



AMCEN

AU

Distr.: General
22 May 2017

English and French only

*African Ministerial Conference on the Environment***African Ministerial Conference on the Environment****Sixteenth session**

Ministerial segment

Libreville, 15 and 16 June 2017

Africa's engagement in the Third United Nations Environment Assembly of UN Environment Programme*

Note by the Secretariat

I. Background

1. The third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly will be held in Nairobi from 4-6 December, 2017, at the United Nations Environment Programme Headquarters. By decision of the defunct Governing Council (February 2013) and the new UN Environment Assembly (June, 2014), all meetings of the UN Environment Assembly are to be held in Nairobi bi-annually.
2. The session in 2017 is part of the effort to re-adjust the calendar in an odd-year cycle. The next UN Environment Assembly shall be held in 2019.
3. The theme of the 2017 Assembly is "Towards a Pollution-Free Planet". A Background Report on the Theme of the Assembly will support discussions and resolutions.
4. The Assembly is expected to attract heads of state and governments, including managers of selected cities to participate and share in the perspectives and experience on management of pollution, and seek global partnership towards a Pollution-Free Planet.
5. The third Open-Ended session of the Committee of Permanent Representatives will be held 29 November – 1 December 2017, at the UN Environment Headquarters in Nairobi, preceding the Assembly scheduled for 4 to 6 December 2017. The Open-Ended session will discuss technical details of the Agenda and build on the preparatory work undertaken by the Committee of Permanent Representatives and the Bureau of the UN Environment Assembly during the inter-sessional period. The session will also prepare final draft resolutions and decisions that will be considered for adoption by the 2017 Environment Assembly after their approval by the Committee of the Whole.
6. This paper aims to stimulate discussions during the sixteenth African Ministerial Conference on the Environment in Libreville, Gabon, on how Africa can better engage in the 2017 Environment Assembly. This will include technical discussion in the development of resolutions, inputs into the expected outcome, and consideration of the Leadership Dialogue sessions, including issuance of national statements. Enhanced participation and contribution of technical experts of AMCEN is paramount.

II. Status of preparations for the third UN Environment Assembly

7. The Bureaux of the UN Environment Assembly and of the Committee of Permanent Representatives held a joint retreat on 27-28 October 2016 in Nairobi, Kenya. Regional and political groups joined the retreat in observer capacity.
8. The joint retreat agreed to re-imagine the structure of the High Level Segment for the 2017 Assembly and to develop a Ministerial Outcome Document for the 2017 Assembly. The meeting also undertook to support the role of regional ministerial fora and meetings in preparations for the Assembly.

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

9. The Fourth Annual Subcommittee Meeting of the Subcommittee of Committee of Permanent Representatives to UN Environment Programme was held from 6 to 9 March, 2017 recommended 'Pollution' as the theme for the 2017 Environment Assembly. They also agreed on the wording of the accompanying slogan 'Towards a Pollution-Free Planet'.

10. The meeting discussed the UN Environment Programme's budget; programme delivery by sub-programmes; resource mobilisation and allocation; programme performance; progress on implementation of resolutions. A special session was given for the presentation of the status of the sixth Global Environment Outlook Report (GEO-6), which is expected to be published by the 2019 Environment Assembly.

11. The annual meeting proposed that the President of the UN Environment Assembly should attend the High Level Political Forum in New York in July 2017 to promote the theme of the 2017 Assembly.

12. The meeting also considered the roadmap and deadlines for resolutions as follows: expression of intention to submit resolution (by 30 April), submission of draft resolutions (by 15 June), and submission of final resolutions (by 22 September). Discussion of all resolutions translated into all five UN languages will be held during the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives on 29 November to 1 December 2017.

III. Scenario of the third UN Environment Assembly

13. The third session of the UN Environment Assembly is a special session, that will take a shorter than normal duration of three days. The meetings of the Open-Ended Committee and the Assembly have been organised to take place back-to-back with the Assembly. Other meetings on the margins of the Committee and Assembly will include: Major Groups and Stakeholders and Science Policy.

14. Most of the technical work will be concluded at the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives meeting and during the Committee of the Whole, including Draft Resolutions, Working Documents on the topical issues, and the Ministerial Declaration. Issues identified so far include air pollution, water pollution, wastewater treatment, phasing out of lead from paint, land degradation, and chemical and wastes.

15. The Bureau of the Assembly is expected to consider the recommendations of the Open-Ended Committee and Committee of the Whole, endorse and approve them for action.

16. The Background Report of the Executive Director on the theme of the Assembly shall provide the basis for discussion during the meeting of member States. The report is a product of wide consultations with multilateral environmental agreements, UN agencies, scientific experts, civil society and member States through the Committee of Permanent Representatives. The report will be concluded and distributed by 15 September 2017.

17. The Ministerial Declaration, developed by the President of the UN Environment Assembly through consensus, shall be presented for adoption after its final consideration by the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives. The Declaration is designed to be simple enough in language and content so that the greater public understands; it will be strong and bold, and based on scientific evidence, to drive immediate action; it will support the resolutions produced by the Assembly; and it will be interlinked with the Sustainable Development Goals.

IV. Strategic engagement of Africa in the third UN Environment Assembly

18. The 2017 Assembly will call for the effective engagement of all African countries to shape the environmental agenda and influence the subject of Pollution as an area of focus and priority in Africa. African countries need to explore ways in which they can work with countries in other regions of the world to achieve the objective of the theme.

19. The Committee of Permanent Representatives currently has One Hundred and Eighteen delegations accredited to UN Environment Programme with most delegations based in Nairobi while others are based in Geneva, Addis Ababa and New York. With universal membership of the governing body, the membership of the Committee of Permanent Representatives was expanded. In view of this, African Governments which are yet to be accredited to UNEP are encouraged to consider getting accreditation to UN Environment Programme at locations of their convenience.

20. It should be recalled that Decision 15/1: of the fifteenth session of African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN) on sustainably harnessing Africa's natural capital in the context of Agenda 2063 has drawn global attention to the engagement with the UN Environment Assembly as one of the drivers for implementation and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, Africa's strategic and active engagement in the work of UN Environment Assembly ensures that the priorities of the region are well addressed and prioritized in terms of follow up and implementation.

21. Building Africa regional consensus on the role of UN Environment Assembly and UN Environment Programme in decision-making and implementation of environmental agenda will continue to be discussed and the region's voice is critical in this regard. The Libreville session of AMCEN therefore needs to pronounce itself with clear messages on the pollution theme of the Assembly that feed into regional and global processes.

22. The above should contribute to strengthening African countries' continued engagement and participation in the work of UN Environment Assembly.

V. Participation of Africa in the third UN Environment Assembly

23. It is envisaged that the Africa region will actively participate and engage in dialogue in all the deliberations of the 2017 UN Environment Assembly at the technical, ministerial and civil society levels. The sixteenth session of AMCEN, therefore, provides an opportunity for the African region to strategically prepare itself with regard to its effective participation in the 2017 UN Environment Assembly.

24. A strong African voice was expressed during the Fourth Annual Subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, which was held from 6 to 9 March, 2017 in Nairobi. The African voice was part and parcel of the decision-making process on the theme, the structure and the agenda of the Assembly.

25. Currently, the President of the United Nations Environment Assembly, H.E. Mr. Edgar Gutiérrez Espeleta, the Minister for Environment and Energy of Costa Rica, has already circulated to all environment ministers (through a letter dated 8 May, 2017) an outline of the outcome document, of which he would like to receive regional and national contributions during its development and build consensus. He has also given guidelines in terms of timelines for feedback during the development of the outcome document into a Ministerial Declaration under the theme "Towards a Pollution-Free Planet".

26. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment to seize the opportunity of this session in Libreville, to discuss their contribution to the outcome document that will be adopted at the 2017 Assembly.

27. Through AMCEN, Africa should also articulate issues that are pertinent to Africa, in addition to the theme of UNEA-3, "Towards a Pollution-Free Planet".

VI. Recommendations

28. It is, therefore, recommended that the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment prioritises the following suggested areas within the context of the theme of the Assembly:

- (a) Substantive issues related to environment and sustainable development in Africa.
- (b) Considers the inputs provided by the President of the UN Environment Assembly in his letter (Annexed) circulated on 8 May 2017 to member States through the respective Environment Ministers.
- (c) Other matters relevant to Africa that need the attention of UNEA-3

ANNEX

Subject matter to be considered for Draft Resolutions during the 2017 Environment Assembly

Input No:	01
Member State:	United States
Subject Matter:	Water Quality Monitoring
Date Received	27 April, 2017
As UNEP reported in 2016, pollution is affecting water bodies across several continents yet global capacity to collect and analyse data on water quality remains poor. Severe pathogenic pollution is found in around one-third of all rivers and severe organic pollution in about 15 percent of all rivers. Severe and moderate salinity pollution is a growing concern, affecting around one-tenth of all rivers.	
Input No:	02
Member State:	United States
Subject Matter:	Lead in Paint
Date Received	27 April, 2017
Despite general agreement that lead in paint causes serious health problems and adverse economic impacts and that there are specific legal solutions that most countries can implement, only thirty percent of countries currently have lead in paint laws.	
Input No:	03
Member State:	Norway
Subject Matter:	Marine Litter and Microplastics
Date Received	30 April, 2017
Marine litter is one of the largest environmental problems of our time and we are pleased with the increased awareness and action that has taken place since UNEA-1 when the first resolution was adopted. We see scope for further urgent action to be taken by UNEA-3. This input will build on and add value to the action taken by UNEA-1 and UNEA-2.	
Input No:	04
Member State:	European Union and its Member States
Subject Matter:	Marine Pollution
Date Received	15 May, 2017
Possible issues to address under the topic of marine pollution include: marine litter/(micro)plastics; promote a broader approach to marine pollution, including issues such as eutrophication, acidification, hazardous materials; comprehensive approaches for related sources, such as a plastic value chain approach to address marine litter/(micro) plastics; data and information gaps (including on marine litter); the importance of bringing together and scaling up existing actions; identify and promote concrete implementation approaches and partnerships under relevant international initiatives; link to different SDGs; provide guidance to UNEP in light of relevant activities and programmes.	
Input No:	05
Member State:	European Union and its UN Member States
Subject Matter:	(Fresh) Water Pollution
Date Received:	15 May, 2017
Possible issues to address under freshwater pollution may include: data and information gaps, i.e. keeping emerging pollutants, including pesticides, and sources under review; improving water quality monitoring and assessment including through GEMS/GEMI and other initiatives; enhance international water governance, international cooperation and multi-stakeholder engagement; promote integrated water resource management; facilitate sharing of best-practices; link to different SDGs; provide guidance to UNEP in light of relevant activities and programmes.	

Input No:	06
Member State:	European Union and its UN Member States
Subject Matter:	Air Pollution
Date Received:	15 May, 2017
Possible issues to address under air pollution include: data and information / awareness gaps; promote action to improve air quality monitoring and assessment and to develop air quality policies and strategies (at the sub-national, national, or regional level); enhance international cooperation and multi-stakeholder engagement including synergies between institutions working on air pollution; promote actions to facilitate the implementation of air quality monitoring networks and capacity to develop air quality management plans; facilitate sharing of best-practices; maximise synergies between policies on air, climate mitigation, SDG's, health, transport, energy and agriculture; provide guidance to UNEP in light of relevant activities and programmes to advance the discussion on a shared global response to air pollution.	
Input No:	07
Member State:	European Union and its UN Member States
Subject Matter:	Soil Pollution
Date Received:	15 May, 2017
Possible issues to address under soil pollution include: knowledge gap on soil pollution and related environment, health, social and economic impact of contaminated soils (considering both point source contamination and diffuse pollution, including pesticides and fertilizers); facilitate the sharing of best practices; provide guidance to UNEP in light of relevant activities and programmes; building from existing work at other UN-agencies such as UNCCD, FAO, including Revised World Soil Charter and the Global Soil Partnership; link to different SDGs including land degradation.	
Input No:	08
Member State:	European Union and its UN Member States
Subject Matter:	An Environment and Health Nexus
Date Received:	15 May, 2017
Building on the UNEA2 debates and reports relevant to pollution, the environment and health nexus has gained credence. Possible issues to address include: potential benefits for human health and of protecting and restoring ecosystems; sound management of chemicals and waste, including pesticides and endocrine disruptors; noise pollution; antimicrobial resistance; promote preventive, "One health" approaches, taking into account gender impacts of pollution; provide specific guidance to UNEP's collaboration with other international organizations, in particular WHO and WMO.	
Input No:	09
Member State:	European Union and its UN Member States
Subject Matter:	Urban Pollution
Date Received:	15 May, 2017
Following rapid urbanization globally, cities are increasingly relevant, both in generating pollution and finding synergetic solutions – this is the basis of urban pollution. The New Urban Agenda identified pollution as one of the main urban challenges. Possible issues to address: the role of local authorities to tackle pollution, facilitate sharing of best practices; smart city and innovative partnership approaches to address concrete issues related to water, soil and air pollution, including from transport, (solid) waste and the building and construction sector in an integrated manner.	
Input No:	10
Member State:	European Union and its UN Member States
Subject Matter:	Innovative Solution Partnerships Platforms
Date Received:	15 May, 2017
Innovative solution partnership platforms are needed to promote the sharing of best practices and development of solution oriented innovation to address concrete (cross-cutting) issues of pollution (s.a. plastics, nitrogen, fertilizers, pesticides, e.g. through integrated lifecycle approaches, sustainable consumption and production approaches, value chain approaches, etc) building on proven collaboration platforms and voluntary action on specific issues at the regional and country level.	
Input No:	11
Member State:	Iraq
Subject Matter:	To Be Confirmed
Date Received:	28 April, 2017