

Committee of Permanent Representatives
Subcommittee Meeting
Tuesday 14 July 2020
9:00 – 12:00
Online Meeting

Background Document for Agenda Item 3: Implementation of paragraph 8 of UNEA Decision 4/2

Note on preparations for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the creation of UNEP

This document, entitled “Note on preparations for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the creation of UNEP” provides an update from the Secretariat on the current preparations of the commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The note has been presented and discussed during the Joint Preparatory Retreat of the Bureaux of the UNEA and of the CPR which took place on 9-10 June 2020. Member States are invited to consider the note and provide further guidance on the above.

The note has been reviewed following the subcommittee meeting held on June 23 and outlines several key aspects associated with the implementation of paragraph 8 of UNEA Decision 4/2.

In the revised note, the Secretariat seeks approval and guidance on the following items:

- Launching the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP at the fifth session for the UN Environment Assembly, while considering that the launching is distinct from the consideration of the theme of UNEA-5;
- Support the proposed engagement and outreach activities following the launch, taking into account the need to ensure broad representation from all relevant stakeholder groups, including those from developing countries;
- Support the proposals for a science-policy input, consisting of the UNEP Global Assessments Synthesis Report, the Global Environmental Assessments Dialogue and the Review of Fifty Years of Strengthening the Science-Policy Interface; while ensuring that these three inputs will be mutually supportive, draw from the best available scientific inputs; find a balance between stock-taking and forward looking conclusions; draw from regionally balanced expertise and include relevant aspects associated with the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development and the means of implementation; and;
- Further consultations with Member States are also recommended to identify the role that UNEA-6, or a resumed session of UNEA, may play in closing the UNEP@50 commemorations and on the relationship between UNEP@50 and Stockholm+50, as distinct but interlinked and mutually supportive

Preparations for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the creation of UNEP

I. Introduction

1. This note outlines the following aspects associated with the implementation of paragraph 8 of UNEA Decision 4/2:

- Status of consultations with member States and stakeholders led by the Executive Director;
- Launching the commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP at the fifth session for the UN Environment Assembly;
- Engagement and outreach activities following the launch;
- Science-policy input for the commemoration and;
- Further consultations with Member States: proposed next steps.

The note should also be considered in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has created significant uncertainty to plan for activities related to the commemoration effectively.

II. Status of consultations with member States and stakeholders led by the Executive Director

2. In February 2020, the Executive Director held consultations with regional and political groups on the implementation of UNEA Decision 4/2, specifically paragraph 8. The outcomes of the consultations were largely considered and captured in the [joint document](#) ⁽⁰⁵⁾ by Kenya and Sweden on a UN high-level meeting possibly to be held in Stockholm in the spring of 2022.

3. The main initial conclusions of this first round of consultations were:

- a) The 50th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP (UNEP@50) should be held at the UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya;
- b) UNEA-5 in February 2021 provides a useful opportunity to kick-start the commemoration;
- c) The launch of the commemoration of UNEP's 50th anniversary should not preclude other important events involving various stakeholders, including, for example, multilateral environmental agreements and Major Groups and Stakeholders;
- d) Major Groups and Stakeholder, and in particular the Children and Youth Major Group, should be actively engaged in the preparatory process for UNEP@50.
- e) The 50th year commemoration of UNEP, as mandated in [UNEA Decision 4/2](#), is distinctly different, but interrelated with a possible UN high-level meeting to take place in 2022 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment, which will require an enabling mandate from the UN General Assembly; and
- f) UNEP, including its governing bodies – namely the UN Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives – is well-positioned to support preparations and discussions regarding both UNEP@50 and a UN high-level meeting, and can contribute to mutual coherence and consistency.

4. Subsequent to the initial rounds of consultations, the Secretariat provided a [presentation](#) on the implementation of paragraph 8 of decision 4/2 to the [150th meeting of the Committee of Permanent](#)

[Representatives](#), based on a [Secretariat background document](#), and reported on the outcome from previous informal consultations on the matter held with Member States.

5. The Committee took positive note of the proposal to launch the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of UNEP at UNEA-5 while noting that the issue required further consideration at an upcoming meeting of the CPR subcommittee. The Committee also agreed that consultations on the implementation of paragraph 8 of UNEA decision 4/2 and on the preparations for UNEA-5 should be addressed separately, including with regard to agenda items and background documentation.

6. Following the offer from Sweden to host a high-level political meeting in Stockholm in 2022 to commemorate the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment, and in the spirit of partnership that has guided the collaboration of the delegations of Kenya and Sweden in this regard, the two delegations informed the meeting that they would need more time for consultations and to elaborate further on the offer.

7. The Committee requested the Secretariat to take into account the views expressed at its 150th meeting in order to prepare a dedicated report on the substantive aspects of the preparations for the 50th anniversary of the creation of UNEP, in accordance with paragraph 8 of decision 4/2.

8. The present note constitutes an opportunity to make progress on the following aspects:

- Launching the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP at the fifth session for the UN Environment Assembly, while considering that the launching is distinct from the consideration of the theme of UNEA-5;
- Supporting the proposed engagement and outreach activities following the launch, taking into account the need to ensure broad representation from all relevant stakeholder groups, including those from developing countries;
- Supporting the proposals for a science-policy input, consisting of the UNEP Global Assessments Synthesis Report, the Global Environmental Assessments Dialogue and the Review of Fifty Years of Strengthening the Science-Policy Interface; while ensuring that these three inputs will be mutually supportive, draw from the best available scientific inputs; find a balance between stock-taking and forward-looking conclusions; draw from regionally balanced expertise and include relevant aspects associated with the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development and the means of implementation; and;
- Undertake further consultations with Member States to identify the role that UNEA-6, or a resumed session of UNEA, may play in closing the UNEP@50 commemorations and on the relationship between UNEP@50 and Stockholm+50, as distinct but interlinked and mutually supportive processes.

III. Launching the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP

9. Based on the outcome of the consultations with Member States and Major Groups and Stakeholders, it is recommended that the forthcoming Environment Assembly launches the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP, as mandated by decision 4/2 of UNEA 4, at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.

10. Launch of the commemoration during UNEA-5 will offer Ministers of the Environment and leaders of the global environmental community several opportunities to strengthen environmental multilateralism, as outlined in Box 1.

Box 1: Potential opportunities to strengthen environmental multilateralism from launching UNEP's 50th anniversary during UNEA-5

- *Strengthen UNEP through a renewed long-term vision building on the Rio+20 Outcome Document as mandated in various operative mandates contained in decision 4/2;*
- *Enhance and strengthen the integration of environmental considerations within the UN-system in the context of strengthening the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda and UN reform;*
- *Promote the science policy interface by making further use of science to catalyze environmental action at all levels as mandated in resolution 23 of UNEA-4;*
- *Reflect on the historic achievements, impact and importance of international environmental law, policy development and governance since the creation of UNEP in 1972, taking into account paragraph 88 of the Rio + 20 Outcome Document, and the findings and recommendations of the an action plan for the implementation of subparagraphs (a)–(h) of that paragraph 88, as mandated in paragraph 14 of decision 4/2.*
- *Highlight the contributions of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) towards a more effective multilateralism in the field of the environment;*
- *Re-examine how global environmental governance can be modernized and strengthened, including through the ongoing process of review of the effectiveness and efficiency of UNEP's policy-making organs, as mandated by paragraph 9-13 in UNEA decision 4/2;*
- *Establish a link between the commemoration and the implementation of General Assembly resolution 73/333.*

11. The kick-off of the commemoration could take the format of an interactive plenary session of the UN Environment Assembly, held during its high-level segment, during which Member States together with selected high-level guests, including from Major Groups and Stakeholders can reflect on the key achievements of UNEP during the past 50 years and launch an outreach campaign between World Environment Day 2021 and 2022

12. The 15 UNEP-hosted multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) have important contributions to make to the commemoration by rallying their respective constituents working on specific environmental issues. The MEAs, together with UNEA amplify the voice of the global environment family to step responses to environmental challenges as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

13. Such a dedicated session at UNEA-5, to launch/unveil the branding of the UNEP@50 and a communication and outreach campaign to kick-off the commemoration can contribute to raising awareness about the role and value-added of UNEP to policymakers and the general public alike in the establishment of enabling environment to ensure full integration of environmental sustainability in policy, investment and other related decision-processes, including in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, by showcasing its central role and continued importance in terms of its mandate, strategic programmes, science-based approach, and policies for a healthy environment.

IV. Possible engagement and outreach activities following the launch

14. In 2020, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, called on all UN Agencies and Programmes to mark the 75th Anniversary of the UN by providing people with the chance to engage in a conversation with the United Nations about its future role. UNEP has actively supported this ambitious and inclusive endeavour to position the UN and UNEP as the main multilateral platform for people everywhere to share their thoughts on current and emerging global environmental trends.

15. The 50th Anniversary of UNEP is a unique occasion for celebration and reflection on UNEP's key achievements and for setting the course for the Organization's future, as major transformations continue to affect our societies, the environment and multilateralism as an instrument to address current global challenges. The health of the environment touches everyone's lives. We aim to position UNEP as the organization for the environment, highlighting how we have a positive impact on people's daily lives and what our role is in advocating for a healthier future.

16. The main purpose of the communication outreach is to bring UNEP into people's daily lives around the world, showcasing the standards that the UNEP develops, the projects it supports and how the policies it recommends and the scientific knowledge it promotes are instrumental in shaping a healthy environment for current and future generations.

17. The engagement and outreach activities will be focused on:

- Reaffirming the relevance of UNEP's work;
- Asserting the significance of its governing bodies and MEAs;
- Demonstrate its knowledge and expertise through past and present impact, science-policy interface, research and innovation;
- Initiate a conversation with Member States, stakeholders and society to ensure that the organisation is equipped in its second half-century to help shape a sustainable planet for all.

18. The communication strategy will work to offer:

- A unified visual identity and set of messages is supplied to and adopted by member States, MEAs and partners;
- Member States, stakeholders, citizens and UNEP staff are involved and invested in the 50th Anniversary and engaged in organizing Anniversary activities;
- All audiences are moved to greater awareness of UNEP's mandate, work and results;
- The general public is exposed to UNEP messages, visuals and information in all languages, resulting in increased traffic to the Anniversary website and other related assets.

At the same time, UNEP communication will seek to engage in a global conversation with global audiences, member States, development partners, the UN System and UNEP colleagues with a collective reflection and look ahead to the UNEP's year to come. Events organized in the regions and HQ will highlight the UNEP's achievements in the global context and emerging challenges, particularly in the context of the 2030 Agenda. Communication on UNEP@50 and its initiatives, in particular on the future of the environment, will intersect from the launch event in UNEA 5 in February 2021 until World Environment Day in 2022. All communication will use the UNEP@50 branding and visual identifier and tagline to be developed)

19. Building on this innovative "global conversation", UNEP intends to develop a broad engagement and outreach strategy to celebrate and reflect on key achievements and to solicit views for a new course for

the Organization's future, in light of recent global trends and challenges such as those associated with COVID-19, unsustainable consumption and production, climate change, the loss of biodiversity and pollution. The aim would be to make the case for environmental multilateralism as an integral and indispensable instrument to these global challenges and to reaffirm UNEP as the UN voice for the environment.

20. Furthermore, to ensure that civil society and the general public will have the opportunity to influence and feel ownership for UNEP@50, UNEP will, in accordance with its mandate and established practices for stakeholder engagement, undertake broad outreach efforts to engage accredited non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders in the commemoration activities. This will also ensure a critical view on the achievements of UNEP during the last 50 years and contribute to avoiding that the commemoration will be limited towards mainly celebrating successes. In line with current practices, e.g. in the context of UNEAs, UNEP will support Major Groups and Stakeholders in organizing their own preparatory process towards UNEP@50, possibly culminating in an international Major Groups and Stakeholders conference prior to the formal commemoration. In this context, UNEP will make a special effort to ensure that in particular youth is fully engaged and that the voice of youth is heard throughout.

21. Moving forward, it would be important for UNEP to leverage its role, including as the Chair of the UN Environment Management Group, to foster greater cooperation, coherence and synergies across all global and regional MEAs.

22. We propose to produce multimedia assets, tapping into the rich content of UNEP and joint United Nations projects that reflect the achievements of multilateral instruments in addressing environmental challenges, such as those arising from climate change, biodiversity loss and unsustainable natural resource use. The objective is to inspire and reinvigorate multilateral support to impactful environmental action.

23. UNEP will keep up with current trends to ensure all type of communication efforts are still the most impactful way to reach a large audience and will adjust course as new formats and platforms emerge. All communication activities will be used as a space for member States, UNEP Executives, Goodwill Ambassadors and influencers to spark conversations on UNEP topics, work drawing thousands of audiences from around the globe.

24. Possibility of organizing an intersectoral dialogue science-policymakers to promote solutions to the main challenges faced by different sectors.

25. Additional possible activities are outlined in Box 2.

Box 2: Additional possible activities following the kick-off of the 50-year commemoration of the creation of UNEP

- *Setting in place, in accordance with its mandate, capacity-building and engagement programmes to contribute to a new generation of environmental leaders worldwide;*
- *Invite the Multilateral Environmental Agreements to support and be part of the UNEP@50 commemoration by providing an expanded platform for outreach and systemic action.*
- *Build on the experience of World Environment Day-related campaigns, to build a network of outreach activities throughout the year (“A World Environment Year”) drawing from resources and existing or voluntary activities organized by various UNEP partners and stakeholders;*
- *Initiate specific competitions/challenges to identify and publicize innovative solutions to challenging environmental issues;*
- *Develop social media material tapping into the rich content of UNEP and joint UN projects that reflect the achievements of multilateral instruments in addressing environmental challenges, such as those arising from climate change, biodiversity loss and unsustainable natural resource management;*
- *Create toolkits and opportunities for environment ministries, civil society organizations, private sector entities and academia to provide consistent messaging around the 50th Anniversary, including on past achievements, success stories and the way forward.*

26. Further efforts will also be made to minimize the environmental footprint of the commemorations, including by promoting the principle of “gathering the few and connecting the millions”, through the identification and application of effective information and communication technology and artificial intelligence solutions for UNEP-related meetings.

V. Ensuring a strong science-policy interface

27. As we approach the 50th anniversary of the Stockholm Conference and of the creation of UNEP in 2022, the global community is at major cross-roads. While the commemoration will provide an opportunity to celebrate manifold successful environmental accomplishments achieved over the past fifty years – such as the healing of the ozone layer¹ – there is, at the same time, a strong need to strengthen the national implementation of the science-based environmental agenda for action towards sustainable development by 2030 and beyond.

28. Indeed, despite progress made the work that UNEP and its partners undertake to catalyze the environmental science-policy interface need to be further strengthened, to trigger and accelerate action towards achieving the environmental dimension of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other internationally agreed environmental goals.

29. In view of the need for urgent action to address global environmental challenges, Member States have called upon UNEP to prepare a proposal for science-policy input on the global environment, in consultation with Member States and making use of contributions collected across all the regions, and by ensuring stakeholders involvement, in commemoration of the creation of UNEP, in accordance with paragraph 7 of UNEA-4 Resolution 4/23.

¹ United Nations. 2019. Ozone on track to heal completely in our lifetime, UN environment agency declares on World Day. United Nations News, New York. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/09/1046452>

30. In response to this request, UNEP is developing the first UNEP Global Assessments Synthesis Report which will provide a synthetic analysis of the key findings and messages emerging from all major recent global environmental assessments. It is expected that this new report will be launched prior to the Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5) to be held in Nairobi in February 2021. Throughout the development of the Synthesis Report, UNEP will also continue to facilitate the Ad-hoc Global Environmental Assessments Dialogue, periodically and informally bringing together experts from all major global environmental assessments undertaken in the UN family, with support from Member States and the wider science community². Meanwhile UNEP will provide this scientific synthesis of the global assessments to the MEAs to promote policy coherence across board under UNEA.

31. In addition, UNEP is proposing to further advance the request from Member States as per UNEA4 Resolution 23 by developing a Review of Fifty Years of Strengthening the Science-Policy Interface (1972-2022). This additional report could be developed to describe progress made over the past half a century with regard to the environmental science-policy interface, as well as to draw forward-looking lessons for the Science-Policy Interface agenda for the coming decades, including future scenarios as food for thought for governments to set pathways for accelerated actions towards a healthy and sustainable planet. Preparations for this proposed report have not yet started and would require additional financial resources for the report to be launched in early 2022. Preliminary discussions are being held with UNEP's long-standing technical partners in Sweden and Kenya to jointly develop this report.

32. Starting from UNEA5 (launch of UNEP@50), UNEP will launch a monthly online series "Science Talks" to address the priority and frontier environmental issues using cutting-edge science and to create the cyberspace for dialogues between scientists, policymakers, business leaders and representatives of civil societies to catalyze environmental smart policies and actions. Wherever and whenever the situation permits, hold online or physical fora to bring together all stakeholders to debate and agree on a set of options for science-based solutions and to implement them collectively.

VI. Further consultations with Member States and Stakeholders: proposed next steps

33. The subcommittee is invited to consider and provide further guidance with regard to the proposal to launch UNEP@50 during UNEA-5 and related proposals outlined in this note.

- As a next step, it is foreseen that consultations continue during the 7th annual subcommittee Member States intending to finalise the aspects related to the launching of the commemorations and the science-policy interface.
- In addition, it is recommended that during the subcommittee further dialogue is undertaken on the role that UNEA-6, or a resumed session of UNEA, may play in closing the UNEP@50 commemorations and on the relationship between UNEP@50 and Stockholm+50, as distinct but interlinked and mutually supportive processes.

34. In addition, the Executive Director intends to continue to conduct informal consultations on the implementation of UNEA Decision 4/2, specifically paragraph 8; with Member States and Major Groups and Stakeholders.

²The Ad-Hoc Global Assessment Dialogue was initiated in 2018 by the UNEP Chief Scientist and supported by the GEO team in the Science Division. It brings together the co-chairs and secretariats of major global assessments processes including i.e. the IPCC, IPBES, GEO, IRP, the UN GSDR etc. to discuss synergies on e.g. methodologies, glossaries, outreach and communication, etc.