



**151st meeting
of the Committee of Permanent Representatives of UNEP
14 September 2020**

**Interventions on behalf of the European Union
and its Member States**

Agenda Item 4: Report by the Executive Director

- Chair, Madam Executive Director, distinguished colleagues; it is my privilege to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.
- Allow me to first pass a warm welcome to the newly arrived Representatives of Member States. We look forward to working with you on the highly important matters UNEP is entrusted to deal with. We trust that despite the constraints related to the COVID-19 pandemic, we will jointly fulfil our responsibility to prepare an meaningful UNEA-5 meeting that will provide guidance on the most burning challenges the world is facing: the need for a green recovery and transition to climate neutral and resource efficient economies, halting the biodiversity loss, and stopping pollution.
- As we are facing unprecedented uncertainties, we appreciate the timely discussions held by the Bureaus of UNEA and the CPR on the options for organising the UNEA-5 meeting. We encourage the Bureaus and leadership of UNEP to provide maximum clarity on the way forward without delay.

- Importantly, we should have a full understanding of the format and timing of UNEA-5 in due course for the CPR Annual subcommittee meeting in October. For these considerations, we should bear in mind the necessity of the adoption of the Mid-Term Strategy and the Programme of Work, as well as the urgency to address some key challenges by the UNEA: the action for nature; a green recovery; a solution for marine litter and plastics, to name but a few.
- On the other hand, we should have a good judgement and full understanding of the limitations related to the different formats that impact participation of Member States and the negotiations of UNEA documents, which might negatively influence the relevance and quality of the outcomes, if not addressed adequately.
- We believe that certain limitations can be overcome to allow for a decisive meeting in February 2021, ensuring the possibility to adopt necessary decisions. We would also like to explore how virtual or hybrid formats can accommodate policy relevant and strong political outcomes and engaging high level representatives in a relevant manner.
- We thank for the feedback from the Bureaus' discussion and stand ready to discuss it in more detail with the CPR membership in a future meeting.
- Madam Executive Director, I don't need to repeat the EU's and its Member States' interest in quality reporting. We would like to thank you and the Secretariat for the timely and relevant quarterly report presented to this meeting [as well as your oral elaboration]. We would like to express our appreciation, in particular, with regard to the COVID-19 response and your consequent advocacy along the "build-back-better-and greener" narrative and UNEP's involvement in the UN-system-wide response to COVID. We encourage UNEP to further support Member States by leveraging existing

initiatives and activities to contribute to a sustainable recovery, including through the UN Development System.

- We should not forget to acknowledge all the efforts UNEP does internally to maintain its operations and support the function of the governance bodies, despite COVID. This is well noticed and appreciated.
- Finally, in line with our earlier requests, we would like to hear more about the state of play of the continued implementation of measures related to the “five lines of defence” related to the management of UNEP and would appreciate a written update in this regard, that could possibly take into account the recommendations of the recent report of the UN Board of Auditors.
- Ladies and gentlemen, the EU and its Member States would like to assure you of our continuous support to UNEP as demonstrated by both the financial contributions and the policy engagement. We look forward to discussing with you the important items on the agenda of the meeting today.

I thank you.

Agenda Item 5: Medium-Term Strategy and Programme of Work

Key messages:

- The EU and its Member States would like to thank the UNEP Secretariat for the work on the MTS and the Programme of Work documents. We appreciate the overall direction the documents have taken. We notably welcome the global long-term vision for 2050, towards which the MTS and its three strategic pillars (climate, nature and pollution actions) are supposed to contribute. We are supportive of the overall ambition and priorities of the MTS, its new structure, which is convincing and solidly supported by the programmatic objectives and the proposed subprogrammes.
- We do, however, expect further improvements:
- We would like to stress the importance of emphasis on the cross-cutting issues of Sustainable Consumption and Production, Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency. While the general narrative on these issues is well addressed, we see the need to better reflect them in the operational parts of the MTS and through more concrete objectives. Along the same line we would like to see the Chemicals and waste area, which goes well beyond the pollution angle, to be better incorporated in the narrative of SCP, Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency.
- We also see that some elements have been lost, as compared to the previous version. For instance, we are missing the emphasis on the importance of the environmental dimension of the SDGs for the 2030 Agenda as a whole. The EU and its Member States are of the view that reintroducing an explicit reference to the need to improve the health of the environment as a

foundational and enabling factor for the implementation of all SDGs would be beneficial and a clear reflection of UNEP's mandate and ambition.

- Similarly, the new draft does not include anymore the references to UNEP's comparative advantage. While there is no need for a dedicated section on this, the EU and its Member States would see a value in the MTS describing more clearly, under the respective subprogrammes, UNEP's strengths and what UNEP can offer additionally to other organisations, particularly with respect to climate and biodiversity. Here, we would like to support UNEP's efforts to build synergies with other multilateral bodies, since climate and biodiversity, as parts of the environment, should be logically and legitimately covered by UNEP's activities. The link to and the centrality of the UN Reform to deliver on UNEP's mandate could also be made clearer.
- The EU and its Member States believe that gender aspects could be further strengthened, especially in the Programme of Work document, where gender does not figure as a proposed outcome in any of the seven subprogrammes.
- We would also like to receive in the next iteration a detailed Programme of Work and Budget that concretises how it contributes to achieving the MTS, including the respective results frameworks and flagship activities.
- We would further like to note that it is currently unclear from the draft Programme of Work how UNEP will measure its impact on the areas where it provides enabling support for a systemic change or influences the work of others. We recognise the challenge but firmly encourage UNEP to be bold in recognising and reporting instances where it has an impact. An analysis of challenges for UNEP with regard to cooperation with other UN entities would also be a welcome complement to inform the discussions.
- Lastly, the EU and its Member States would welcome more details on the modalities envisioned by UNEP for the previously proposed three thematic

trust funds for the three strategic pillars, and how the results of the survey on UNEP funding may inform the further development of that proposal.

. **(See detailed comments in the Annex)**

Agenda Item 6: Update on the process under the UNGA resolution 73/333

Key messages:

- EU and its Member States thank co-facilitators for their work so far as well as the Secretariat for the valuable support to the follow up process on the General Assembly Resolution 73/333.
- We would like to reiterate the importance of this exercise that should lead us to prepare for UNEA-5 a political declaration that is ambitious and really fulfils the mandate of strengthening the implementation of international environmental law and international environmental governance as set forth by Resolution 73/333.
- We look forward to receiving the co-facilitators' document on the building blocks of the political declaration and a rich discussion in the next consultative meeting in November.

Agenda Item 7: Update on the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics

Key messages:

- EU and its Member States thank Bureau and Secretariat for the update.
- We would also like to express our appreciation to the outgoing Chair of the Expert Group Ms Jillian Dempster of New Zealand, thanking for her tireless efforts in guiding this extremely important strand of UNEP's work since its establishment by UNEA-3. We wish you all successes. We welcome Mr Satoru Iino of Japan, who kindly agreed to step in for the chairmanship. We trust that the Group will conclude its work and in line with its mandate will deliver adequate and ambitious recommendations to UNEA-5, which UNEA will be able to take further to urgently address the global problem of plastic pollution.
- More specifically on the work of the Expert Group, the EU and its Member States would like to reiterate our expectations expressed in earlier discussions:
- We expect that the response options should be clearly reflected in the outcome document of the Expert Group. As regards the studies, they should not be the major focus and central part of discussions in Expert Group but rather inform discussions around response options.
- While the UNEP's scenario note mentions a "short summary", the EU and its Member States are of the view that it is important to have a summary that adequately reflects the discussions, views and recommendations of the Expert Group. Hence, a clarification of what "short" means would be welcome, since the list of elements to be included therein is rather extensive.

- Moreover, the EU and its Member States expect the summary report to refer to the substance of submissions on response options made by submitters pursuant to UNEA Res 3/7 and earlier conclusions, and in particular, that keeping the status quo can be ruled out as a response option.
- Regarding the foreseen virtual preparatory meetings, the EU and its Member States ask the Secretariat to explain what is meant by “technical, operational and procedural aspects for organising the virtual AHEG-4 meeting” that are to be discussed at these meetings.
- In our view it would be helpful to utilise the virtual meetings for presenting outcomes of the pending studies, so as to leave enough time for substantive discussion on response options during AHEG-4, which are to be informed by these studies.
- In addition, the EU and its Member States would like the Secretariat to clarify what is meant by “Draft of the Meeting documents for AHEG-4” that are supposed to be supporting material for the virtual preparatory meetings.
- The EU and its Member States are also of the view that it would be sensible to update the timing of the virtual preparatory meetings, given that the current timeline foreseen already seems to be delayed.
- Lastly, regarding the AHEG-4 meeting, the EU and its MS expect it to focus discussions on response options, organised along the life-cycle stages of plastic.
- Regarding the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) and its Inter-Governmental Review (IGR), the EU and its Member States would like to inquire about next steps regarding the process of consideration of a draft decision for the IGR.

Agenda Item 8: Update on the implementation of the UNEA-4 Pollution Action Plan.

Key messages:

- The EU and its Member States would like to thank UNEP for providing the update. We will look forward to further regular updates in the future.
- It is good to see that UNEP conducted a wide array of activities in support of the Action Plan in the areas of reporting, knowledge sharing, implementation, infrastructure, awareness raising and leadership.
- In the context of the discussions around the new Mid-Term Strategy and the Programme of Work we underline the importance of effectively implementing the Pollution Action Plan and ensuring that the new strategic pillar and respective subprogramme build on, but also go beyond it.
- The EU and its Member States appreciate the array of valuable publications described in the progress update. We would like to highlight the need to translate findings and recommendations therein into action. In communicating, Secretariat should be careful when referring to reports as tools, if these do not contain concrete guidelines, concrete suggestions for policy mechanisms or methodologies for implementation.
- The knowledge platforms and websites referred to in the update at this stage remain somewhat general and substantive content could be strengthened further. In this context we emphasise the need to ensure transparent and efficient linking across platforms, so as not to present information in a fragmented manner.

- We would like to encourage UNEP to further strengthen the implementation of the Action Plan and indicate agreement with the conclusions drawn in the document regarding the way forward.

ANNEX - Detailed comments

Medium-Term Strategy and Programme of Work (agenda item 5)

Comments on the second draft of UNEP's MTS 2022-2025

The current draft MTS improved compared to its previous version and forms a balanced document and the EU and its MS wish to highlight a number of positive points:

- We support the overall ambition and priorities outlined by UNEP in the draft MTS 2022-2025 and thank UNEP for incorporating views and ideas previously expressed by Member States.
- The EU and its MS welcome the new structure proposed in the MTS, which is convincing and solidly supported by the proposed programmatic objectives and with the subprogrammes encompassing a comprehensive range of relevant issues.
- Many of the changes to the structure had a positive impact on readability and decreased duplication (e.g. stronger focus on programmes instead of pillars; clear identification of outcomes of thematic subprogrammes; description of envisioned contribution of foundational and enabling subprogrammes to all other subprogrammes; levers following subprogrammes).
- The EU and its MS appreciate that the new draft now outlines a global long-term vision for 2050 more clearly, towards which the MTS and its three strategic pillars are supposed to contribute.
- Generally, the EU and its MS reiterate their positive view expressed in previous comments on the MTS submitted for the CPR subcommittee meeting on 14 July 2020.
- The issues underlying the three pillars are closely interlinked and therefore it will be crucial to strive for coherence and cater to such interlinkages when the MTS is translated into action at the programmatic level. In this regard the EU and its MS welcome the strengthened recognition of this in the draft MTS and that policy and institutional coherence are referenced as an important objective as well as instrument in various crucial instances.
- The EU and its MS agree with the expanded, amended and more data-driven situation analysis of the current MTS draft and in particular with the assessment that environmental crises have to be addressed if the international community is to succeed in eradicating poverty, protecting people and ensuring sustainable development.
- The EU and its MS welcome that the MTS makes clear reference to socio-economic inequality and inequity and underline the importance of UNEP's work reflecting this.
- For the EU and its MS the transparent and systematic alignment of the MTs and its underlying PoWB with the SDGs is important and we therefore welcome the intent to utilise or reference SDG indicators where possible. We look forward to this being implemented in the next iteration of the MTS for the strategic pillars and particularly the PoWB for the thematic, foundational and enabling programmes.

- In addition, the EU and its MS welcome UNEP’s proposal to develop and use impact metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of projects and UNEP products, in order to continuously improve results-orientation and long-term impact.
- The EU and its MS agree with the proposed “four levers of change” being vital to UNEP delivering on its mandate (i.e. cooperation/synergies with MEAs, leveraging UN reform, inclusive multilateralism and innovative communication) and welcome this approach.
- The EU and its MS welcome an update of the Resource Mobilization Strategy from 2017 as well as an update of the Partnership Strategy. In this regard it would be interesting to know what UNEP sees as important take-aways from the current Resource Mobilization Strategy and what can be improved in its next iteration?

At the same time we see room for improvement on a number of issues:

- The EU and its Member States welcome the substantively strengthened descriptions of the objectives and key areas of work under the subprogrammes. However, we would like to see more emphasis on the cross-cutting issues of Sustainable Consumption, Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency. While the overall narrative of these issues is well addressed in the document, we see the need to better reflect this narrative in the operational parts of the MTS and through more concrete objectives like resource decoupling in the outcomes.
- The importance of the environmental dimension of the SDGs for the 2030-Agenda as a whole is not emphasised as clearly and explicitly as before anymore. The EU and its MS are of the view that reintroducing an explicit reference to the need to improve the health of the environment as a foundational and enabling factor for the implementation of all SDGs would be beneficial and a clear reflection of UNEP’s mandate.
- The new draft does not include a section on UNEP’s comparative advantage anymore. While there is no need for a dedicated section in its own right, the EU and its MS would see value in the MTS describing more clearly, under the respective subprogrammes, UNEP’s strengths and what UNEP can offer additionally to other organizations contributing to the same issues, and to emphasise that the organisation will strive to focus on activities where it can create the biggest impact, where possible in cooperation with other organizations. Particularly with respect to climate and biodiversity we think that the role of UNEP and complementarity vis-à-vis other agencies and fora could be better explained.
- Although gender and human rights integration has been strengthened throughout the document, with gender identified as a key aspect of environmental sustainability and an emphasis on training of staff to “get gender right”, the EU and its MS believe gender aspects could be further strengthened, especially in the PoWB, where gender does not figure as a proposed outcome in any of the seven subprogrammes, and would therefore not be measured at a higher level.
- Where the MTS refers to “indigenous populations” and “indigenous people”, such as in the section on the importance of a rights-based approach, the EU and its MS suggest to use the agreed term of “indigenous peoples”.
- Regarding the thematic subprogramme on Climate Action, the EU and its MS reiterate the importance to ensure enough funding for the mechanisms set up to deliver on the Paris

Agreement, e.g. the CTCN, which is currently underfunded. In addition, we would like the Secretariat to clarify whether “high emitting countries” should be understood in absolute, per capita or perhaps both terms?

- In addition, the EU and its MS would encourage UNEP to rethink some of the terminology employed under this subprogramme with a view to ensuring the use of more exact language. Terminology used under UNFCCC should be applied to ensure consistency across the UN. For example, instead of “climate stability”, which is somewhat unclear, “Climate resilience and moving towards net zero greenhouse gas emissions”; “low greenhouse gas emission”, instead of “low-carbon”; “tackle climate change” instead of “reverse climate change”; “unavoidable climate change impacts” instead of “unavoidable climate change”; “to support the transition to climate neutrality” instead of “to help cut emissions”; “the financial mechanism of the UNFCCC and its operating entities, GEF and GCF” instead of listing GEF, GCF and the financial mechanism as separate “partnerships”; or avoiding the use of “climate emergency” in favour of “climate change”.
- The EU and its MS welcome the thematic subprogramme on Chemicals and Pollution Action as an important step in the work towards a pollution-free world. At the same time, we see chemicals and waste as an important issue which goes well beyond the pollution angle. We would therefore like to see chemicals and waste better incorporated in the overall narrative of Sustainable Consumption and Production, Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency.
- In addition the EU and its MS would welcome the inclusion of important elements that had been part of previous MTS and remain important challenges, such as for example the importance to support countries in implementing cross-sectoral national chemical management regimes as well as an integrated approach to financing sound management of chemicals and waste.
- Under the same thematic subprogramme and in line with the aim to leverage inter-agency cooperation and partnerships, it would be essential to better leverage the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste (IOMC) for coherent support.
- Under the foundational subprogramme on Science-Policy, the EU and its MS wish to emphasise and welcome the different important roles of UNEP as a strong voice in scientific debate, for safeguarding consistency in global environment assessment dialogue as well as for using science as the foundation to inform international negotiations and decisions and as a convener and knowledge broker that builds consensus on emerging issues.
- However, we are of the view that the role of UNEP in “Building the capacities of countries to collect, analyze their own relevant data and conduct their own environmental assessments, and guiding them towards embedding these in their policies and decisions that drive actions on climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, will be key aspects of UNEP’s intervention” (p. 28 of MTS) could be better placed, not only in the context of environmental data, but is also relevant in view of the other elements mentioned on environmental knowledge, coherence and keeping the environment under review.

- Regarding the foundational subprogramme on Environmental Governance the EU and its MS would suggest to include “and Law” in the title, so as to fully reflect this important dimension of the subprogramme.
- The EU and its MS welcome the support UNEP will provide through the Montevideo Programme and emphasise its key role given UNEP’s relation with MEAs to advance international environmental law.
- The EU and its MS welcome the intent of UNEP to reach and engage with a diverse and expanding range of stakeholders and see national law-makers (parliamentarians) as an important group in this regard.
- However, the EU and its MS requests UNEP to make sure the language on environmental rights under this subprogramme is accurate and in line with its mandate.
- Regarding the enabling subprogramme on Digital Transformations the EU and its MS would like to emphasise the continued relevance of keeping and applying a human rights lens on digitalization, as well as to not limit support to only digital innovations but also seek to integrate social innovative practices on environment.
-
- Lastly, relating to the MTS, the EU and its MS would welcome more details on the modalities envisioned by UNEP for the previously proposed three thematic trust funds for the three strategic pillars (climate, nature and pollution actions), and how the results of the survey on UNEP funding may inform the further development of said proposal.

Comments on the first draft of the PoWB 2022-2023 (Annex to MTS)

- The EU and its MS welcome that the PoWB conceptualises results at three different levels.
- EU and MS also agree that the PoWB is the tool to implement the MTS and we support the general direction it is taking.
- We would further like to note that it is currently unclear from the draft PoWB how UNEP will measure its impact on the areas where it only provides enabling support for systemic change (outcomes) or influences the work of others to achieve outcomes, which would be necessary in order to facilitate an improvement in measuring results both in terms of output and outcome in the longer term. We recognise the challenges related to defining attribution and encourage UNEP to be bold in recognising and reporting instances where it has had an impact, even if UNEP has not been the sole contributor of the result. In doing so, we can report and monitor more ambitious impacts.
- The EU and its MS look forward to engaging in more detail with the next iteration of the PoWB, which is to include the results frameworks for the subprogrammes and highlight for each subprogramme their respective flagship programmes/projects.
- The EU and its MS look forward to the next draft iteration of the PoWB that should help clarify in more detail how UNEP will deliver the MTS, for example how exactly UNEP plans to support countries in raising their climate ambition together with UNFCCC; how UNEP will facilitate access to finance, technology and innovative solutions for vulnerable countries; how UNEP intends to concretely promote sustainability and transparency of value chains and production methods and who key partners would be; or how UNEP will

mobilize and drive behavioural change and whether UNEP intends to partner with UNESCO on environmental education in doing so.

- The EU and its MS welcome the focus under the section “Programme management and support” on continued investment in human resources and staff since this aspect is key to UNEP delivering on the MTS and PoWB, and welcome the idea of capacity building and training of staff, establishing “learning loops” from evaluations, as well as a strategic senior leadership. We note that for fully integrated systems thinking/transformational change and taking into account the complexity of UNEP’s mandate, it will be important to ensure at the same time a “safe space” (or “allowance”) to try new modes or practices. We would welcome to know UNEP’s views on this.
- The EU and its MS welcome the evaluation plan for the period 2022-2023 annexed to the draft PoWB. Evaluation exercises of the past years and the incorporation of respective results into ongoing improvement of UNEP’s results-orientation, strategic and project management have proven the positive role of continued and thorough evaluation efforts.
- In addition to regular internal evaluation efforts the use of and participation in external evaluations may provide additional value, such as for instance with MOPAN. The EU and its MS would like to know how such external evaluations, where appropriate, fit into the picture of the evaluation plan outlined in the PoWB.