



UNEP OECPR-2 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 15 FEBRUARY 2016

The second meeting of the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR-2) to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) opened Monday in Nairobi, Kenya. Delegates heard messages from UN General Assembly President Mogens Lykketoft and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner, as well as many statements from Member States and regional groups. Delegates adopted the agenda and organization of work, considered policy matters, and discussed: the programme performance review; the 2018-2021 Medium-Term Strategy (MTS), the 2018-2019 Programme of Work (PoW) and budget; and changes to the cycle of the UN Environment Assembly of the UNEP (UNEA).

A reception took place in the evening, hosted by the Netherlands and Romania.

OPENING PLENARY

Welcoming delegates, CPR Chair Julia Pataki noted a successful OECPR-2 will be one that defines clear messages that would come from UNEA-2. Delegates approved the nomination of Pakistan as the new CPR Vice-Chair for the Asia-Pacific region, and adopted the provisional OECPR-2 agenda (UNEP/OECPR.2/1/Rev.1) without amendment.

In a video message, UN General Assembly President Lykketoft described UNEA-2 as a key intergovernmental checkpoint on the road to 2030, and highlighted its role in integrating the environmental dimension across all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Steiner described attendance at OECPR-2 as “overwhelming,” noting Member States’ interest, expectation and confidence with regard to UNEA’s role in the global sustainable development architecture. He urged delegates not to view UNEP as an institution to be further “cut and shrunk,” stressing it has demonstrated efficiency and effectiveness.

G-77/CHINA, the EU and its Member States, and the AFRICAN GROUP all highlighted the important sustainable development agreements finalized in 2015 and noted the emphasis in 2016 on commencing implementation. They emphasized UNEP’s critical role in advancing implementation of the environmental aspects of these agreements, with the EU stressing the need to address fragmented handling of the environment. G-77/CHINA highlighted the importance of OECPR-2 in addressing the environmental impacts of conflict, while the AFRICAN GROUP noted African countries’ progress in responding to the UNEA-1 resolution on illegal trade in wildlife.

The Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC) said the SDGs must form the “guiding light” of UNEP’s work and expressed a preference for a smaller set of

resolutions to allow for their overall consideration. The ARAB LEAGUE underlined the need to step up international and regional efforts to combat terrorism.

On promoting the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, SRI LANKA highlighted the role of the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific, FINLAND emphasized system-wide strategies, and SWEDEN, with SWITZERLAND, supported having a negotiated political outcome from UNEA-2.

CHINA drew attention to their US\$6 million contribution over four years to South-South cooperation, and the country’s robust environmental governance laws.

The US prioritized discussion of: air quality outcomes; its proposed resolutions on food waste and - together with the EU - oceans and seas; the UNEA cycle; the format of the high-level outcome; and the stakeholder engagement policy.

KENYA highlighted African countries’ efforts to combat illegal trade in wild fauna and flora, noting the African Common Strategy agreed at Brazzaville in April 2015, and calling for a continued partnership with UNEP in this area.

MEXICO called for increased harmonization of the Convention on Biological Diversity and UNEA work programmes, and NIGERIA called on UNEP to align its strategic planning with the Paris Climate Agreement.

COLOMBIA expressed concern that the high number of draft resolutions may prevent Member States’ effective participation at OECPR-2.

On stakeholder engagement, the EU, US and G-77/CHINA urged OECPR to make progress on achieving a consensus agreement before UNEA-2. CHINA emphasized the importance of the ‘no objection’ rule. MEXICO and CUBA highlighted the importance of arrangements for stakeholder engagement. ARGENTINA stressed that UNEA must remain an inclusive, open and participatory forum, and called for adequate resources for developing countries in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION cautioned against politicization of UNEP.

AUSTRALIA and NORWAY welcomed the resolution on marine plastic debris and microplastics.

JORDAN called on delegates to discuss the environmental impacts of the Syrian crisis on neighboring countries in a cooperative spirit.

MAJOR GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDERS called for UNEA to deliver “a political input” into the implementation of the environmental aspects of the 2030 Agenda, and underscored the importance of a “non-regression” approach to the stakeholder engagement policy.

Adoption of previous CPR meeting minutes: Pataki proposed and delegates agreed to defer this item to the next meeting of the CPR.



Organization of work: Delegates adopted the organization of work (UNEP/CPR/133/8), including the constitution of the Working Groups and endorsement of cluster Chairs: Marcela Nicodemus, Brazil, for Cluster 1; John Moreti, Botswana, for Cluster 2; Corinna Enders, Germany, for Cluster 3; John Moreti, Botswana, also for Cluster 4; and Raza Bashir Tarar, Pakistan, for Cluster 5.

CONSIDERATION OF POLICY MATTERS

Executive Director Steiner presented 12 reports on work that UNEP has undertaken in response to various decisions and resolutions of the previous sessions of the Governing Council and the UNEA, addressing: illegal trade in wildlife; science-policy interface; chemicals and waste; marine plastic debris and microplastics; strengthening the role of UNEP in promoting air quality; ecosystem-based adaptation; Global Environment Monitoring System/Water Programme; different approaches, visions, models and tools to achieve environmental sustainability in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication (UNEP/EA.2/6/Add.1-8); coordination across the UN system in the field of the environment, including the Environment Management Group; mid-term review of the Fourth Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law; relationship between UNEP and multilateral environmental agreements; and enhancing synergies among the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements (UNEP/EA.2/7/Add.1-4).

NORWAY called for enhanced synergies to combat environmental crimes and noted high expectations for the forthcoming GEO-6 and expert report on marine plastic debris and microplastics. JAPAN welcomed UNEP's support for air quality issues in the Asia-Pacific region and stressed the need for ensuring budget and programmatic coherence across the UN system. The EU highlighted, *inter alia*, the need to: broaden the selection of GEO-6 authors and ensure the report's completion by 2018; develop a long term plan to ensure the success of UNEP-Live as a tool for policy makers; and ensure that UNEA-2 adopts a substantive decision on the relationship between UNEP and multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). NEPAL requested increased capacity building and financing for developing countries. BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY called for "all economy approaches" and focusing partnerships on areas that would benefit most from UNEA's convening power. LOCAL AUTHORITIES encouraged closer linkages between UNEA and the forthcoming Habitat III conference. Steiner suggested that the use of regional assessments to articulate policy messages has proven to be a useful approach. He expressed confidence that GEO-6 is on track to meet the 2018 deadline.

PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE REVIEW

The Secretariat introduced this agenda item, summarizing UNEP's performance across each of its seven sub-programmes in 2014-2015, and noting that UNEP has met 70% of all expected outcomes. On the draft Evaluation Synthesis Report 2014-15, he recommended further attention to, *inter alia*, preparation and readiness for implementation, and project monitoring.

The US requested information on how UNEP can overcome its low score on the indicator for "likelihood of impact." The EU called for: addressing the differences between the various sub-programmes in performance results; further addressing the dwindling contributions to the Environment Fund; adopting a longer-term vision in the 2018-2021 MTS; reducing the time it takes to fill vacancies; and ensuring gender balance in senior posts. JAPAN underscored the importance of taking measures to standardize the state of implementation within the sub-programmes. NORWAY stressed that predictable and stable funding is crucial to strengthening UNEP.

2018-2021 MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY, 2018-2019 PROGRAMME OF WORK AND BUDGET, AND OTHER MATTERS

The Chair introduced the agenda item, noting that four draft reports had been distributed to Member States covering: the proposed biennial PoW and budget for 2018-19; development of the MTS for 2018-21; and management of trust funds and earmarked contributions. She noted these reports would be relayed to UNEA-2, reflecting comments from Member States.

UNEP Deputy Executive Director Ibrahim Thiaw said the MTS and PoW aim to deliver UNEP's strengthened role in supporting the SDG implementation agenda. He noted UNGA decisions had strengthened the regular budget, but that challenges remain, including the requirement to prepare budgets three years in advance. The Secretariat also gave detailed presentations on the MTS, PoW and budget, noting these aimed for total funds for 2018-19 of \$793.2 million, requiring considerable efforts in 2016 to mobilize sufficient resources.

The US welcomed efforts to respond to concerns raised by Member States on the budget and MTS, and characterized the budget for the Environment Fund as "aspirational." CUBA called for more time at OECPR-2 for discussion of the MTS. The AFRICAN GROUP cautioned against treating air quality as a stand-alone issue. NORWAY expressed support for the Environment Fund and, with NEW ZEALAND and others, welcomed the increased orientation of the MTS to the 2030 Agenda. JAPAN and SINGAPORE welcomed the results-based budgeting approach and encouraged continued efforts to bridge the financing gap, and SINGAPORE welcomed the prioritization of air quality. Noting the MTS is "close to completion," the EU called on providers of earmarked funds to contribute to the Environment Fund, and favored zero nominal growth for the regular budget. MEXICO, and others, requested UNEP to provide budget estimates for each of the resolutions under consideration at OECPR-2. The SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL COMMUNITY MAJOR GROUP called for enhanced support for UNEP's core functions, notably linking formal science with local knowledge.

In his response, Thiaw said UNEP would continue discussions on this topic through the Chair and cluster Chairs and would be able to provide the CPR with cost estimates after OECPR-2. Pataki invited delegates to send concrete language suggestions to the Secretariat.

UNEA CYCLE

Pataki highlighted broad agreement on shifting the UNEA cycle from even to odd years. Cluster 5 Chair Tarar presented a historical account of discussions on this issue, noting that Member States had requested clarification about the budgetary and political implications of shifting to an odd-year cycle. Pataki proposed, and delegates agreed, to carry out further discussions on this during the Cluster 5 meeting on Tuesday evening.

IN THE BREEZEWAYS

A crowded conference room, which prompted internet connectivity issues, marked the start of the week as delegates came to grips with the work cut out for them. "The resolution text was already 56 pages before the weekend – now it's even longer," said one participant, noting that several countries and regional groups had been active in submitting draft text, while another bemoaned the patchy quality of the draft resolutions.

Nevertheless, many felt the time-squeeze showed the interest and commitment of Member States in evolving the role of UNEA as a high-level political body. While the three days dedicated to negotiating resolution text this week is certain to be insufficient, the question on everyone's lips is, where should the priority be for this week? Insiders suggest this will be on the substantive policy issues: oceans including marine debris and microplastics; the impact of conflict on the environment; and ways to link UNEP to the SDG agenda and the High-Level Political Forum.