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United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme

**Annual subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives
to the United Nations Environment Programme**

Eighth meeting

Nairobi, 25 – 29 October 2021

12:00 – 18:00 (GMT+3)

Hybrid meeting

Conference Room 1

Agenda Item 5

Preparations for the special session on the commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme

This document serves as a background note for consideration of Agenda Item 2 a): Preparations for the special session on the commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP@50) - Secretariat note on the preparations for the special session.

The note reflects the [presentation](#) made by the Executive Director during the informal consultations with regional groups and at the [155th meeting of the CPR](#), which also included a summary of initial feedback received at the regional consultations. It has been revised and updated based on comments and questions from Member States at the meeting of the CPR subcommittee on 15 October.

Delegations are invited to provide further feedback and guidance on the note by the Secretariat.

Preparations for the special session on the commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme



A. Mandates for the special session

UNEA 4/2: “...Also requests the Executive Director to prepare, in consultation with Member States, the commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm from 5 to 16 June 1972, making use of contributions from relevant stakeholders;”

UNEA 4/23: “...Also requests the Executive Director to prepare a proposal for science-policy input on the global environment, in consultation with Member States and making use of contributions from relevant stakeholders, in commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme, in line with the recommendation of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm from 5 to 16 June 1972;”

UNEA5 Decision 5/3: “Decides to convene a special session of the United Nations Environment Assembly to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme, to be held for two days on 3-4 March 2022 in Nairobi, in conjunction with the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly, under the leadership of the Presidency and Bureau of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly”.

B. Objective

The Commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP@50) is an opportunity to strengthen UNEP by positioning the organization at the forefront of a revamped global multilateral environmental system.

Global collective action to address the three interdependent planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution can reinvigorate and give new meaning to the global multilateral system. The Secretary-General’s recent Report ‘Our Common Agenda’¹ notes urgent and bold steps are needed to address the triple planetary crisis and offers the opportunity to inject a new mission for international cooperation; a mission which, under UNEP’s leadership, can spur collective engagement towards common solutions.

To effectively tackle the three planetary crises and achieve the objectives of Agenda 2030 and the Decade of Action, a more effective and transformative multilateral system is required – a system that bears greater appeal and vibrancy and that grounds the relationship between people and planet on greater inclusivity, equity, and solidarity. Environmental multilateralism can rejuvenate the existing *global environmental movement* for change where everybody’s voice and action -- *from world leaders to the youth* -- bears weight.

Building on the vision outlined in its approved [Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025](#), UNEP will be at the forefront of this transformation, combining the best of its past achievements from the last 50 years with a

¹ ‘Our Common Agenda’ – Report of the Secretary General (2021) , available at <https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/>

creative and adaptable approach to the future of environmental multilateralism for the next 50 years. UNEP@50 should focus on how to further strengthen UNEP's foundation – *science and governance*, by:

- **Strengthening UNEP's work to promote the environmental science-policy interface** to support the evidence needs of reinvigorated multilateral policies and systems;
- **Strengthening UNEP's role as a catalyst for environmental action;** including providing support to Member States and their implementation of existing multilateral environment agreements in the context of the 2030 Agenda, and promoting a more networked, inclusive and effective multilateral system anchored within the United Nations, as called for in 'Our Common Agenda', where the power to change is apportioned across all segments, sectors and levels of society;
- **Strengthening UNEP's role as the global environmental authority** within the UN system, and further elevating its Nairobi Headquarters as the global hub for the environment; and
- **Strengthening UNEP's financial capacity** to fulfil its mandate and carry out its approved Medium-Term Strategy and mandate and Programme of Work.

C. Possible political outcomes, building on high-level Leadership Dialogues informed by UNEP's science-policy contributions

Subject to further guidance from Member States and the President of the sixth Environment Assembly, the secretariat outlines the following proposals regarding possible political outcomes from UNEP@50.

Based on proposals by Member States, the commemoration may be held under the overall theme of "Towards the Implementation of the Environmental Dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals for the Future We Want."

In line with the proposed draft structure for the resumed session of UNEA-5 and the UNEA special session on UNEP@50 (see Annex), two high-level Leadership Dialogues are envisioned:

1. **Looking back: 50 years of UNEP.** Focus on UNEP achievements and foundation of their success. What worked and what did not. Exploring UNEP's contributions to multilateralism and its comparative advantages to inspire new opportunities to today's multilateral challenges of tackling the three planetary crises.
2. **Looking forward: Achieving the 2030 Agenda for people and planet.** A reinvigorated environmental multilateralism within the frame of relevant international frameworks. How the science-policy interface and the global environmental governance system can remain fit-for-purpose, keeping up with societal changes and improving transparency, inclusivity, equity and solidarity, while accelerating global action in response to the three planetary crises.

The dialogues will be open to high-level participants and representatives from Member States, multilateral environmental agreements, and Major Groups and Stakeholders. As per the UNEA UNEP@50 mandates, the UNEA special session will be **informed by UNEP's science-policy contributions to UNEP@50** (see section D) and also by other contributions including the proposed [Action plan for the implementation of Paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which will be considered for possible adoption at the resumed session of UNEA-5.](#) These contributions will stimulate interventions and discussion on a multi-dimensional strengthening of UNEP that is better equipped to support Member States' efforts to implement the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals, including through adequate and sustained resources.

The Leadership dialogues may contribute to the following possible outputs:

1. **A Chair's summary**, outlining discussion points and key actions and priorities resulting from the discussion.
2. **A political declaration** in support of a modernized and adequately resourced UNEP for the next 50 years, to be adopted at the high-level closing ceremony.

D. Strengthening UNEP's capacity for implementation

1. **Enhancement of the World Environment Situation Room, through the establishment of a global environmental data hub in Nairobi.** A new confederated data hub will be established at UNEP Headquarters, partnering with the established network of GRID centres in Norway (Arendal), Switzerland (Geneva), Poland (Warsaw) and the United States of America (Sioux Falls). This Headquarters-based hub will provide data, information, knowledge, and analytics services through a federated data system for the global environment. Once developed it will host an easy-to-use portal enabling access to a wide and varied number of platforms, data sources, analytics and modelling capabilities. It will make use of interactive digital technologies and innovation. The hub will work to meet the goals set in UNEP's Medium-term Strategy 2022-2025 and support the UN Secretary-General's Data Strategy and the Roadmap for digital transformation and cooperation. It will provide enhanced support to UN country teams and country-level processes through Common Country Analysis. Moreover, it will help enhance the science-policy interface through live support to environment assessments, monitoring and reporting, horizon scanning and foresight, and interactive communications. Finally, it will enhance UNEP's leadership role on environmental data and will play an important role in consolidating and coordinating global efforts to address data-fragmentation and leverage the best available data.
2. **A science-policy report reviewing 50 years of action at the science-policy interface and providing a fresh outlook on the future.** This new publication follows and complements the first input provided by UNEP in response to UNEA Resolution 4/23 and presented at UNEA 5.1: the Synthesis Report "[Making Peace with Nature](#)". This new publication will propose opportunities to strengthen the science-policy interface while securing that global environmental governance remains socially relevant, economically robust and contributes to inter-generational equity. It will provide reflections on how the science-policy interface has contributed to environmental management and governance in the past and will lay out a select number of issues that need consideration by UNEP and its stakeholders in securing the future of the Planet. In doing so, the report will focus on considerations such as need for new models for a more effective science-policy interface; the role of technology; behavioural change; equity; and people's participation in enhanced management of our environment.
3. **A renewed universal financial commitment to UNEP: moving towards a universal commitment to a "fair share" (voluntary indicative scale of contributions – VISC) principle while also establishing three thematic funds for Climate, Nature, Chemicals and Pollution Action to enable UNEP to achieve its mandate.** The Rio+20 Outcome Document calls for secure, stable, adequate and increased financial resources from the regular budget of the United Nations and voluntary contributions to UNEP to fulfil its mandate. A decade after Rio+20, it remains essential to advance contributions from all Member States to implement the universal mandate of UNEA and provide adequate support for UNEP to its core areas of work towards the achievement of UNEP's Medium-term Strategy 2022-2025.

Regarding the core funding, the Member States have continued to request the Executive Director to implement the Voluntary Indicative Scale of Contributions (VISC), which the Member States established in 2002 to broaden the base and increase the predictability of the Environment Fund. To enhance its application further and in response to requests from Member States for a tool to better communicate the concept and purpose of VISC, the Secretariat introduced the “fair share” concept. The results of the [survey on UNEP’s funding](#) conducted in 2020, in which 80 Member State representatives from all UN regional groups participated, confirm that the VISC supported by the “fair share” concept is helpful in encouraging the Member States to contribute to the Environment Fund (over 4/5 of the survey respondents) and that the Secretariat’s efforts to refer to the “fair share” made it easier to understand the concept and the purpose of the VISC (2/3 of the respondents).

As a complementary source of funding to the Environment Fund, and to encourage the shift from tightly to softly earmarked funding, the Secretariat also proposed to establish three thematic funds. The purpose of these funds would be to strengthen an integrated and focused delivery of UNEP’s work, including core areas of science-policy and environmental governance, in support of 1) Climate Action, 2) Nature Action and 3) Chemicals and Pollution Action - the strategic objectives of the UNEP Medium Term Strategy 2022-25. A vast majority of the respondents to the survey on UNEP’s funding supported the thematic funds as an important strategy for increasing the flexibility in the organization’s funding. The complete secretariat approach to supporting the quality and quantity of funding to UNEP by its Member States is reflected in its 2021 [Resource Mobilization Strategy](#).

E. Communications plan and side events

UNEP will carry out an extensive communications campaign in support of UNEP@50 that will include, but not be limited to, the following deliverables:

- **A revamped website** (unep.org/unep-50) that will be expanded continuously to aggregate all anniversary content, including a timeline of past and present UNEP activities.
- **An anniversary toolkit** to share with external partners and Member States, to enable them to communicate about UNEP’s anniversary and their relationship with UNEP.
- **A series of anniversary stories** that will highlight UNEP’s legacy over the past 50 years and underscore the importance of multilateralism. These will be prominently promoted to top-tier media.
- **A social media campaign** featuring a series of infographics that will use the anniversary to raise awareness about UNEP’s mandate and work and the use of a hashtag #UNEP50 for all anniversary content.
- **A section has been created on the UNEP website** dedicated to the UNEP@50 event on 3-4 March 2022. This will be expanded to include details about the event as they are confirmed.
- **A dedicated event logo** is being designed for the event. It will combine the UNEP@50 logo with “Nairobi 3-4 March 2022”, to be used for all communication assets amplifying the event.

UNEP@50 will also feature side events that will shed light on key topics related to the future of multilateralism, within the context of the three planetary crises. UNEP will undertake an extensive stakeholder engagement in the preparation of these events to ensure an inclusive approach that brings diverse perspectives across sectors and geographical areas. These events will also take note of and link, as much as possible and as appropriate, to existing initiatives undertaken by UNEP partners, including but not limited to Multilateral Environmental Agreements, other UN Agencies and Major Groups and Stakeholders on similar topics.

Annex: Draft structure of UNEA-5.2 and the UNEA special session on UNEP@50

					HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT					
	DRAFT STRUCTURE OF THE RESUMED SESSION OF UNEA-5 Theme: “Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals” Final decision on agenda and structure will be taken by the UNEA-5 Bureau in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives and its Bureau				DRAFT STRUCTURE OF THE SPECIAL SESSION ON UNEP@50 Theme (TBC): “Towards the Implementation of the Environmental Dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals for the Future We Want.” Final decision on theme, agenda and structure will be based on consultations with the CPR and the UNEA-6 Presidency/Bureau					
	Monday 28 February 2022		Tuesday 1 March 2022		Wednesday 2 March 2022		Thursday 3 March 2022		Friday 4 March 2022	
8:00 – 10:00	Reg/pol group meetings Bureau meetings Major Groups meetings		Reg/pol group meetings Bureau meetings Major Groups meetings		Reg/pol group meetings Bureau meetings Major Groups meetings		Reg/pol group meetings Bureau meetings Major Groups meetings		Reg/pol group meetings Bureau meetings Major Groups meetings	
10:00 – 13:00	UNEA-5 Opening Plenary - Opening statements from UNEA 5 President, host country and UNEP ED - Statements from Reg/Pol Groups - Statements from Major Groups reps - Report from the Chair of the CPR - Action on draft resolutions National Statements [11.30 – 13.00]		Committee of the Whole	National Statements	UNEA-5 High Level Segment Opening Plenary Leadership Dialogue [11.30 – 13.00] Theme: Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals		High-Level Opening Ceremony		Plenary 1 National statements	Plenary 2 High Level Leadership Dialogue 2 Regionally balanced Theme: Looking forward - Achieving the 2030 Agenda for people and planet (TBC)
13:00 – 15:00	UNEA-5 side events				UNEA-5 side events		UNEA-5 side events			
15:00 – 18:00	Committee of the Whole	National Statements	Committee of the Whole	Plenary UNEA-5 Leadership Dialogue with MEAs [15.00 – 16.30]	UNEA-5 Closing Plenary - Action on Ministerial Outcome - Action on GA Res 7/333 Declaration - Action on draft resolutions - Election of Officers - Date & Provisional Agenda of 2021 Assembly - Adoption of the Report		Plenary 1 National statements	Plenary 2 High Level Leadership dialogue 1 Regionally balanced Theme: Looking back: 50 years of UNEP (TBC)	High level closing ceremony Poss. adoption of political declaration	
18:00 – 20:00				UNEA-5 Multi-Stake-holder Dialogue [16.30 – 18.00]						