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Switzerland – Written Inputs for Consideration

Consultations on 73/333 – 21-23 July

This written input is largely drawn from the interventions delivered during the consultations.

On Governance

Thank you, Co-facilitator,
Excellencies, distinguished colleagues

Despite the many conventions and institutions in the area of the environment, policymakers still lack the institutional framework required to be able to guarantee global environmental protection. For this reason, Switzerland advocates for a strengthening of international environmental governance in order to achieve a comprehensive, cohesive, effective and efficient international environmental regime.

UNEP is to adhere to its mandate. UNEP was mandated to collect and analyze global, regional and national environmental data, develop political instruments for the protection of the environment, and assume a central role in coordinating and guiding the policies of the international environmental regime. UNEP is a normative organization.

Switzerland advocates for the implementation of UNEA's resolutions and the facilitation of UNEP in the effective fulfilment of its coordinating function within the UN system through the formulation of environmental policy goals and strategies.

It means that member states together with UNEP and other stakeholders strive to strengthen governance, account for emerging issues, and place the environment at the highest political level whenever there is opportunity to do so.

Laws, regulations and standards are important tools for international environmental governance. Regulation can also support means of implementation: Clear legal requirements increase the innovative power of companies, mobilize resources, and assure planning certainty.



Member States need to enable UNEP to take its role as the leading global authority by assuming their fair share of the Voluntary Indicative Scale of Contributions (VISC). Member states that do not meet the VISC should ramp up their contributions. Where they already do, they should commit to the practice of not falling behind previously committed contributions. Moreover, MS should give priority to unearmarked contributions.

Member States need to put emphasis on the science-policy interface of UNEP and UNEA: More specifically Member States need to take up science and data for their effective decision-making. That means that MS need to invest resources and time in assessing the science and formulate and adopt resolutions at the UNEAs.

Global environmental goals can increase the visibility and commitment to international environmental issues. For that reason, Switzerland initiated the publication by UNEP of a compilation of internationally agreed environmental goals (or Global Environmental Goals, GEG) that were drawn from the goals in existing multilateral environmental agreements, resolutions of the UN General Assembly and the results of UN summits.

Mainstreaming environment and the results from UNEA into other process of socio-economic decision-making can prove to be another promising support for UNEA and UNEP.

UNEP has the obligation to provide better service to its MEAs. They must be “well-served” through strengthening the institutional framework and accountability, the administrative and financial framework, and relies on mutual supportiveness of the programs of work. EMG can and should be exerting an important role in it.

Switzerland supports the exploitation of synergies as an effective and pragmatic way of dealing with the fragmentation of the international environmental governance system. Multilateral environmental conventions which deal with the same topics and areas should cooperate more and exploit potential synergies. An example stems from the Chemicals and Waste Cluster.

Switzerland fully supports the important role of the Environment Management Group (EMG) for the elaboration of system-wide strategies for the environment as agreed at the Rio+20 conference. Ultimately, UNEP needs to head a system-wide strategy that every UN institution, body etc. has to sign up for, a strategy that is embedded at the highest level in the UN and that is top-down. Switzerland wants to stress that that work has to be of political nature, and it that doesn't mean to be “greening the offices”. It must remain a strategic approach. Member States can support “their” agencies, organizations, and conventions to sign up for the system-wide strategies on the environment.

In summarizing, most delegations do like refer to specific mandates and call for respecting them. UNEP's mandate is clear, as a normative organization, it should focus on the science-policy interface and formulate policy decisions on the global environment.

We seem to all agree that we want to strengthen UNEP. As it currently stands, it lacks the finances to deliver adequately on its mandate and the resolutions that we adopt at UNEA. In para 88 of Rio+20, UNEP shall “*have secure, stable, adequate and increased financial resources from the regular budget of the United Nations and voluntary contributions to fulfil its mandate.*” We should all enable UNEP by providing our fair share.

On Means of Implementation

Thank you, Co-facilitator,
Excellencies, distinguished colleagues

At the outset, we are encouraging all member states that have not yet done so to consider ratifying multilateral environmental agreements, in order to engage in the processes for effectively implementing the MEAs.

Further, regulation can also support means of implementation: Clear legal requirements increase the innovative power of companies, mobilize resources, and assure a certain planning certainty.

Concrete action by member states, UNEP, and other stakeholders can improve on the implementation and means of implementation. A few proposals to that end:

First, each of the MEAs already does feature mechanisms for financial support, technology transfer and capacity building. Hence, we judge it as most effective to call on members of the COP for each specific MEA to work with their existing mechanisms with the aim of improving on the tools available, as applicable.

Second, member states can tap into existing financing mechanisms that pertain to the environment and sustainable development. As an example, the AAAA was specifically designed to secure the implementation of the Agenda 2030.

Third, with a view to utilize existing funding most efficiently, Switzerland has been advocating for synergies among MEAs. While ensuring optimal use of available resources, harnessing synergies also warrants a certain coherence.

Fourth, UNEP is not an implementing agency. UNEP has a normative role and cannot support implementation on the ground due to the lack of such a mandate and the lack of resources at the country level. UNEP can however, make available key environmental information to strategic entry points of UN Common Country Analysis, UN Country Teams, for example through the World Environment Situation Room or generally feeding the Resident Coordinators.

Lastly and importantly, member states need to enable UNEP to take its role as the leading global authority by assuming their fair share of the Voluntary Indicative Scale of Contributions (VISC). Member states that do not meet the VISC should ramp up their contributions. Where they already do, they should commit to the practice of not falling behind previously committed contributions. Moreover, MS should give priority to unearmarked contributions.

.Thank you.

On Environmental Law

Thank you, Co-facilitator,
Excellencies, distinguished colleagues

To provide assistance to Member States and members of Specialized Agencies in current discussions on principles of international environmental law, UNEP should make full use of coordination and mainstreaming mechanisms such as the Environmental Management Group, which is chaired by UNEP. In unlocking the potential of such mechanisms, UNEP can reach a wide range of policy makers and assist Member States in their efforts to streamline environmental issues into other sectors.

Such efforts to streamline environmental matters into other sectors might additionally be strengthened by showcasing the benefits of implementing environmental principles to policy makers in areas that are not typically considered at the core of environmental law (for instance in contexts of health, sustainable economic development, etc.). In this regard, there is a need that member states apply a “whole of government” approach at the national level. One coherent voice for the environment that is placed in all different environmental processes and in other sectors.

To benefit the most from UNEP’s assistance in the development of national environmental law and capacity-building, Member States, on the other hand, are called to participate effectively in the development of the Montevideo V program, which is currently developed.

We would also like to encourage member states to engage in other existing deliberations in the UN context, such as the work of the International Law Commission.

Finally, in addition to providing assistance and capacity-building itself, UNEP could also facilitate and convene an exchange among Member States with similar challenges (also in terms of South-South Cooperation for instance).

Thank you.