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United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme

Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme
Extraordinary Meeting
Nairobi, 5 December 2016

Draft minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme, held on 5 December 2016

Agenda item 1

Opening of the meeting

1. The meeting was opened at 10.10 a.m. on Monday, 5 December 2016, by Ms. Julia Pataki, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Romania to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP.

2. The Chair informed the meeting that interpretation services would not be provided for the meeting, because the interpreters had been assigned to the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Cancun, Mexico. She further informed the meeting that the Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director were also participating in the meeting in Cancun.

Agenda item 2

Adoption of the agenda

3. The meeting adopted provisional agenda as contained in document UNEP/CPR/XO/2.

Agenda item 3

Consideration of theme for the Third Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

4. In her introduction, the Chair recalled the mandate on consultations on the theme for the 2017 Environment assembly given to the Committee by the Joint Bureaux Retreat and provided a brief overview of the consultation process. The process had included three Sub-Committee meetings held on 17 November, 24 November and 29 November 2016 and had taken into account selection criteria and inputs from Member States, including those without resident missions in Nairobi. Provision had been made for remote participation. The Sub-Committee had agreed on with five recommendations as follows:

a) There would be only one theme for the 2017 UN Environment Assembly.

b) Theme one on pollution would be selected in its generic form. Details would be agreed at a later date.

c) A general title will be used as a work in progress until Member States agreed on the actual title for the theme

d) Member States with an interest in themes two, resilience and three on harmony with nature, could look into relevant elements of these themes that could be included in the concept paper for theme 1 on pollution.

e) The Secretariat would prepare a brief document on the process and timelines for work on the themes to be considered by the Committee of Permanent Representatives and the Bureau of the Assembly as appropriate.

f) The Secretariat would present in time for the Fourth Annual Subcommittee Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives a first draft outline of the Report and possible key-recommendations regarding the theme of the 2017 Environment Assembly, taking into account the inputs received from Member States and stakeholders. The presentation would further introduce how the process for the sixth edition of the Global Environmental Outlook will complement the preparations.

5. The Chair expressed appreciation to all Member States, Regional and Political Groups for their constructive engagement, particularly those that had preferred other themes such as Mexico, Bangladesh and Dominican Republic but had demonstrated flexibility during the consultation process.

6. At the invitation of the Chair, Ms. Elizabeth Mrema, Director Legal Division and Officer-in - Charge, apologized for the absence of the Executive Director and conveyed a message on his behalf. In the message the Executive Director congratulated the Committee and the Bureau on selection of the single theme for the 2017 Environment Assembly, which was a milestone in preparations. He added that the Secretariat had noted the limited time before available, but was committed to efficient delivery. It had also noted the messages from Member States on avoiding duplication of last Session's theme by going beyond human health. With the general guidance received, the Secretariat could begin fleshing out the theme Bureau. Engaging the private sector, ministers and the general public would be critical to produce actionable outcomes of the 2017 Environment Assembly and raising the profile of UN Environment.

7. The Chair informed the meeting that the Secretariat was working on a concept paper on the selected theme and it would be ready by the first week of February 2017 in time for discussion during the Fourth Annual Subcommittee Meeting of the Committee Permanent Representatives, to be held on 6-10 March 2017.

8. In the discussion that followed, Members were grateful to the Chair, the UN Environment Assembly President, the Bureaux and the Secretariat for leadership, constructive contributions and flexibility that enabled early agreement on the generic theme of pollution. They also thanked the Secretariat for its support. Many expressed strong firm support for selected theme. Some stated that UN Environment was uniquely positioned to address the theme of pollution. It provided opportunities for UN Environment to demonstrate leadership, was easy to communicate to diverse audiences and had links to different sectors like health, sustainable transport and the new urban agenda. They underscored the need to build on and not duplicate the theme for the second session of the UN Environment Assembly.

9. Some were of the view that the Third Session of the Environment Assembly could play a key role in combatting pollution worldwide by focusing on ambitious, realistic, measurable, actionable and achievable outcomes in a Global Action plan on pollution. However, one representative indicated that his country required more time to consult on the idea of a global action plan on pollution and looked forward to further discussion.

10 While some noted that the theme was still too broad, many members stated that it should be broad and inclusive, considering different dimensions of pollutions such as the pollution-health nexus, marine litter, plastics, water, soil, oceans, and air pollution as well as chemicals and ecosystems. The link to climate change was cited as important. Others called for the inclusion of important components like institutional issues on how to address the proliferation of initiatives on different types of pollutants and enhance programmatic efficiency.

11. One delegation said his country had expressed preference for theme two on resilience, but supported the consensus. Reiterating the need to avoid repeating the theme of the second session he stressed that themes two on resilience and three on harmony with nature should not be neglected. He emphasized that desertification and land degradation were critical issues that should be included in

this process. Other issues raised included the importance of describing the theme with references to scientific studies and addressing the economic costs of pollution as well as access to resources.

12. Members were of the view that UN Environment should focus on areas in pollution where it could add value. In this regard, the Secretariat was requested to identify possible areas for decisions where concrete action and partnerships are envisaged as well as how the partnerships could be supported. The importance of seeking support and partnerships from other agencies to prepare actionable outcomes was also highlighted.

13. While supporting pollution as a generic theme, several Member States expressed discomfort with the working title, on which they needed to have further discussions. One country, supported by others stressed that while his country had no problem endorsing the generic theme, it could not support the proposed working title, "Pollution free planet: delivering a deal to clean the world" contained in the draft Chair's Report to the UN Environment Bureau, which had not been agreed and was misleading. Another suggested that it be put in should be in brackets to indicate that it was still under negotiation.

14. One member expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate through remote means. Many looked forward to sending contributions for the concept paper to the Secretariat.

15. A representative of Major Group and Stakeholders offered to support the process of developing the theme with scientific evidence, concrete examples and success stories. Another welcomed the meeting's agreement on the selection of theme one and underscored the importance of including gender perspectives in the concept note.

16. In her concluding remarks, the Chair assured the meeting that the title would remain in its generic form as a working title until Member States agreed on an actual title through a consultation process early in the new year.

17. The meeting endorsed the five recommendations on the theme for the 2017 Environment Assembly and noted the process and details for further work on the theme would be initiated early in the new year. The Chair informed the meeting that she would briefly report on the Committee's endorsement of the theme at the meeting of the Bureau of the UN Environment Assembly to be held later that day. She reiterated her gratitude to all Member States, adding that they had demonstrated the true spirit of Nairobi.

Agenda item 4

Other Matters

18. One representative who was not resident in Nairobi informed the meeting that he had sent communication to the Secretariat about environment degradation in his country and region resulting from terrorism. He wished to know whether this information would be incorporated. The Chair assured him that all inputs from Member States would be considered in the preparation of the concept paper. She encouraged him to continue participating both physically and online. She also urged all Member States to send inputs on the theme.

Agenda item 5

Closure of the meeting

19. The meeting was declared closed at 10.50 a.m.