



## **150<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) of UNEP 30 April 2020**

### **Interventions by Switzerland**

#### **Agenda Item 4: Report by the Executive Director**

I would like to start by commending the Deputy Executive Director on her comprehensive briefing. I would also like to thank the Secretariat and the Bureau for organizing this CPR meeting and Member States for their flexibility to allow for this meeting without translation under exceptional circumstances. It is important and commendable that the CPR continues its work and its meetings. 150 CPR meetings is quite an achievement.

Switzerland is impressed by the swift action that UNEP's Senior Management has taken at the early stages of the COVID-19 crisis. Duty of Care was taken seriously, business continuity assured, pragmatic and well-functioning solutions were identified and applied.

Furthermore, and according to the report, UNEP was pro-active in the crisis by proposing new initiatives and by working with Member States and partners to build back better and by this to promote the environmental dimension of the SDG agenda. In this regard, the UN Development Systems Reform provides a great opportunity (and also a test) for a comprehensive, well-sequenced and coordinated approach of the UN system.

We call on UNEP and Member States to use this crisis as an opportunity to strengthen green and sustainable recovery efforts, sound management of hazardous medical and chemical waste, and to avoid financial and investment decisions that risk a lock-in of emissions and negative effects on biodiversity for years to come.

Question: It is not the mandate of UNEP to work on the ground but to provide the necessary knowhow on the environment to the UN System. How has UNEP engaged with the UN system in the design of its different funding instruments such as the WHO Strategic Preparedness Response Plan and the Global Humanitarian Response Plan and the Secretary-General's Response and Recovery Fund? And how will UNEP continue to engage on building back better in the implementation of the UN response?

#### *On the quarterly report*

Switzerland appreciates the detailed information provided in the quarterly report(s) as they allow to better conduct our important oversight role here in the CPR: i.e. to monitor, evaluate and provide guidance to the Secretariat as it follows the implementation of POW/B, MTS and the resolutions. The current report has certainly improved over previous versions. The structure is clearer and more logical.

Yet the preparation of such detailed reports every two or three month require a lot of resources of the Secretariat. We believe that current reporting is still too burdensome and hope that a digital reporting tool will ease this burden. Such an accessible and trackable tool is under development and we trust that especially section 2 builds on the PoW and the implementation of UNEA resolutions could in future be replaced by this new web-based solution.

#### **Agenda Item 5: Implementation of paragraph 8 of UNEA decision 4/2.**

There is a sense of urgency to tackle global environmental decline. We know that the environmental dimension of the SDGs is lagging behind in the implementation of the Agenda 2030. In order to address this global threat and to trigger the necessary political action, we have to put the environment onto the highest political agenda.

We are now in a position to harness two distinct moments in time to take action and address this situation:

- With UNEP@50 at UNEA 5 in Nairobi, Kenya, we can commemorate the achievements of UNEP over the last 50 years;
- With Stockholm+50, we have an additional opportunity to do so in 2022, when a forward looking outcome can accelerate political action on the environment.

We welcome the generous offer of Sweden and Kenya and support the statement provided by Sweden.

#### *On UNEP@50*

UNEP is well-equipped and guided by member states. At UNEA 4 we have not only requested the ED to prepare for a commemorative event, but also to work on a science-policy input on the global environment. We thank the Secretariat for the information provided today and look forward to discussing this input.

In line with the document by the Secretariat, UNEA would also provide the backdrop for the implementation of General Assembly Resolution 73/333. We are of the opinion that the political declaration from UNGA 73/333 should be concluded at UNEA 5. As we use the recommendations from the Annex 73/333 we already have the content for the political declaration at hand in order to conclude the discussions by then. We see this political declaration concluded at UNEA5 as one contribution of many to the S+50 conference in 2022. The High Level Segment of UNEA 5 can serve as the platform to agree on and conclude the political declaration from UNGA 73/333 – the focus on the HLS could help to avoid cross-contamination. Concluding this political declaration at UNEA 5 will not only strengthen UNEA as the authoritative voice and political decision making body but also give emphasis on the UNEP@50 celebrations at UNEA5 in Nairobi.

#### *On Stockholm+50*

Switzerland is strongly in favor of a UN high level conference, a Stockholm+50 and is in full support of Sweden: We need a moment in place and time, when the world leaders can take the necessary political action on the environmental challenges and opportunities and stand ready to carry the preparatory process forward.

The UN High Level political meeting in Stockholm can and should create the necessary visibility and harness the potential in certain areas of international environmental policy. This holds particularly true in those areas where significant gaps exist with respect to the normative policy setting or in light of implementation.

Such an event should be forward looking, and could address the environmental dimension of the agenda 2030, provide the political mandates for progressing with emerging environmental issues, like plastic pollution, or allow for concrete progress in sustainable consumption and production. Overall there is the opportunity to strengthen International Environmental Governance. Stockholm+50 should be visionary and concrete at the same time, bringing together world leaders and yet be inclusive and connect with people.

Lets us harness these two distinct moments in time for the good of UNEP, UNEA and the global environmental agenda.

#### **Agenda Item 6: Preparations for the fifth session of the Environment Assembly.**

Many thanks for the introduction and the thought-provoking discussion paper. It is important and timely to start these discussions now. Allow me to provide some initial reactions on the document.

On the relevance of the COVID-19 crisis for the **Mid-Term Strategy**:

While the COVID-19 crisis has an unprecedented impact on all aspects of public life and building back better provides a unique opportunity to green and substantial recovery efforts, we caution against making COVID-19 the focus of the new Mid Term Strategy. Fundamental challenges with respect to the environment, in particular those that are not strictly tied to the COVID crisis, will remain beyond the recovery and will need to be addressed.

Question: What is the status of the preparations of the interactive sessions in terms of regional representation, level of representation, etc.?

**On the preparation of UNEA 5:**

We support the idea of generating a certain focus and visibility for UNEA. So far the theme has served this purpose by supporting the elaboration of the ministerial declaration and by structuring the High Level Segment. We welcome that the theme for UNEA-5 was defined at an early stage. We understand that the proposed action areas are supporting the theme of UNEA5 by providing more details and background. However, we wonder according to what criteria these areas of action were defined. Science is the underlying basis for making informed political decisions and with that we should turn to the recommendations of science to identify areas where political action is needed. More specifically, we must take into account the key environmental assessments in particular the 6th Global Environment Outlook, and thematic assessments like the Global Chemicals and Resources Outlook for the consideration of identifying areas we need to work on. If these action areas are updated, we invite the Secretariat to utilize the key findings and outlooks of these aforementioned assessments as a guidance.

**On resolutions:**

Omnibus resolutions are a valuable tool to cluster and combine proposals by Member States. We made good experience of this in past UNEAs such as the cluster of chemicals and waste resolutions or the water pollution resolutions. Action areas, we mentioned before, can be useful for the clustering of resolutions of similar intention. Yet, we think that the resolutions should be presented by Member States and the action areas could serve as a guidance, but must not limit Member States in the presentation of resolutions on themes or emerging issues that are not covered by these areas. At UNEA, we must not limit the opportunity to submit, negotiate and decide on any relevant environmental challenges that are of global concern.

Allow me to emphasize one aspect, where an early contribution of the Secretariat would be extremely helpful. Almost all of the adopted resolutions ask for an ED's report on the implementation for that particular resolution. These ED's reports on the resolutions also include recommendations on further action on the specific topic. That information is of great help to Member States when drafting follow-up resolutions. With that information Member States would not only understand where the gaps and areas of action lie but would probably avoid duplication and repetition in the follow-up resolution. For that, Member States need these recommendations way ahead of UNEA. If we were able to consider them by the Annual Sub-Committee, it would provide us with ample time to start drafting based on those recommendations coming from the ED.

**On communication:**

We support the development of a communication strategy with key messages from UNEA that assures that

- all stakeholders are being targeted, not just one segment and the messages are tailored to the respective stakeholders;
- the communication puts focus on communicating the outcomes of UNEA, i.e. the resolutions, decisions and the ministerial declaration coming from UNEA;
- the UNEA outcomes are actively placed into other environmental political fora and processes and in processes outside the environmental domain.

## **Agenda Item 7: UNEA contribution to HLPF**

A contribution from UNEA to HLPF would be an opportunity to promote the environmental dimension of the SDGs in the most important inter-governmental forum for the monitoring of the accomplishments of the SDG, the High-Level Political Forum, and by this an opportunity to reach out within the UN-System and have some influence on processes that are beyond the UNEA and UNEP. Ideally such a contribution would have some impact in the HLPF, would help to strengthen UNEA and UNEP and last but not least this Committee, the CPR.

To have such an impact, the contribution would have to be concise and substantial and closely linked to the topic of the HLPF, the message should be simple and clear and the recommendations few and well targeted. And very importantly, it should be handed in on time. Unfortunately, we run the risk to achieve all the contrary. While the report has improved over the last weeks, it is in our view still too long, too broad in scope and the recommendations are too numerous and too little specific. The process was not well managed and not transparent. We recall the introduction of politically sensitive issues at a very late stage, the launch of silence procedure of 24 hours on a weekend and the repeated breaking of silent procedures, all of which hopefully will not undermine the trust that we've built in this Committee.

We have spent too many hours in this Committee on this report, which at the end is one of many contributions to HLPF not less, but certainly not more. Time that we haven't spent on the core function of this Committee, which is to do oversight of UNEP's activities and to provide guidance to UNEP.

Switzerland thinks that we must learn our lessons from this unfortunate experience. We concretely propose for future contributions:

- That the first draft of the Secretariat should be more concise, more focused with a clear message and few and well thought-through recommendations.
- That the CPR should be consulted once and after this consultation a revised version of the draft should be handed over to the Presidency of UNEA and it would be up to the Presidency of UNEA and its Bureau to finalise the contribution in time. It is after all a contribution of UNEA and not of the CPR.

Apparently the deadline of submission has passed for a long time. Currently in NY an outline with elements of the Ministerial Declaration for the HLPF is circulating. This contribution will hardly have an impact.

Having said this, Switzerland does not oppose consensus reached on the text today. However, we insist that the process must significantly improve next year.