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**United Nations Environment  
Assembly of the United Nations  
Environment Programme**

**Committee of Permanent Representatives to the  
United Nations Environment Programme  
148th meeting**  
Nairobi, 10 December 2020

**Draft minutes of the 147th meeting of the Committee of  
Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment  
Programme, held on 11 October 2019**

**Agenda item 1**

**Opening of the meeting**

1. The meeting was opened at 2.45 p.m. on Friday, 11 October 2019, by Mr. Fernando Coimbra, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP.
2. The meeting was attended by 88 participants representing 68 members and 2 observer missions.

**Agenda item 2**

**Adoption of the agenda**

3. The agenda was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/CPR/147/1).

**Agenda item 3**

**Adoption of the draft minutes of 146th meeting of the Committee of  
Permanent Representatives**

4. The Committee adopted the minutes of its 146th meeting, held on 20 June 2019, on the basis of the draft minutes of the meeting (UNEP/CPR/146/3).

**Agenda item 4**

**Report by the Executive Director**

5. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to a document entitled “Advance quarterly report to the 147th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives. 01 July–15 September 2019”. He invited the Executive Director, Ms. Inger Andersen, to brief the Committee on activities carried out by the secretariat during the third quarter of 2019.
6. In her remarks, the Executive Director said that the annual meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development had been held in New York in July 2019 under the theme “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”. Its purpose had been to assess the progress made in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals at the end of the first four-year cycle of the forum’s review mandate. The conclusion of the Secretary-General of the

United Nations, as described by attendees, was that although progress had not kept pace with expectations, there was a will to reinvigorate engagement in efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The forum had identified new threats to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including climate change and the double-edged sword of slower economic growth, which had some environmental benefits but was generally bad for the achievement of many of the Goals.

7. She had attended the eighteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), held in Geneva in August 2019. The efforts of Sri Lanka in preparing for the meeting, which was to have been held in Colombo, had been honoured and recognized by all, as had the efforts of the host country of the CITES secretariat. The agenda for the meeting had been the largest ever, with 105 agenda items, and more than 300 decisions had been adopted. The success of the event had shown that environmental multilateralism was alive and well, and that it remained critical for species management. She noted that she had also taken the opportunity to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, ensuring that it would be possible to step up collaboration within the respective mandates of that Office and UNEP.

8. The fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, had been held in New Delhi in September. At that event, 36 decisions had been adopted, including on land tenure, sand and dust storms, gender mainstreaming, private sector engagement, and desertification and drought, and on how to tackle those issues as key drivers of migration.

9. The United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) had been a central theme at the session as had nature-based solutions to climate change, which had been the subject of one of the nine coalitions of national governments established by the Secretary-General to undertake preparatory work for the 2019 Climate Action Summit. UNEP had served as the lead agency for the nature-based solutions to climate change coalition.

10. The first meeting of the open-ended intersessional working group on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, established pursuant to decision 14/34 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, had been held in Nairobi at the end of August. The working group was supporting the preparation the post-2020 framework for consideration and possible adoption by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention at its fifteenth meeting.

11. The twenty-fifth meeting of the senior officials of the Environment Management Group, in September 2019, on the sidelines of the Climate Action Summit, had seen the successful participation of a large number of its members. Progress had also been achieved by the Group on work to address sand and dust storms with an inter-agency dimension at an informal meeting held in Nairobi on the margins of the first meeting of the open-ended intersessional working group on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

12. Turning to systems, oversight and processes, she said that she had worked with the Deputy Executive Director, Ms. Joyce Msuya, to continue to set a positive example of senior management, with a particular focus on senior managers as role models and on strengthening internal decision-making, including by the senior management team. Work with the Corporate Services Division aimed to enhance compliance with the rules and regulations of the United Nations and to ensure that internal oversight mechanisms and reporting were in place in addition to the oversight provided by the governing bodies of UNEP.

13. With regard to staff outreach and engagement, she had continued sending monthly letters to staff written in her own informal style, keeping them abreast of her activities, what she was reading and any specific concerns she had identified. Staff outreach, including through videos, town hall meetings and meetings with staff in various UNEP offices, had been well received, highlighting the imperative of collaboration and of working as one United Nations.

14. She expressed her satisfaction at continuing dialogue with the bureaux of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and of the United Nations Environment Assembly, ensuring that enhanced robust reporting continued in a consultative manner that reflected an understanding of the priorities of Member States so that those priorities were in turn reflected in the work of UNEP.

15. Recalling that it was one of her six priorities, she underscored the importance of the United Nations system-wide reform, which would strengthen UNEP, as one of the smaller programmes of the United Nations. She said that she was proud to have spearheaded the related dialogue with resident coordinators from Africa, which had highlighted the tremendous opportunities presented by the reform.

16. In the ensuing discussion, several representatives thanked the Executive Director for her written report and oral summary. Several representatives said that the report was a highly valued and enormously improved tool to provide an overview of UNEP activities between meetings of the Committee. The report was widely used by representatives and their colleagues in the capitals.
17. One representative said that the main focus of quarterly reports should be on progress achieved in the implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the UNEP programme of work. Reports should incorporate a mechanism to define the main obstacles and challenges and to track progress in implementation. He welcomed the contributions of UNEP to the meeting of the high-level political forum and to the meetings of the conferences of the parties to CITES and the Convention to Combat Desertification. Such continuous engagement by UNEP could strengthen the voice of the Programme, mainstreaming environmental concerns within the wider reform of the United Nations system and ensuring a continued focus on the environmental pillar of the 2030 Agenda. UNEP should continue to engage in supporting the green economy and the transition to a zero-carbon future, while developing methodologies to assist countries in monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals. Another representative acknowledged the cost and effort required in drafting the quarterly report, noting that it would be useful to discuss the most appropriate level of detail and frequency of written reports in the framework of consultations on the UNEP reporting framework.
18. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, congratulated the Executive Director and the Deputy Executive Director on the launch of the Swahili version of the UNEP website, which would enable greater understanding of the environmental concerns of local people and greater action by local communities on environmental issues. Recognizing the importance of the sustainable use and management of the environment in eradicating poverty and food insecurity, she said that, while progress achieved in environmental management in the region was notable, land degradation, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, pollution, inadequate access to clean water and sanitation services and poor urban conditions continued to pose serious challenges to sustainable development. Working to manage those challenges was therefore a priority for the region. She urged Member States to make their financial contributions in a timely and consistent manner for broader and more effective implementation of the core activities of UNEP. She also noted with concern the sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe, which had a negative impact on efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in the African region. She called for the immediate lifting of those sanctions to facilitate economic recovery and sustainable environmental management.
19. One representative noted with appreciation the engagement of the Executive Director, in spite of her many other obligations, in the work already under way to meet the ambitious expectations for the second meeting of the open-ended intersessional working group on the post-2020 biodiversity framework, which would require the collective wisdom and efforts of all.
20. A number of representatives called for geographical and gender balance in the composition of UNEP staff, and for greater engagement and progress on gender empowerment within the organization as a contribution to sustainable development.
21. Thanking representatives for their comments, the Executive Director acknowledged the importance of geographical and gender balance in UNEP staffing. She said that she looked forward to engaging in detailed discussions on the usefulness of quarterly reports and on providing reports with the greatest expediency and efficiency within the constraints of available internal resources. She thanked China and New Zealand for their leadership on the nature-based solutions workstream in preparation for the 2019 Climate Action Summit. She expressed her commitment to fully supporting the handover between Egypt, host of the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES, and China, host of the fifteenth meeting. She acknowledged the need to strengthen UNEP's work within United Nations development reforms to mainstream environmental considerations across the UN, assuring those present that UNEP would continue to strive towards that objective within available budgetary resources while ensuring that optimal support was provided to countries in their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

## **Agenda item 5**

### **Adoption of the draft Chair's summary of the sixth annual subcommittee meeting**

22. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to the draft Chair's summary of the sixth annual subcommittee meeting, held from 7 to 11 October 2019, noting that it was not a negotiated document

but that efforts had been made, nonetheless, to incorporate as many of the oral and written comments received from representatives as possible.

23. In the ensuing discussion, many representatives commended the Chair for his able leadership of the sixth annual meeting of the subcommittee and congratulated him on its successful conclusion.

24. One representative said that the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of UNEP should take place at United Nations Headquarters.

25. Responding to a request for a change in the draft summary, the Chair said that he had taken note of all the comments received to date, although the format of the report was not such that every aspect of the discussion could be included therein.

26. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the long hours of work put in by all representatives during the annual subcommittee meeting had been deeply appreciated. The rich discussion and active and increased participation and contributions of delegates and the secretariat alike during the meeting were a reflection of the engagement of States in UNEP work and the importance of the subcommittee's work. He expressed appreciation for the Chair's summary, in which an acceptable balance had been struck between too much and too little information. Nevertheless, it was regrettable that some elements that were not controversial had not been included in the summary. He expressed the view, however, that the Chair's summary would provide useful guidance for the work of the Committee over the coming months.

27. The Committee adopted the Chair's summary.

## **Agenda item 6**

### **Report of the subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives**

28. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to the report of the subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (UNEP/CPR/147/5), noting that it summarized the work completed by the subcommittee since the Committee's 146th meeting, held on 20 June 2019. Since that meeting, four meetings of the subcommittee had been held. On 5 September, the secretariat had organized a dedicated briefing for the subcommittee on the development of the UNEP draft strategy for south-south and triangular cooperation. On 12 September, the subcommittee had met to consider the preparations for the sixth annual subcommittee meeting; the consultation process for finding a consensual agreement on the theme of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly; the status of implementation of the UNEP marine and coastal strategy; and the progress made in the implementation of the ministerial declaration of the fourth session of the Environment Assembly (UNEP/EA.4/HLS.1).

29. The chair also informed the committee that the subcommittee had also considered the visual identity of UNEP and had welcomed the proposal by the Executive Director that the acronym "UNEP" be reinstated as the short form of the United Nations Environment Programme, and the logo and visual identity of UNEP be adjusted in accordance with option one of the Executive Director's proposal as set out in document entitled "Visual identity of the UN Environment Programme"<sup>1</sup>. At the invitation of the Chair, the Committee endorsed the proposal of the proposed option one for use with immediate effect by the Programme. The Chair noted that the endorsement would be formalized by means of a decision to be adopted by the Environment Assembly at its fifth session.

30. Lastly, the committee acknowledged that the sixth annual subcommittee meeting had concluded successfully on 11 October. At that meeting, progress in the implementation of the UNEP programme of work for the period 2018–2019 had been reviewed; matters related to the internal governance of UNEP had been considered; the process had begun to examine the follow-up to and implementation of Environment Assembly decision 4/2 and Environment Assembly resolution 4/22; and the status of preparation of the medium-term strategy for the period 2022–2025 had been assessed.

## **Agenda item 7**

### **Election of officers**

31. Introducing the item, the Chair noted that at the conclusion of the 146th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, the nomination of a Vice-Chair by the Eastern European States had been pending.

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<sup>1</sup> Visual identity of the UN Environment Programme

32. The Committee therefore elected by acclamation the following representatives as members of its Bureau covering the period from 11 October 2019 to 30 June 2021, after nomination by their regional group:

Vice-Chair: Ms. Julia Pataki (Romania) from 11 October 2019 to 30 June 2020, thereafter to be replaced by Mr. Marek Ron Garztecki (Poland) from 1 July 2020 until 30 June 2021.

## **Agenda item 8**

### **Other matters**

33. One representative, speaking on behalf of the President of the Environment Assembly regarding consultations held on the margins of the sixth annual subcommittee meeting, emphasized the need for a clearer focus on the theme of the fifth session of the Environment Assembly and urged Member States to provide input on the matter. The significant interest shown by Member States in nature-based solutions was an indication that it could be one element of the theme, possibly in combination with the blue economy or the energy-water nexus. Once all the regions had contributed to the discussion on the matter, it would be possible to craft a compelling message on the contribution of the environment to the achievement of people's goals.

34. One representative said that a technical team sent by the United Nations to undertake maintenance on a leaking oil reservoir in his country had been prevented from doing so by regional hostilities. The leaking oil combined with oil releases due to recent aggressions towards tankers in the Red Sea would cause serious pollution that could reach the Suez Canal, take decades and a great deal of investment to clean up, and affect international transportation routes. He said that he would provide a more detailed proposal for solutions to the matter in the coming weeks.

35. In conclusion, the Executive Director thanked representatives for their engagement in the governance of UNEP, which was indispensable for a clear understanding of the strategic goals of Member States.

## **Agenda item 9**

### **Closure of the meeting**

36. The meeting was declared closed at 4 p.m. on Friday, 11 October 2019.

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