



Governance Affairs Office

Dear Colleagues,

It is with a deep sense of gratitude and fulfillment that I take this opportunity, in my capacity as Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, between July 2015 to June 2017, to say a big THANK YOU to each and every one of you, both as individuals and as missions, for having made the 2015 – 2017 work of the Committee and that of its Bureau, a resounding success. I also wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the chairs of regional and political groups who provided resources and ideas to advance the agenda we set for ourselves.

With your guidance, cooperation and mutual support, we achieved together major milestones - through inclusiveness, transparency, innovation, collegiality and consensus building -, which gave assurances and confidence to our appointing authorities – our member States - that indeed the environmental agenda has become critical in every sphere of influence for our generation.

As the Chair of the Committee, I can say without any fear of contradiction that the period 2015 - 2017 presented numerous challenges, but it also created enormous opportunities and achievements. The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals became operational during our watch, and we endeavored to mainstream their environmental dimensions into the Programme of Work (2015 – 2017) and Medium Term Strategy (2018 – 2022) of the UN Environment Programme.

During the same period, the UN Environment Programme had a transition in its executive leadership, end of an era of significant transformation of the environmental agenda and governance, a change which will give another dimension to the work of the Programme, but keeping the main objective – to keep our Planet healthy. I acknowledge how we quickly adapted to the new paradigm of the universality of the UN Environment Assembly, as opposed to its earlier configuration of the Governing Council. Without your cooperation, flexibility and understanding, we could have easily lost focus, but instead we worked more effectively with the Secretariat than we ever could.

We were able to manage these changes in a seamless manner and coordinated our agenda using realistic strategies. Over time, the scorecard of the entire Committee of Permanent Representatives, led by the Bureau achieved the following highlights:

1. *On innovation*, we were able for the first time, to facilitate the participation of members who are not located in Nairobi, through tele/video conferencing. We also saw new frontiers of cooperation operationalized between the Bureaus of the Committee and Assembly, as well as between the two committees of the UN Environment and the UN-Habitat.

2. *On transparency*, we witnessed how the Bureau of the Committee guided discussions and debates on issues of critical importance for the advancement of the agenda at hand. We shared the records of the Bureau widely with all Member States and stakeholders using available technology, including internet platform, in timely manner. The team engaged member States, as well as regional and political groups, in all the decisions made, especially on preparations for Assembly meeting and follow-ups on the recommendations of the second session of the UN Environment Assembly of 2016.

3. *On inclusiveness*, we were able to take the decision to include Major Groups and Civil Society participation during our deliberations. This brought about increased engagement and we

continue to look forward to substantive contribution from the major groups and stakeholders during discussions on the theme of 'Towards a Pollution-Free Planet' at the third session of the UN Environment Assembly.

4. *On collegiality*, this experience was self-evident in the way and manner that our Bureau conducted its business with member States. Teamwork became a new way of doing business leading to higher efficiency in implementing the Committee's mandate.

5. *On consensus building*, it became central in all our activities and on emerging issues of environmental concern, including International Environmental Governance, in the true spirit of Nairobi and not leaving anyone behind.

With these achievements, we have been able to: prepare and negotiate an unprecedented number of resolutions at the 2016 Assembly; prepare successful meetings of the Annual Subcommittee and Open Ended Committee; define the Agenda of the 2017 Assembly; mobilize resources for the next assembly; approve structures of the Assembly and the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives, including themes of dialogues at the High Level Segment; define the parameters for the development of Draft Resolutions; keep updated on the on-going process of the High Level Political Forum.

Continue to encourage non-resident Members States to join Committee meetings virtually and to appoint their permanent representatives to the UN Environment Programme with HQs in capitals, to enhance participation of all in implementing the global environmental agenda.

In conclusion, I am honored that during my term of office as the Chair of the Committee, we were fortunate to greet the Holy Father in 2015, to host the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres upon his visit to Nairobi on 8 March 2017, followed closely by the visit of the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Peter Thomson on 8 May 2017. On each of these occasions, we articulated the importance of environmental governance and its institutions, as well as the processes that we were preparing for the 2017 Environment Assembly.

Finally, I wish to thank you my dear colleagues, Excellencies, members of the Bureau, permanent representatives and deputy permanent representatives, members of the Secretariat, for your unreserved cooperation during my tenure in office. I look forward to seeing a similar gesture extended to the new Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, to be able to achieve even greater success during the next two years, including in the days leading to the 2017 Assembly. The pragmatic solutions to be identified at the December session are critical for the recognition of the Assembly as the global authority of environmental governance, but also for concrete ways of changing the way we treat our Planet.

Accept, dear colleagues, the assurances of my highest consideration and appreciation.

Yours Sincerely,



Ms. Julia Pataki  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Romania  
Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives UNEP  
July 2015 – June 2017