

Thank you very much for the floor, Ambassador Coimbra. It is my great privilege to take the floor on behalf of the UNEA president. I would like to use the opportunity to report on last week's UNEA bureau meeting, and the reason for that is that we in this Annual Sub-Committee have been entrusted with following up on their decisions. We are now entering an important phase of our preparations to make sure that both the Environment Assembly and UNEP are able to send a message to the world that our work continues, and that it, and multilateralism in general, is highly relevant.

Firstly, thank you, Ambassador, for reporting kindly to the bureau on the discussions on date and format for UNEA-5 following the sub-committee meeting 1 October. The discussion among the bureau members mirrored the same thinking as we noted among member states at that meeting. Essentially, the bureau recognised the need to balance the need to approve the Medium-Term Strategy, Programme of work and budget so that UNEP is able to continue its work also heading into the post-pandemic recovery and the challenges posed by online negotiations of substantive issues. As a result, the UNEA bureau agreed that the two step approach proposed by the President was the best solution. The Bureau agreed that a shorter, more focused session should take place as agreed in February 2021. The meeting would then adjourn and reconvene to address the resolutions and other substantive issues in February 2022. There was clear support to reconvene in late 2021, but one region indicated a very clear preference to postpone until 2022. The Bureau then decided by consensus that February 2022 was acceptable. As Ambassador Coimbra has/will inform/-ed you, the ball has now been passed to us in this Annual Sub-Committee to agree on the mandate and scope of the February 2021 session. Our work this week in this Annual Sub-Committee is therefore the next step.

On the ministerial declaration itself, the bureau was divided. Some bureau members agreed with the UNEA president that it is important that the first session of UNEA send a clear message to the world, while others pointed to the real challenges of finalising such a document by online negotiations. The Bureau therefore agreed that the president consult in order to establish what could be possible to agree. I will have more to say on this later this week.

Mr. Chair, I will stop here, and now leave the rest of this meeting in your capable hands.