

3RD MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY: 4-6 DECEMBER 2017

The third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-3) opens today at the UN Office at Nairobi and runs through 6 December. The overarching theme of the three-day meeting is "Towards a Pollution-Free Planet."

For the first time, a series of Leadership Dialogues will take place during the High-Level Segment, addressing the four sub-themes of: Science, evidence and citizens' awareness for change; Regulatory frameworks, institutions and the rule of law to address pollution; Practical solutions towards a pollution-free planet and; Financing and innovation to combat pollution. An interactive multi-stakeholder dialogue will provide a platform for presenting voluntary commitments by governments and other stakeholders, as well as individual citizens' pledges, as expressed through the "#BeatPollution Pledge." A Sustainable Innovation Expo will run concurrently with the Assembly.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF UNEP

As a result of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, the UN General Assembly, in resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 1972, established the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as the central UN node for global environmental cooperation and treaty making. The resolution also established the UNEP Governing Council (GC) to provide a forum for the international community to address major and emerging environmental policy issues. The GC's responsibilities included the promotion of international environmental cooperation and the recommendation of policies to achieve it, and the provision of policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes in the UN system. The GC reported to the UN General Assembly, which was responsible for electing the 58 members of the GC, taking into account the principle of equitable geographic representation. The Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF) was constituted by the GC as envisaged by General Assembly resolution 53/242 (1998). The purpose of the GMEF was to institute, at a high political level, a process for reviewing important and emerging policy issues in the field of the environment.

The GC and the GMEF met annually in regular or special sessions beginning in 2000. Some of the highlights from 2000-2012 include: the adoption of the Malmö Ministerial Declaration in 2000, which agreed that the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development should review the requirements for a greatly strengthened institutional structure for international environmental governance (IEG); the creation of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management; the 2005 Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-Building; the establishment of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group

to Review and Assess Measures to Address the Global Issue of Mercury; and the establishment of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

GCSS12/GMEF: Convening from 20-22 February 2012, in Nairobi, Kenya, the twelfth GC Special Session (GCSS-12) marked the 40th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP. Eight decisions were adopted, including on: "UNEP at 40;" IEG; the world environment situation; sustainable consumption and production (SCP); and the consultative process on financing options for chemicals and waste.

RIO+20: The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, or Rio+20, convened in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 13-22 June 2012. With regard to UNEP, the outcome document, "The Future We Want," called for the UN General Assembly to take decisions on, *inter alia*: designating a body to operationalize the 10-year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP), and strengthening and upgrading UNEP, including through: universal membership in the GC; secure, stable, adequate and increased financial resources from the UN regular budget; enhanced ability to fulfill its coordination mandate within the UN system; promoting a strong science-policy interface; disseminating and sharing evidence-based environmental information and raising public awareness; providing capacity building to countries; consolidating headquarters functions in Nairobi and strengthening UNEP's regional presence; and ensuring the active participation of all relevant stakeholders.

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY: On 21 December 2012, the 67th session of the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 67/213 on strengthening and upgrading UNEP and establishing universal membership of its GC, which allows for full participation of all 193 UN Member States. The resolution also calls for UNEP to receive secure, stable and increased financial resources from the UN regular budget and urges other UNEP donors to increase their voluntary funding.

GC27/GMEF: Convening from 19-22 February 2013, this meeting was the first Universal Session of the GC. The GC adopted a decision on institutional arrangements, inviting the UN General Assembly to rename UNEP's governing body the "UN Environment Assembly of the UNEP." Other decisions were adopted on, *inter alia*: state of the environment; justice, governance and law for environmental sustainability; Climate Technology Centre and Network; UNEP's follow-up and implementation of UN Summit outcomes; and budget and the Programme of Work (PoW) for the biennium 2014-2015.

OECPR-1: The first meeting of the OECPR to UNEP took place at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, from 24-28 March 2014. The OECPR considered: the half-yearly review of the implementation of the PoW and budget for 2012-2013; policy matters, including its advice to UNEA; and the draft PoW and budget for 2016-2017 and other administrative matters.

The meeting provided an opportunity to: prepare for the UNEA sessions in 2014 and 2016; debate the role of UNEA in the UN system; and prepare draft decisions for adoption by UNEA. Delegates did not approve any decisions during the session.

UNEA-1: This meeting took place at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, from 23-27 June 2014, on the theme, “Sustainable Development Goals and the Post-2015 Development Agenda, including sustainable consumption and production.” The Assembly included a High-Level Segment on “A Life of Dignity for All,” which paid attention to the growing problem of illegal trade in wildlife, including the escalation in poaching and related environmental crimes. UNEA-1 convened two symposia, on the environmental rule of law and financing a green economy. Delegates adopted one decision and 17 resolutions on, *inter alia*: strengthening UNEP’s role in promoting air quality; the science-policy interface; ecosystem-based adaptation; implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development; illegal trade in wildlife; chemicals and waste; and marine plastic debris and microplastics. A Ministerial Outcome Document was adopted, although several Member States noted reservations with this document.

OECPR-2: The second meeting of the OECPR took place from 15-19 February 2016 at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, in preparation for UNEA-2. Delegates discussed an initial set of 24 draft resolutions, working in five clusters on: environmental governance and education; chemicals, waste and SCP; oceans and water-related issues; natural resources, conflict and the environment; and biodiversity, administrative and organizational matters. Delegates also were presented with a concept note from the UNEP Executive Director on “Delivering on the Environmental Dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” and the draft Global Thematic Report on “Healthy Environment, Healthy People.”

UNEA-2: UNEA-2 convened from 23-27 May 2016 in Nairobi, Kenya, on the overarching theme of “Delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” The High-Level Segment included interactive dialogues aimed at identifying relevant partnerships, policies and tools in areas including air quality, ecosystems, and chemicals and waste management. Ministers also discussed and endorsed the Global Thematic Report on “Healthy Environment, Healthy People.” The meeting adopted 24 resolutions and two decisions, including on a number of organizational matters such as the UNEP Medium-Term Strategy 2018-19 and changes to the UNEA cycle to ensure a better fit with broader UN budgeting processes. In a lengthy closing plenary that lasted until the early hours, delegates debated on whether to put to a vote the draft resolution calling for an environmental assessment of the Gaza Strip, with a counter motion calling for “no action.” The draft resolution was ultimately not adopted following a lack of quorum for a vote. Informal discussions on the sidelines on the UNEA stakeholder engagement policy and a ministerial outcome document did not arrive at consensus and neither of the draft documents were adopted.

OECPR-3: The third meeting of the OECPR convened from 29 November – 1 December, in Nairobi. In addition to finalizing draft resolutions for adoption at UNEA-3, OECPR-3 reviewed progress in implementing previous UNEA decisions, and considered items pertaining to the UNEA-3 theme. During the closing plenary, delegates welcomed the consensus achieved on the draft ministerial outcome document and agreed to forward it to UNEA-3 for consideration. OECPR-3 adopted eight draft decisions and resolutions and agreed to hold informal consultations on four more unfinished texts to facilitate their conclusion during UNEA-3.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

BRS TripleCOPS: The COPs to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (COP 13 of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal; COP 8 of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade; and COP 8 to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) convened from 24 April - 5 May 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland. Delegates considered some issues of joint concern, including cooperation and coordination among the Conventions, budget, technical guidelines on POPs waste, technical assistance and financial resources. While the COPs did not achieve consensus on some long-standing issues, including compliance under the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, they agreed to convene the next round of chemicals and wastes COPs jointly and back-to-back in 2019.

The Ocean Conference: The High-Level UN Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 (life below water) took place from 5-9 June 2017, at UN Headquarters in New York. Spearheaded by Fiji and Sweden, the conference produced a Call for Action, which reconfirmed Member States’ commitments to implement SDG 14 within the context of the 2030 Agenda, and to mobilize resources in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. The meeting also produced a registry of voluntary commitments covering a wide range of topics, from creation of marine protected areas and action on plastic and other marine debris, to funding for scientific research and capacity-building activities.

HLPF 2017: The 2017 meeting of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), took place from 10-19 July 2017 at UN Headquarters in New York. The meeting focused on the theme of “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world.” During the first week, the Forum carried out four thematic reviews related to the 2017 theme, as well as two issues related to SDG 17 (partnerships for the Goals): investing in and financing for SDGs; and advancing science, technology and innovation (STI) for SDGs. Delegates further undertook an in-depth review of six SDGs, namely: SDG 1 (no poverty); SDG 2 (zero hunger); SDG 3 (good health and well-being); SDG 5 (gender equality); SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure); and SDG 14. Forty-three countries presented their Voluntary National Reviews.

Minamata COP 1: Following the entry into force of the Minamata Convention on Mercury on 16 August 2017, the first COP took place from 24-29 September 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland. The Convention: bans new and phases out existing mercury mines; contains measures to control air emissions; and regulates the informal sector of artisanal and small-scale gold mining. Among other decisions, COP 1 agreed on a compliance committee, made progress towards establishing reporting cycles, and agreed on guidance on waste thresholds and contaminated sites.

Vienna Convention COP 11 and MOP 29 of the Montreal Protocol: The eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer (COP 11) and the twenty-ninth Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol (MOP 29), took place from 20-24 November 2017 in Montreal, Canada, coinciding with the 30th anniversary of the Montreal Protocol. MOP 29 adopted 26 decisions, including on: essential- and critical-use exemptions; future availability of halons; energy efficiency; the Multilateral Fund replenishment; and membership of Montreal Protocol bodies. Sufficient ratifications were received to enable the Kigali Amendment to enter into force on 1 January 2019. Adopted at MOP 28 in 2016, the Kigali Amendment agrees to add hydrofluorocarbons to the Montreal Protocol and to set schedules for their phase down.