

Meeting of the Bureau of the Environment Assembly  
Tuesday, 1 October 2019  
4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
United Nations Office at Nairobi Gigiri,  
Executive Office Boardroom

### **MEETING SUMMARY**

*All background documents and presentations are available on the [meeting portal](#).*

#### **Agenda Item 1: Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda**

- 1 The meeting was chaired by Mr. Ola Elvestuen, President of the UN Environment Assembly Bureau and Minister for Climate and Environment of Norway. Mr Elvestuen welcomed all Members of the Bureau and H.E. Fernando Coimbra, Chair of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, who attended the meeting in an ex-officio capacity, as well as Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UN Environment Programme, to the meeting.
- 2 The meeting was attended via video link by the following Members of the Bureau of the Environment Assembly:
  - Costa Rica (VP) Mr. Carlos Manuel Rodriguez Echandi, Ministry of Environment and Energy, Latin America and Caribbean Group;
  - Serbia (VP) H.E. Mr. Goran Trivan, Minister of Environment, Eastern European Group;
  - Indonesia (VP) Ms. Laskmi Dhewanthi, Senior Advisor to the Minister of Environment and Forestry, Asia-Pacific Group;
  - Estonia (VP) Mr. Ado Lohmus, Permanent Representative, Eastern European Group;
  - Burkina Faso (VP) H.E. Mr. Bassiere Batio Nestor, Minister of Green Economy and Climate Change, African Group;
  - France Mr. Yann Wehring, Ambassador of France for Environment representing H.E. Ms. Brune Poirson, Secretary of State for the Ecological and Inclusive Transition, Western Europe and Others Group;
  - Bahrain (VP) H.E. Dr. Mohamed Mubarak Bin Dainah, Chief Executive of Supreme Council for Environment, Asia-Pacific Group;
  - South Africa (Rapporteur) Hon. Ms. Barbara Creecy, Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, South Africa, African Group.

Other representatives present:

- H.E. Marta Juarez-Ruiz, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to Kenya;
- H.E. Dragan Županjevac, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Serbia to Kenya;
- H.E. Elin Bergithe Rognlie, Ambassador to Kenya and Permanent Representative of Norway;
- Ms. Guri Sandborg, Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway;
- Ms. Amanda Mkhwanazi, Deputy Permanent Representatives of South Africa;
- Ms. Shahkira Parker, Senior Policy Advisor of South Africa.

The Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives was represented ex officio by:

- H.E. Fernando Coimbra, Chair of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Brazil;
- Mr. Patrick Luna, Deputy Permanent Representative of Brazil.

The Secretariat of the UN Environment Programme was represented by:

- Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director;
- Mr. Jorge Laguna-Celis, Secretary of Governing Bodies;
- Mr. Ulf Bjornholm, Deputy Secretary of Governing Bodies;

3 The meeting adopted the provisional agenda.

**Agenda Item 2: Consideration of the theme for the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.**

- 4 The President invited the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to provide an update on the consultations on the theme in the Committee. The Chair informed the meeting that consultation process started at the Subcommittee meeting held on 12 September 2019 (meeting summary available [here](#)) and noted that delegations considered the three thematic areas proposed by the UNEA President as a good basis for further consultations. Many of the initial views expressed by Member States focused on the need to find a theme that supports implementation, has as clear link to sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals, and provides continuity with previous UNEA decisions and themes.
- 5 A broad majority of the Members of the Bureau expressed a general preference for a theme which is linked to the concept of “nature-based solutions”, while possibly integrating elements also from other themes and taking into account the inputs from regional environmental fora.
- 6 Two Members of the Bureau underlined the need for further regional consultations, including the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) and the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) convened under the auspices of the league of Arab States which will take place in November 2019.
- 7 One Member underlined the need for a strong scientific basis for the theme, and the importance of a theme which is relevant for sectoral policies.
- 8 The President thanked the Members of the Bureau for their guidance. Subsequently, it was noted that, in preparation for the Bureau’s decision on the theme, the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and the Presidency Envoy, Ambassador Elin Bergithe Rognlie, would continue consultations with the regional and political groups in Nairobi at the margins of the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Subcommittee Meeting (7 to 11 October 2019) and within the Committee of Permanent Representatives, as previously informed to Member States by the Chair of the CPR. Based on their feedback, the President would then circulate a revised document on the theme for further consideration, taking into account the Joint Bureau meeting scheduled for 3 December 2019.

**Agenda Item 3: Consideration of relevant recommendations endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 73/333.**

- 9 The President reminded the Bureau of the adoption of General Assembly resolution [73/333](#), which endorsed the recommendations by the ad hoc open-ended working group on the Global Pact for the

Environment, which, under the section on “Further Work”, indicates the following: “Forward these recommendations to the United Nations Environment Assembly for its consideration, and to prepare, at its fifth session, in February 2021, a political declaration for a United Nations high-level meeting, subject to voluntary funding, in the context of the commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm from 5 to 16 June 1972, with a view to strengthening the implementation of international environmental law and international environmental governance, in line with paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled ‘The future we want’”.

- 10 The President then pointed to the potential connection with the mandates set out in the [Decision 2 of UNEA4 entitled](#), “Provisional agenda, date and venue of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly”, which states in its paragraph 8: “Requests the Executive Director to prepare, in consultation with Member States, the commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm from 5 to 16 June 1972, making use of contributions from relevant stakeholders”.
- 11 The Secretariat presented a note entitled “[Possible follow-up action on the relevant recommendations endorsed through General Assembly resolution, in particular as they relate to the preparations for UNEA-5](#)”, which recommended that the Environment Assembly Bureau and the Committee of Permanent Representatives and its Bureau organizes time-bound consultations amongst Member States in Nairobi, in consultation with the Executive Director.
- 12 In general terms the Members of the Bureau supported the proposal to hold consultations within the Committee of Permanent Representatives in Nairobi on both General Assembly resolution 73/333 and Decision 2 of UNEA4 in Nairobi. There were, however, different views on the time frame needed for such consultations.
- 13 Two Members of the Bureau indicated that consultations on the Political Declaration referred to in General Assembly resolution 73/333 should be initiated as soon as possible.
- 14 One Member of the Bureau underlined the importance of making progress on the Action Plan on the implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document.
- 15 In the exchange of views, Members agreed on the usefulness to hold discussions in Nairobi drawing from the mandate and constituencies of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, and expressed the following views:
  - Stressed that the implementation of environment dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has been lagging behind and that the commemoration of UN Environment Programme could serve as an opportunity to highlight this;
  - Underlined the convenience to differentiate the preparation of a political declaration and the organization of the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of UN Environment Programme;
  - Indicated that the preparation of a political declaration should not interfere with other outcomes of UNEA5;
  - Raised the concern that UNEA5 may be too soon to finalize a political declaration;
  - Noted the possible role of regional offices to collect inputs from Member States.
- 16 In concluding the agenda item, the President indicated that it would make sense that the Chair of the CPR work with the Envoy of the President on this issue. The President ruled, with the consent of the

Bureau, that the meeting first address the following agenda item before adopting a decision on the matter.

**Agenda Item 4: Update on the implementation of decision UNEP/EA.4/2 entitled “Provisional agenda, date and venue of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly”.**

- 17 The President invited the Secretariat to introduce the background document entitled “[Note on implementation of Decision 2 of UNEA4, “Provisional agenda, date and venue of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly”](#)”.
- 18 The Chair of the CPR outlined the main tracks highlighted under the Secretariat Note entitled “Note on the implementation of Decision 2 of UNEA4, Provisional agenda, date and venue of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly”, which highlight the following three streams of work on international environmental governance, namely:
  - Preparation of the commemoration of the creation of UNEP by the UN Conference on the Human Environment in 1972 (paragraph 8) – see Section II;
  - Process for review by the CPR to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the UNEP governing bodies (paragraphs 9-13) – Section III; and
  - Preparation of an action plan for the implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (paragraph 14) – Section IV.
- 19 Regarding the Process for review by the CPR to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the UNEP governing bodies, the Chair of the CPR presented his proposal (available [here](#)) for the consultations to be led by two co-facilitators in order to fully implement the mandate contained in Decision 2 of UNEA4 (paragraphs 9-13).
- 20 The Chair of the CPR also indicated his intention to consider in the context of the broader CPR the processes concerning the commemoration of the creation of UN Environment Programme by the UN Conference on the Human Environment in 1972 and the preparation of an action plan for the implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (paragraph 14).
- 21 On her part, the Executive Director indicated that five decades after the establishment of the of the United Nations Environment Programme, and after the UN Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1972, the international community has an opportunity to join hands to assess the state of the global environment, tack stock of progress achieved, and define a new long-term vision paired with targeted action to ensure an environmentally sustainable and healthy future within our environmental thresholds. When looking at the thematic preparations and the outcomes from Stockholm 1972, it is undisputable that many of the environmental challenges identified 50 year ago are still with us today, and that some have become exacerbated and that new ones have emerged. While the health and material welfare of millions of people today has, on average, improved significantly since 1972, the main UN and other international scientific assessments indicate that the global environment is, on the whole, in a much more precarious state today than it was in 1972.
- 22 To this end, the Executive Director highlighted that it would be worthwhile to think in a scale of ambition of what the international community can set to achieve in 2022 with, on one side, organizing a “commemorative event” and on the other mobilizing the highest political level of attention and the international community at large, preferably in an innovative manner, to reaffirm a long-term vision

comparable with the outcomes from the Stockholm Conference in 1972. The event should allow for a far-reaching decision with measurable impact that have the potential to initiate the transformative change needed to create the real turning point for significantly improved health and environment globally.

- 23 The President welcomed the guidance provided under both agenda items. Regarding the process for review by the CPR to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the UN Environment Programme governing bodies, the President proposed to the Bureau the following way forward, which was subsequently endorsed by the Bureau itself: to take note of the [proposal](#) which the Chair of the CPR presented and to receive further updates as the work progresses.
- 24 The President noted that there remained different views on the relationship between work streams created by Decision 2 of UNEA4 and by General Assembly Resolution 73/333.
- 25 With respect to agenda item 4 and 5, the president reiterated the agreement that consultations be held in Nairobi, while recognizing the need to ensure that delegations without representation there should be given the opportunity to contribute. Given the divergent views on the deadline and content in respect of the follow-up of UNGA resolution 73/333, the President requested that the Chair of the CPR and the Envoy of the President to consult with member States, taking into consideration the outcomes of discussions to be held at the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Subcommittee meeting. The Chair of the CPR and the Envoy of the President were asked to report back on this issue at the joint Bureaux meeting scheduled for 3 December 2019. The President considered that a clearer understanding on the implementation of paragraph 8 of Decision 2 of UNEA4 is needed in order to make the appropriate decisions regarding the preparation of the political declaration at UNEA5 as per resolution 73/333. The Bureau agreed to the proposal of the President.

#### **Agenda Item 5: Other Matters**

- 26 One Member of the Bureau pointed out that scheduled date for the next UNEA Bureau meeting would conflict with UNFCCC COP-25, 2-13 December in Santiago, Chile. The President suggested to keep the date unchanged and proposed that Members present in Santiago may link up remotely from there, with the support of the Secretariat.

#### **Agenda Item 6: Closing of the Meeting**

- 27 The meeting closed at 5:35 p.m.