementation of Chemicals and Waste sub-programme, but emphasized a need for demonstration of harmonized synergies between these two elements. They recognized that whereas indicator targets under this sub-programme were set too high for this biennium, they will be more realistic and attainable while still ambitious as of 2018.
29. Members identified the importance of the gender issue, and stressed that it was critical to reflect aspects of gender and youth engagement in the reporting, because experience has shown that these cohorts get most affected by pollution. They identified air quality as critical based on available vital statistics on the burden of disease due to this problem is a cause for alarm in many countries.

## **vii. Implementation of UN Environment Programme's work on Environment under Review**

30. Members welcomed the progress achieved in promoting the science and policy through the implementation of the sub-programme on Environment under Review.
31. Members appreciated the progress on the development of GEO-6 and encouraged the Secretariat to devote priority attention and make sure the product is ready in good time and widely disseminated. They also expressed satisfaction with progress on the Environment Live platform and encouraged outreach to a wider audience.

32. Members further considered Frontiers Report as very critical document for highlighting emerging environmental issues that are related to a changing technological world and the natural environment. For this reason, they recognized and appreciated the need for additional funding to make the Environment under Review sub-programme more vibrant and effective.
33. Members welcomed the case study on Ugandan wetlands supported by the Government of Uganda at the highest level. The Uganda Wetlands Atlas is a two-volume resource and it was suggested that such materials become part of a catalogue of success stories highlighting challenges for interested countries to use as guidance for project development.

#### **IV. Contribution of the Environment Assembly to the High-Level Political Forum**

34. Members appreciated the presentation by the Secretariat on the contributions that the Environment Assembly can deliver to the High Level Political Forum. Members also appreciated the ideas presented in the draft template document pertaining to the response to the request by the President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to provide inputs to the 2017 session of the forum under the theme: Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world.
35. Members underscored the importance of submitting meaningful and substantive contributions (clear political messages) to the High Level Political Forum to demonstrate the value of environmental action for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as well as in tackling key issues on health, poverty and the principle of 'Leave No One Behind'.
36. Members agreed to retain the response template document, and requested the secretariat to revise its content, taking into account the deadline for submissions, to make the Environment Assembly's contribution more effective, precise and succinct. Several members shared specific issues to be highlighted in the template. In addition, there was a general agreement that the contribution should provide scientifically based policy advice, taking into account the balance amongst the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and drawing from existing reports from UN Environment Programme. Members also considered that case studies should be used to demonstrate how environmental action is contributing to the 2030 Agenda.
37. While the exact modalities of the Assembly President's role during the Forum remain to be confirmed, members requested that the President should formally present the contribution of the Assembly to the Forum scheduled during the Ministerial segment, supported by a political statement.

#### **V. Preparations for the 2017 Environment Assembly**

##### **i. Special Statement by the President of the UN Environment Assembly**

38. The President, through his representative H.E Ms. Marta Juarez, highlighted the importance of the work being undertaken during the fourth Annual Sub-Committee Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives. He expressed the need to build consensus on the outstanding items that will make preparations for the Assembly a success.

39. The President also spoke about the Assembly's outcome document and made it clear that he will present his vision in the next joint meeting of the both bureaux. He also raised the need for cooperation and importance to achieving tight timelines, including the imperative of including the private sector and civil society organizations to driving the Assembly's process.
40. The President made reference to the theme and slogan of the Assembly. He emphasized the need to conclude on the slogan, get consensus on the timelines for draft resolutions, discuss and agree on scenario and structure setting of the high level segment, discuss budget considerations, and collaborate on the outcome document.

## **ii. Consideration of the outline of the report of the Executive Director on the theme of the Assembly**

41. Members expressed appreciation for the outline of the report of the Executive Director, and requested the Secretariat to review the time-line for its development, as the report will be useful for the consideration of the outcomes of the Assembly.
42. Members also welcomed the idea of commitments and pledges and requested the Secretariat to develop and circulate a note in this regard.
43. Major Groups and Stakeholder's participants committed to support the theme of the Assembly and requested to be allowed to make commitments and contribute to the success of the Assembly. Participants also agreed to encourage private sector involvement.

## **iii. Proposed wording of the title of the theme for the 2017 UN Environment Assembly**

44. Member States endorsed the proposal of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives of "Towards a Pollution Free Planet" as the wording for the title of the theme of the 2017 UN Environment Assembly.

## **iv. Timelines for submission of draft resolutions**

45. The meeting considered the document entitled 'Preparations for the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly' Annex 1 Note on the process for submission of Draft Resolutions to be adopted by the 2017 Environment Assembly. These timelines had earlier been circulated by the Secretariat. Members agreed to the proposed timelines as amended but emphasized that they should be exercised without prejudice to the Rules of Procedure.

The amended timelines are as follows:

- 30 April 2017: Members signal intention to submit draft resolutions
- 20 May 2017: Single online platform activated
- 1 June 2017: Draft resolutions are submitted to the Secretariat
- 15 June 2017: Draft resolutions are submitted to the Secretariat
- 27 June 2017: 139th Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives. Agenda to include discussion on draft resolutions
- 22 September 2017: Submission of resolutions to the Secretariat
- 10 October 2017: 140th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives: Send off for draft resolutions to Open Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives

46. Members also requested the Secretariat to prepare scenarios for the Open Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives and for work during the inter-sessional period. They emphasised the need for good coordination and continuity between chairs of inter-sessional and sessional bodies.

#### **v. Structure of the High-Level Segment**

47. Members welcomed the Secretariat's efforts for a more innovative and action-oriented High Level Segment. There was an appreciation for both scenarios and members called for revised scenarios taking into account their comments. While some members questioned the possible participation of Heads of State in a Ministerial meeting, on the basis of past experience the Secretariat mentioned that the participation of Heads of State would raise the visibility of the Assembly.
48. Members appreciated that Ministers will have an opportunity to deliver statements and make their positions known globally. It was confirmed that a conference room would be made available and a list of speakers will be provided on a first-come-first-serve basis.
49. There was a general appreciation of the Leadership Dialogues and a scenario note will be prepared by the Secretariat to explain how they will be run during the High Level Segment. More information on the commitments and pledges will also be provided. It was also agreed that there will be a limited number of side events which will not clash with the negotiation process. The challenge of translation and interpretation was also raised by the Secretariat and will need to be addressed as well as the organizational structures of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives and the Committee of the Whole. The meeting requested the Secretariat to improve logistic arrangements and availability of wifi and other services to delegates in the campus. The Secretariat was also requested to prepare short background notes for the leadership dialogues. Several delegations called for limiting parallel sessions to no more than two.

#### **vi. Required Documentation for the Open Ended Committee of Representatives and 2017 UN Environment Assembly**

50. Members endorsed the table for the official and information documents as contained in the Note on the documents for the Open Ended Committee of Permanent representatives and 2017 Environment Assembly per (Annex 2).
51. At the request of one member, the note was amended to include a reference that resolutions will be translated into all official languages prior to their adoption.
52. Members agreed that the Updates of the Executive Director on Progress made Pursuant to the Assembly's resolutions would be considered at the Open Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives.

#### **vii. Outcome of High-Level Segment**

53. On the outcome of the high-level segment of the Assembly, the majority of members remained supportive of the recommendations set-out during the Preparatory Retreat for the 2017 Environment Assembly held in Nairobi in October 2016, which states that "The 2017 Environment Assembly should strive for a negotiated ministerial outcome document linked to the theme of the high-level segment. The negotiated ministerial outcome document should be succinct, actionable, appealing and drafted in language that is easy to understand. In addition to a ministerial outcome document, discussions at the High Level Segment of the Assembly should be captured in a chair's summary".



54. In this regard, during the Annual Subcommittee Meeting three delegations expressed scepticism on the possibility to achieve a negotiated ministerial outcome document and expressed a preference for a chair's summary. A group of Members also provided additional guidance on the content of the outcome document. They emphasized that the document should underscore a commitment to reduce pollution at all levels. It should address priority areas and reflect the impact of pollution as an obstacle to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and call-upon the UN System to a coordinated approach to address pollution.
55. Members further stated that in order to retain its appealing nature, the outcome document should not be prescriptive, thus leaving it to Member States to consider when and how to take action in accordance with national circumstances and priorities.
56. A "call for action" could also be considered as part of the communication tools for the Assembly, which could be open for commitments by Member States, regional and local authorities, civil society, the private sector, and citizens at large without undermining the intergovernmental nature of the Assembly.
57. On the process, members reiterated their support to the President of the Assembly to develop an inclusive and transparent process of consultations. It was emphasized by several delegations that the text of the outcome document should be negotiated among Member States prior to the Assembly, including during regional ministerial fora and meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.
58. Taking into consideration the views expressed, the meeting invited the President of the Assembly to outline his vision for the process of consultations at the joint meeting of the bureaux of the Assembly and the Committee.

### **viii. Communication Strategy**

59. Participants expressed appreciation to the Executive Director for the draft communication strategy for the 2017 Environment Assembly and recognized the importance of early engagement. They also expressed satisfaction with the approach set forth in the draft strategy and requested the secretariat to make more use of established UN communications channels and resources including those provided by the UN Department for Public Information; to make information related to the Assembly available in all official languages and to continue to explore the idea of communicating the Assembly as a "pollution summit". Participants also requested the Executive Director to focus on action rather than on awareness raising and strengthen advocacy platforms targeting the youth and children and other groups of society with the aim of creating a social movement in support of the Assembly. The meeting also agreed to use the forthcoming meeting of the high-level political forum in June 2017, the general debate of the General Assembly and other important meetings to raise the visibility of the Assembly.

### **ix. Budget of the 2017 Environment Assembly**

60. Members appreciated financial contributions made so far towards the Environment Assembly by Member States. However, more resources are still required to close the funding gap.
61. Members cautioned against limiting participation of Developing Countries to UN Environment Assembly due to lack of funding.
62. Two Members responded from the floor with funding pledges into the UN Environment Assembly budget. In the meantime, the Secretariat was encouraged to be more innovative in resource mobilization and savings.

63. Finland announced a contribution of Euros 50,000 (which added to the already recorded pledges from the European Commission, Nordic Council and France with \$38,000) towards the support for developing countries participants.