

MGFC, RF and UNEP teleconference

Summary of minutes

8 April 2020

Agenda

- Situation at UNEP in light of COVID-19
- MGS consultations towards UNEA-5/RCMs
- Oslo Consultations
- Elections Regional Facilitators
- MGS Transparency
- Corona and Environment: Call for ideas for Perspectives Article

Participants

- UNEP: Alexander Juras, Aurora Cheung, Laetitia Zobel
- Science MG: Mohammed Abdel Raouf, Stephen Stec
- Trade Union MG: Bert De Wel
- NGO MG: Griffins Ochieng, Khawla Al-Muhannadi
- Women MG: Giulia Carlini
- Children and Youth MG: Teresa Oberhauser, Yugratna Srivastava
- Local Authorities MG: Yunus Arikan
- Business and Industry MG: Michelle Tan, Mumbi Munene
- Regional Facilitators:
 - LAC: Pedro Pereira Marques da Cunha
 - West Asia: Marie Therese Merhei Seif, Tareq Ahmed Abdo Hassan
 - Europe: Sascha Gabizon, Janis Brizga
 - North America: Jennifer Garard, Dan Burns, Anne Bowser
- Ingrid Rostad
- Jan-Gustav Strandenaes

Summary of Minutes

- **Situation at UNEP in light of COVID-19**
 - The UNEP HQ compound in Nairobi is closed, allowing only critical staff to enter. Most staff have been working from home, UNEP remains open for business.
 - The pandemic has a huge impact on UN organized meetings, in which some are postponed or happening virtually. It is a working progress in making virtual meetings work well, including how to ensure participants can focus and discussions lead to meaningful results.
 - UNEA-5 preparation is ongoing. There is a UNEP working group including Member States to decide how UNEA-5 will respond to the pandemic situation. By mid-April 2020, there will be a decision on the possibly adjusted UNEA-5 theme and modality. As several COPs will be postponed, it is also unsure whether UNEA-5 will also be postponed. As of now, the dates remain unchanged, i.e. February 2021.
 - The pandemic might also have impact on the funding of UN and UNEP.
- **MGS consultations towards UNEA-5/Regional Consultation Meetings (RCMs)**
 - UNEP welcomes MGS to prepare for UNEA-5, including through the “Oslo” consultation scheduled in June 2020, which will be held virtually. UNEP also encourages its regional offices to organize back-to-back or self-standing consultation meetings with MGS, mostly through online consultations. Major Groups are welcome to self-organize to prepare for UNEA-5.
 - We are still waiting to see how the Ministerial Consultation will be carried out, which is usually not held virtually. The planned CPR in October 2020, a UNEA-5 preparatory meeting, if will happen in person, MGFC members might also be invited to join.
 - Youth organizations has started developing their own UNEA-5 preparatory process that culminates in a global youth environment forum around UNEA-5.
 - Members shared successful experience of virtual meetings, including using a software that turn speeches / interpretations into texts. Members noted that it is important to have a programme to meaningfully MGS, not only giving a slot for speech.
 - Challenges of online meetings were also pointed out: Governments may hold face-to-face meetings after the pandemic, while the MGS are only consulted online; currently there are UN regulations on quorums for in person meetings to allow them to be valid, the impossibility to meet in person might be used as a reason to block meetings; interpretation into the UN official languages might also be challenging for online meetings.
 - NGO MG started UNEA-5 preparation via a multi-level consultation via Whatsapp and phone calls, on impact maximization, understanding current barriers, and ideas and proposals for the way forward.
- **Updates on the virtual "Oslo" consultation, 6-9 June 2020**
- Update from Ingrid Rostad: the Norwegian Government has banned all meetings of over 50 people until mid-June 2020. The Norwegian Ministry of Environment confirmed the consultations will be 6-9 June 2020, and will be conducted virtually. They are looking for ways

to accommodate a broader participation and consultation, e.g. organize shorter sessions, allow discussion over working on a text. More details will be given after technical solutions are confirmed. Options of recording the event are also being looked into. The consultative fall over the weekend which is not ideal, but is not possible to change now.

- In terms of the thematic elements of the consultation, Stakeholder Forum summarized consultation documents developed from July 2019 to April 2020, in which there are 10 thematic points with sub-points. **Action point: Jan-Gustav Strandenaes will share this document with the MGFC by end of April 2020.** The document is not a policy paper, it also does not confine the themes that MGS would like to discuss.
 - There are 3 parts during 6-9 June 2020:
 - 1 - Virtual MGS consultation (mainly an accredited NGOs audience), inputs on thematic clusters and ministerial declaration;
 - 2 - More open discussion, potentially public panels organized by MGS for a wider audience, potentially a Q&A session with the UN;
 - 3 - CPR and UNEA Bureau meetings, where MGS might talk to the Bureau. They are to kick start the UNEA-5 process, not global conference itself.
 - On science-policy-business event, there are still discussions within UNEP. **Action point: Science and Technology MG is to follow up with UNEP Science Division to ensure dialogue and consultation with MGS is on track.**
 - MGS representatives will bring MGS feedback to Bureau member during the Bureau meeting.
 - As for the open discussion (Part 2 above), the MGFC sub-group will organize with the Norwegian ForUM. The panels will be MGS-led. **Action point: the MGFC sub-group on the "Oslo consultation" will have a call and then discuss next steps. It will also update the rest of MGFC.** Sub group members:
 - Wali Haider from Farmers MG (walikhi@yahoo.com), Pakistan
 - Griffins Ochieng from NGO MG (ogriffins@gmail.com), Kenya
 - Yugratna Srivastava from Children and Youth MG (yugratna.srivastava@unmgcy.org), India
 - Mohamed Raouf from Science and Technology MG, co-chair of MGFC (mhdraouf@yahoo.com), Egypt
 - Janis Brizga, Regional Facilitator Europe (janis@zalabriviba.lv), Latvia
 - In terms of the **World Environment Day**, the host country Colombia is considering having virtual celebrations, supported by Germany. UNEP LAC office confirmed, and we will have more updates.
- **Elections of Regional Facilitators**
 - We need to have **2 facilitators per region**: Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), North America, and West Asia.
 - North America ended its elections and has its new regional facilitators. Other regions are still in the process. The time for nomination was extended by 10 days, to 10 April 2020.
 - For Europe, it is hoped that candidates from Eastern Europe can also be nominated; for LAC, nominations will complete by end of April 2020.

- **MGS Transparency**
 - The MGS Transparency document was sent to the MGFC, and had collected feedback. The issue was raised by UNEP a few months ago. The MGS Transparency document is ready for adoption - it is approved and will be shared in the final version with MGFC, and will be uploaded on the UNEP Civil Society website.

- **Corona and Environment: Call for ideas for Perspectives Article**
 - Perspective is a UNEP publication that provides a platform for MGS to share their views, which don't need to be the same as UNEP.
 - Articles need to be written in an understandable way and have some scientific background/truth. Everyone is welcome to submit articles, it could be on COVID-19 but also on any other topics under UNEP's mandate.
 - Action point: UNEP will write a short email for MGS to forward to their mailing lists, with info on how to submit articles to "Perspectives", details on the number of words, etc.

- **New members of MGFC**
 - New members are encouraged to get in touch with the Civil Society Unit for more information.