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**Committee of Permanent Representatives
to the United Nations Environment Programme
170th meeting
Nairobi, 23 June 2025**

**Draft minutes of the 169th meeting of the Committee of
Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment
Programme, held on 20 March 2025**

Agenda item 1

**Opening of the meeting by the Chair of the Committee of Permanent
Representatives**

1. The meeting was opened at 10.15 a.m. on Thursday, 20 March 2025 by Firas Khouri, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP.
2. The meeting was attended by 98 participants representing 83 members and 4 observer missions.
3. The Chair welcomed the following new members to the Committee: Mário de Azevedo Constatino (Angola), Inés Fors Fernández (Cuba), George Psiachas (Greece), Stavess Msowoya (Malawi) and Kang Hyung-shik (Republic of Korea).
4. He then bade farewell to the following departing members: Sidenio Acosta Aday (Cuba), Mohamad Hery Saripudin (Indonesia), Maria Rosanna O. Josue (Philippines) and Cesar Augusto Chavarri Cabello (Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of).

Agenda item 2

**Adoption of the provisional agenda of the 169th meeting of the Committee of
Permanent Representatives**

5. The agenda was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/CPR/169/1).

Agenda item 3

**Adoption of the draft minutes of the 168th meeting of the Committee of
Permanent Representatives**

6. The Committee adopted the minutes of its 168th meeting, held on 17 December 2024, on the basis of the draft minutes that had been circulated. The minutes, as adopted, are set out in document UNEP/CPR/169/2.

Agenda item 4

Report of the Executive Director to the 169th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

7. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to the document entitled “Quarterly Report to the 169th Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives: October–December 2024”.
8. Welcoming participants to the 169th meeting, the Executive Director of UNEP, Inger Andersen, said that, with major global shifts under way, it was worth recalling that the work of UNEP was guided by the knowledge that a healthy planet was vital to economic and human health and to prosperity. Multilateral action was the only way to ensure that planet Earth was healthy and benefited all.
9. A commitment to multilateralism had been in evidence at the resumed sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Rome from 25 to 27 February. The Conference of the Parties had showed strong support for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework; agreed on a resource mobilization strategy; and launched the Cali Fund. All those important commitments to making peace with the natural world were only as good as the action that would follow them, and she urged all countries and stakeholders to honour their promises in full as soon as possible.
10. Nationally determined contributions were due to be updated well in advance of the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Belém, Brazil, from 10 to 21 November 2025, and rapid, large-scale investment was needed to keep climate change in check.
11. In April and May 2025, the conferences of the parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants would convene in Geneva, under the theme “Make visible the invisible: sound management of chemicals and waste”. The conferences of the parties were due to address enhanced legal clarity, a strategic framework, prior informed consent procedures, electronic and electrical waste (e-waste), plastic waste and the listing of new chemicals, among other issues.
12. No less important was the resumption of the third session of the ad hoc open-ended working group on a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution, to be held in Punta del Este, Uruguay, from 15 to 18 June 2025. Establishing the panel would complete a trio of panels, alongside the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, that did not set targets for or make demands of States, but which produced the scientific information countries needed to make informed decisions.
13. In Nice, France, from 9 to 13 June 2025, the third United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, to be co-chaired by Costa Rica and France, would provide an opportunity to focus on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans.
14. The resumed fifth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, to be held in Geneva from 5 to 14 August 2025, would be another milestone. Thanking Switzerland for agreeing to host the resumed session, she recalled that discussions would be based on the Chair of the committee’s text, which represented a solid basis for securing agreement. Prior to the resumed session, political and diplomatic impetus was required to find the common ground needed to secure an instrument that could eliminate plastic pollution across its life cycle.
15. Work at the seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, in Nairobi, from 1 to 5 December 2025, would seek to stitch together the commitments and agreements under which Member States had agreed to tackle environmental crises.
16. In her time as Executive Director, which had begun in 2019, consistent effort had been made to improve the efficiency, accountability and transparency of UNEP, while delivering on its mandate. To that end, a task force had been created to improve the application of science across UNEP by better aligning core functions in the Early Warning and Assessment Division and the Office of the Chief Scientist, helping to optimize the use of staff and financial resources, while providing the agility needed to face future challenges.

17. The United Nations continued to face a severe liquidity crisis. The Secretary-General had recently launched the “UN80 Initiative” to identify efficiencies, review the implementation of mandates and conduct a strategic review of structural changes and programme realignment. Austerity measures were being imposed and the implementation of mandates would be affected, along with financial support for intergovernmental meetings, including in Nairobi. UNEP, along with other United Nations entities, had been requested by the United Nations Controller to reduce spending to 80 per cent of its approved budget and to suspend hiring for regular budget positions until further notice. Allocations to divisions and regions were being reduced, and regional and divisional directors had been asked to submit plans that aligned with the new reality.

18. Thanking Member States for their financial support to UNEP work, she confirmed that the steady rise in contributions to the Environment Fund since she had become Executive Director had continued, from 82 Member States providing \$70 million at the end of 2019 to 94 contributing \$90 million as at December 2024. In that time, the number of Member States contributing their full share had also risen from 27 to 59, a change that was not certain to continue given political changes at the national level. She urged all Member States to contribute their full share to the Environment Fund to ensure that UNEP could continue its critical work.

19. A funding shortfall threatened the successful organization of the seventh session of the Environment Assembly, with a funding gap of \$1.7 million against a total approximate budget of \$4.4 million. She thanked the Governments of Australia, Germany, Hungary and the Philippines for their financial support and the European Union for expressing its intention to contribute. The allocation from the regular budget of the United Nations would fall by 20 per cent. As \$1.8 million had been due to be allocated to the participation of representatives of developing countries and major groups and stakeholders, however, without increased voluntary contributions, funding for those representatives might have to be reduced. If the shortfall were severe, the types of countries being sponsored might have to be limited to least developed countries. The broad participation that strengthened both the Assembly and its ability to guide UNEP and the global environmental agenda was therefore at risk.

20. Working together, UNEP and Member States had a long history of environmental action that saved lives, strengthened economies, created jobs and a vibrant environment. In complex and uncertain times, she called on Member States to draw on the “Nairobi spirit”, show the world that multilateralism worked and ensure that the environment could support humanity for centuries to come.

21. In the ensuing discussion, many representatives, including several speaking on behalf of groups of countries, thanked the Executive Director for the quarterly report.

22. The challenging global political outlook led several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, to echo the Executive Director’s invocation of the Nairobi spirit of mutual understanding and compromise. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed continuing or renewed commitment to multilateralism, which, said one, was being undermined by certain Member States.

23. Many representatives, including several speaking on behalf of groups of countries, commented on the medium-term strategy for the period 2026–2029 and the programme of work and budget for the biennium 2026–2027. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the strategy should have a solid scientific foundation, including a basis on the outcomes of scientific processes, such as the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the International Recovery Platform. A balanced approach to priorities was needed in order to include those of developing countries, said several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries. A representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries said that the three Rio conventions should be given equal attention in the strategy, while another said that vulnerable regions should not be left behind in global environmental governance. One representative expressed the hope that the strategy would include improved alignment with other entities of the United Nations development system.

24. The inclusion of land degradation, desertification and drought in the strategy was a priority, said several representatives, including some speaking on behalf of groups of countries, one of whom welcomed the broadening of the foundational and thematic subprogrammes to that end. Another, also speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the medium-term strategy should not be limited to addressing the triple planetary crisis. A representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries requested that consideration be given, in the development of the strategy, to the outcomes of the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. One representative said that tackling desertification required the transfer of technical

expertise and innovation, as well as sustained financial assistance. Several representatives called on UNEP to increase its work in those areas.

25. Innovation should form part of the forthcoming strategy, said one representative, including, where appropriate, emerging technologies and artificial intelligence, in accordance with the principles of the recently launched Coalition for Sustainable Artificial Intelligence.

26. A representative of major groups and stakeholders welcomed the opportunity for young people to contribute to the discussions on the development of the strategy and requested that priority be given in the strategy to capacity-building for young people. He thanked UNEP for supporting the first Youth Forum on Climate Protection, held in Bangkok in October 2024.

27. Recommending that a strategic focus on circular economy approaches be applied in the strategy, one representative said that UNEP expertise could secure the multilateral cooperation and funding needed to achieve lasting change.

28. Several representatives said that debt-for-nature swaps could help counter the adverse effects of debt on developing countries' capacity to tackle environmental crises. Countries housing ecosystem services essential to planetary stability often needed access to concessional financing and debt relief mechanisms, said one representative, requesting further information on UNEP plans to support interested parties to engage in swaps, both in terms of South-South and triangular cooperation.

29. Several representatives drew attention to the impact of environmental crises on health and economic well-being, including in relation to food security, and the emergence of infectious diseases and antimicrobial resistance. The Quadripartite Alliance on One Health was vital in that regard, and the representatives urged UNEP to spotlight the oft-neglected environmental dimensions of such issues, including threats to biodiversity. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, encouraged the Executive Director to consider means of implementing the commitments made in the political declaration of the high-level meeting on antimicrobial resistance, held in New York on 26 September 2024.

30. Regarding the lessons learned section of the quarterly report, several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, requested further information on how UNEP would address the gaps affecting the implementation of environmental policies and strategies and how the organization could make use of existing coordination structures such as the United Nations Environment Management Group.

31. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, specifically addressed the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 2026–2027. The representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries commended UNEP for its support to African countries in the implementation of the Paris Agreement and requested the secretariat to regularly update Member States on the funds allocated to the different thematic programmes, including to land degradation, desertification and drought.

32. Several representatives commended UNEP for its consistent work on gender and the empowerment of women. Underlining her country's prioritization of feminist policy, one representative said that the inclusion of women could be decisive in UNEP achieving its goals. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noted that environmental transitions did not affect all people equally, particularly when it came to land use and access to justice and financing. Another, reiterating the importance of gender-responsive policies, said that the principles of inclusion should form part of the medium-term strategy. The representative of Brazil said that his country had been honoured that Sonia Guajajara, the Minister of Indigenous Peoples, had been chosen by UNEP to be one of its Champions of the Earth for 2024.

33. A number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, drew attention to the geographical representation among UNEP staff and requested information on efforts by UNEP to rectify the imbalance therein, including outreach to underrepresented regions. One representative said that, for the second consecutive quarter, no staff from Latin America and the Caribbean had been appointed to UNEP leadership positions, and the region remained underrepresented among professional staff. Another representative asked the secretariat to present an overview of regional recruitment trends over the past decade at the 2025 annual subcommittee meeting of the Committee. One representative said that greater geographical diversity in UNEP staffing could contribute to strengthening global environmental action. Thanking the secretariat for the detailed presentation on staffing, one representative recalled that Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations specified that competence, among other qualities, should be given priority when recruiting staff.

34. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the upward trends in financing for the work of UNEP, both in terms of total contributions and number of contributors. The representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries said that the funding dialogues had helped to bring about the doubling of full-share contributions to the Environment Fund between 2019 and 2024 and urged the secretariat to build on that constructive engagement with Member States, while taking into account their varying capacities. One representative urged Member States that had not yet contributed their full share to the Fund to do so, especially given the decrease in the regular budget allocation to UNEP; another, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, underscored the importance of softly earmarked or non-earmarked funding. The contribution of her country's full share was said by one representative to embody a recognition of the importance of UNEP work; while another said that her country's contribution demonstrated commitment to international cooperation for sustainable development. Several representatives expressed support for innovative and flexible funding solutions, including public-private partnerships, South-South cooperation, outcomes-based payment mechanisms and nature-based financing. One representative encouraged the secretariat to strengthen and communicate the proof of concept for the planetary funds so as to attract more flexible funding.

35. Several representatives commented on the closure, in the first quarter of 2025, of six trust funds. One congratulated UNEP on the closures and requested information on funds that remained to be closed. The other asked why those trust funds had been inactive and chosen for closure, particularly the trust fund for assisting the delegates from the developing countries, the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States in attending the sessions of the ad hoc open-ended working group for the Global Pact for the Environment. In that regard, she asked whether resources were available that could be used to assist developing countries to participate in important environmental processes.

36. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed UNEP engagement with multilateral environmental agreement secretariats over the previous quarter. A representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries requested information on the round tables on synergistic implementation of multilateral environmental agreements hosted by the Environment Management Group at the meetings and conferences of the parties held in the last quarter of 2024.

37. Many representatives, including several speaking on behalf of groups of countries, emphasized the importance of the fifth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, and many expressed continuing commitment to the process. Negotiations at the adjourned fifth session had failed, said one representative, while another said that some progress had been made; still another said that the sessions held to date had revealed a gulf between the positions of different States. Bridging that gap required a great deal of work in the intersessional period, said several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries. One representative noted that consultations had been held in Oslo to find common ground in preparation for the resumed fifth session. One representative said that the issues preventing agreement were highly political, as they touched on the core economic activities of many countries, including developing countries.

38. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the world expected an ambitious agreement on an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. Issues raised by representatives in that regard were that the future instrument should include the fair participation of waste pickers; have a prevention focus, including ecolabelling; and prioritize waste management, circular economy solutions and innovative and advanced recycling technologies, with scope for countries to develop tailored approaches aligned with their priorities. One representative sought clarification of whether the Chair of the intergovernmental negotiating committee had established any innovative means of ensuring the timely conclusion of the negotiations.

39. Turning to the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, individual representatives, including some speaking on behalf of groups of countries, welcomed specific outcomes of the meeting. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, asked how UNEP was integrating developments related to the subsidiary body on article 8 (j) and decision 16/6 on the role of people of African descent.

40. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that, while the sixteenth meeting had been a milestone in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, mobilizing financial resources for biodiversity remained a major challenge. Another said that greater ambition in relation to nature-related finance in UNEP work could accelerate the implementation of the Framework while supporting environment and development objectives and

boosting food security and multilateral cooperation. Another representative requested updated information on the establishment of the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund on human resources. One representative commended UNEP for its work on the match-making mechanism for national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

41. One representative, stressing that harmful subsidies were a key cause of nature loss, expressed surprise that the nexus dialogue on harmful subsidies of the Environment Management Group had focused on repurposing subsidies in a manner that was inconsistent with the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies of the World Trade Organization and target 18 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. He proposed that a meeting of the subcommittee be convened to address the issue of harmful subsidies to biodiversity, particularly agriculture and fisheries subsidies.

42. Several representatives welcomed the progress achieved at the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification, held in Riyadh from 2 to 13 December 2024. Some representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that incorporating land degradation, drought and desertification into the medium-term strategy for 2026–2029 would assist UNEP in the implementation of Environment Assembly resolution 6/14. One representative urged Member States to build on the work of the sixteenth session, including by joining the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership. One representative who said that his country's food production and export sectors were threatened by the spread of arid land lamented the failure to reach a substantive agreement on drought at the session. A representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries commended UNEP for its engagement in dialogues on desertification, land degradation and drought held during and in the margins of the sixteenth session, and recalled the strong call for action on those issues by the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment at its tenth special session held from 30 August to 6 September 2024.

43. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, requested more briefings on UNEP activities on drought resilience. Another representative welcomed the agreement at the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification to establish caucuses in which the views on land degradation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities would be taken into account.

44. Several representatives commended the active participation of UNEP in the twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Baku from 11 to 22 November 2024, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, who particularly welcomed its work on the declaration on water for climate action. Noting that 10 years had passed since the Paris Agreement on climate change had been signed, one representative urged Member States to strive to limit climate change to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels by the end of the century. In particular, together with another representative, he welcomed the agreement on climate financing and the finalization of the rules of implementation of carbon markets, in accordance with the mechanism established by article 6 of the Agreement.

45. One representative requested further information on the future functions and hosting arrangements of the Climate Technology Centre and Network. One representative, referring to the declaration on reducing methane from organic waste of the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-ninth session and noting that the issue was a priority for his region, asked for information on any plans for engagement with Member States on the matter. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed gratitude for the engagement of UNEP with the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment at the twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties and with United Nations resident coordinators in African countries. He urged the secretariat to continue working with African countries to develop tailored solutions to address the impacts of climate change, land degradation and pollution.

46. The representative of Brazil said that his country would be proud to host the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Belém, the first in the Amazon region, which would provide a unique opportunity to drive collective mobilization.

47. Many representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, stressed the importance of the seventh session of the Environment Assembly. Several echoed the Executive Director's concerns about the funding shortfall and the possible effect on participation. Some representatives called on Member States and donors to UNEP that were in a position to do so to provide the funding required to ensure that the seventh session and its outcomes were inclusive and international.

48. One representative requested information on the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Environment Assembly at its sixth session, while another expressed concern about the will to implement resolutions originating in and concerning the Africa region and underlined the importance of ensuring balance in that regard.
49. On the draft ministerial declaration of the Environment Assembly at its seventh session, one representative welcomed the balanced approach to its preparation taken by the President of the seventh session, while another, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the declaration should be concise and should take into account the unique characteristics of each region.
50. One representative commended UNEP for its engagement with regard to advisory opinions before the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, in discussions on deep-sea mining, and on responsibilities for climate change before the International Court of Justice.
51. One representative requested further information on the status of applications to the Global Framework on Chemicals Fund. Another representative requested information on collaboration between UNEP and the Statistical Commission, in particular regarding the multidimensional vulnerability index.
52. Several representatives highlighted the value of the reports published by UNEP, with one suggesting that their visibility should be maximized. One highlighted the relevance of the *Adaptation Gap Report 2024* and the *Emissions Gap Report 2024*; while another sought further information on the increase in per person emissions in the United Nations system mentioned in *Greening the Blue Annual Report 2024: The UN system's environmental footprint and efforts to reduce it*.
53. Several representatives noted that time was running out to achieve the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, which, said one representative, remained the only global blueprint for sustainable development. One representative said that the Goals, like the 2030 Agenda and the Pact for the Future, could give rise to processes that impinged on the autonomy of States and he recalled their non-binding nature.
54. One representative expressed satisfaction with the progress made in the implementation of Environment Assembly resolution 6/10 on promoting regional cooperation on air pollution to improve air quality globally. Another underlined the importance of the intergovernmental meeting on the acid deposition monitoring network in East Asia to improving technical capacity to tackle air pollution in Asia.
55. Many representatives, including some speaking on behalf of groups of countries, commended UNEP for its work in supporting countries to address the consequences of conflict. The representative of Ukraine called on UNEP, along with international partners, to continue working to reduce the negative environmental effects caused by the Russian Federation in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.
56. Several representatives, including some speaking on behalf of groups of countries commended UNEP for its work in Gaza, including in the management of debris, and its contribution to the rapid damage needs assessment in Gaza. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, urged UNEP to take into account, when preparing future reports on Gaza, the communiqué adopted at the Extraordinary Arab Summit held in Egypt on 4 March 2025. One representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries said that a comprehensive assessment required international observers to visit the site of the conflict. Another representative said that his country continued to work towards a ceasefire that could pave the way to the free flow of aid into Gaza. One representative said that the attacks on ships in the Red Sea, including those containing potentially polluting cargo, were causing harm to sea life and the livelihoods of coastal communities.
57. Many representatives underlined the importance of technology transfer to the achievement of environmental objectives, particularly for developing countries, with one saying that sanctions could prevent States from accessing the financial resources needed to build capacity to achieve such objectives. Another representative said that economic sanctions were a lawful and effective tool for addressing serious threats to peace and security.
58. One representative stressed the importance of data collection and analysis to ensuring that national reports accurately reflected conditions on the ground. Welcoming the co-convening by UNEP of the second roundtable meeting of the African forum of environment protection agencies in Cairo from 3 to 5 December 2024, another representative emphasized the importance of capacity-building on data collection, sharing and management for professionals from developing countries.
59. The representative of the Russian Federation, speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the allegations made against his country were groundless and that the business of meetings of the Committee was to foster a cooperative approach to global environmental challenges.

60. The representative of Ukraine, speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the denials of the Russian Federation obscured the truth.
61. The Executive Director thanked representatives for their comments and questions and for highlighting specific areas of UNEP work.
62. On water, she said that, at the request of Member States, UNEP was implementing Environment Assembly resolution 6/13 in three core areas, namely scaling up the integrated management of water resources, improving water quality and protecting water ecosystems. Those efforts also helped achieved Sustainable Development Goal 6, in relation to which UNEP was tasked with monitoring several indicators.
63. Turning to drought and desertification, UNEP engagement in that area was significant and perhaps underreported. Work on land degradation comprised 23 per cent of the work across the UNEP climate and ecosystem portfolios, with expenditure on ongoing projects amounting to \$171 million in Africa and \$73 million in Latin America and the Caribbean, and over 70 projects being implemented in 132 countries. As the Global Environment Facility (GEF) allocation to desertification was relatively modest, at between \$600 million and \$700 million globally, and UNEP was just one of a number of implementing agencies, bringing such large sums together required a strategic approach to funding. In order to maximize impact on land degradation and desertification, UNEP used both climate and biodiversity resources. The work and its results also overlapped: work on land degradation to combat desertification could also build climate change resilience. The need for flexibility in funding strategies meant that there was little to be gained from creating a separate land degradation programme for Africa.
64. On human resources and regional representation, she said that UNEP always recruited in accordance with Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations, including the requirement that staff be recruited on as wide a geographical basis as possible. Accordingly, UNEP had held many outreach events, including 32 in areas where it was less well known, reaching over 16,500 potential applicants. Special efforts had been made to recruit people of African descent and from Indigenous communities, and she requested Member States to encourage the submission of applications, without which selections could not be made. Recruitment had risen from Africa, where it was a particular priority to recruit from francophone and lusophone African countries; from Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean by 6 per cent; and from Eastern Europe by 26 per cent. As well as 13 senior UNEP positions being held by people from Latin America and the Caribbean, four professionals from the region had recently joined through the Young Talent Pipeline.
65. Regarding Gaza, she confirmed that the secretariat had coordinated environmental input for the interim rapid damage and needs assessment published in February 2025 and had reviewed the plan presented by Egypt at the Extraordinary Arab Summit and was preparing its inputs in collaboration with other United Nations entities.
66. The Environment Management Group had held round tables at the meetings of the conferences of the parties to the three Rio conventions in order to improve understanding of synergies between the conventions and to improve coordination, inclusion and broad United Nations system support for multilateral environmental agreements.
67. The African Union had been included in the *Emissions Gap Report 2024* because it was a member of the Group of 20 and because the low level of emissions across the over 50 African States was highly relevant to the findings of the report.
68. With regard to sand and dust storms, which were often linked to the impacts of climate change and land degradation on the water cycle, she confirmed that UNEP was collaborating with the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management and resident coordinators on the issue.
69. Expressing gratitude for the support given to the national biodiversity strategies and action plans accelerator partnership, which already involved 70 countries, she said that the match-making mechanism launched at the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity had already resulted in 30 matches.
70. She also expressed appreciation for the support given by Global Affairs Canada to the application of gender transformative thinking in work on biodiversity.
71. Given that the decision to host the Climate Technology Centre and Network in Copenhagen had been taken by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at its sixteenth session, the Committee and UNEP were not able to alter that decision.

72. On the matter of collaboration with the Statistical Commission, she said that UNEP statistical work included linking biophysical indicators to social indicators in the context of disaster risk reduction and resilience, and had contributed to the framing of the multidimensional vulnerability index.
73. Noting that it was for Member States to decide whether the proposed future plastics instrument would be legally binding, she said that the Environment Assembly had agreed, in resolution 5/14, that it should be.
74. UNEP stood ready to examine the impact of subsidies, upon request by Governments. She stressed that the Environment Management Group had considered, among other things, the identification of subsidies with positive and negative environmental effects. The implementation of subsidies was a matter for national Governments.
75. Acknowledging the interest in debt-for-nature swaps, she said that UNEP work in that area had included regional consultations, at the request of the Government of Colombia, support for individual countries to secure swaps, and efforts to determine whether they could be integrated into nationally determined contributions.
76. With regard to the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund, an additional \$163 million had been pledged at the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, bringing the total to nearly \$400 million from 12 contributors, namely, Austria, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as well as Quebec, the first pledge from a non-national entity. The third round of project allocations by the Fund was under way.
77. In its work on the circular economy, she said that UNEP collaborated with the Inter-American Development Bank. Emphasizing that the largest investments in that field were from international financial institutions, she said that UNEP was also working with the United Nations Capital Development Fund on the matter.
78. On the carbon footprint of UNEP, she underlined that much of it was the result of sponsored travel to meetings held under the 17 multilateral environmental agreements and some staff travel, which was limited by resource constraints. While virtual alternatives were evolving, face-to-face meetings remained the best option to ensure the inclusivity of the meetings and leave no one behind.
79. She explained that trust funds were established when Governments gave resources and asked them to be isolated for a specific purpose; once they expired, the funds were closed in accordance with the agreements made with donors on handling unspent funds, which were either returned or reallocated within agreed sectors. Information on such closures was included in quarterly reports for transparency reasons.
80. With regard to implementation gaps, she said that UNEP could not force Member States to follow through on their commitments to integrate the objectives of multilateral environmental agreements into national plans.
81. On the inclusion of food security in the medium-term strategy, she said that UNEP worked at the point where nature met agriculture, but that other United Nations entities were tasked with working on food security directly.
82. Welcoming the comments on the negotiation of the proposed future international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, she reiterated her call for leadership and compromise, noting that a failure to reach agreement at the resumed fifth session – like a failure to conclude the talks on the proposed science-policy panel – could call into question the validity of the Environment Assembly itself.

Agenda item 5

Development of a medium-term strategy for the period 2026–2029 and a draft programme of work and budget for the period 2026–2027

83. Introducing the item, the Chair recalled paragraph 9 of Environment Assembly decision 6/7 and the process set out in paragraph 11 of decision 27/2 of the Governing Council of UNEP.
84. In her introductory remarks, the Executive Director said that the draft medium-term strategy for the period 2026–2029 was being shaped by inclusive engagement with Member States, major groups and stakeholders, and the secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements and was well aligned with the mandates of UNEP and emerging priorities. She expressed her gratitude to those

Member States that had engaged in the informal dialogues on the strategy and provided crucial information, as well as to the staff of UNEP and of the secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements, who continued to contribute to the drafting process.

85. Highlighting the critical importance of the three strategic objectives envisaged for the medium-term strategy (climate stability, land degradation neutrality and living in harmony with nature, and living on a pollution-free planet), she reaffirmed that the issues of land degradation, drought and water scarcity, as well as sand and dust storms, were well integrated into the draft strategy, and she asked Member States to recognize that it was necessary to embed them within a broader framework.

86. Apart from expanding the scope of its work using the available resources, be that for activities relating to pollution, climate, nature or land degradation, UNEP would also continue to address critical cross-cutting issues, such as disasters and conflicts, artificial intelligence, sustainable production and consumption, circularity, mobilizing the private sector, and gender and youth inclusion.

87. Regarding the draft programme of work for the biennium 2026–2027, the intention was to create an ambitious but measurable programme. In view of the funding landscape, UNEP was now recommending a reduced budget envelope. Whereas the secretariat had previously recommended a budget envelope option that totalled \$1.28 billion, with an earmarked funds envelope of \$220 million, it now suggested returning to the previous figure of \$200 million for the biennium 2026–2027. Figures from the United Nations regular budget, which was not determined by UNEP, could be found in the relevant documentation.

88. Noting that UNEP would continue its efforts to maximize the use of earmarked funds, she said that, with regard to the global funds, GEF was undergoing replenishment and the total amount of funding was not yet known.

89. In closing, she reaffirmed UNEP commitment to fulfilling the expectations of Member States and to delivering a far sharper and more solutions-focused strategy. In order to reduce translation costs, the aim was to produce a concise and streamlined strategy with a maximum length of 15 pages, and she asked Member States for their support in that regard.

90. In the ensuing discussion, many representatives, including several speaking on behalf of groups of countries, expressed appreciation to the Executive Director for her introductory remarks and to the secretariat for preparing the annotated draft outlines of the medium-term strategy and of the programme of work and budget (UNEP/CPR/169/3/Add.1), which, several representatives said, would form a solid basis for the upcoming consultations and work.

91. Many representatives, including several speaking on behalf of groups of countries and one speaking on behalf of a major group, highlighted the value of the open, transparent multi-stakeholder consultation process followed in the development of the draft strategy, including the informal dialogues held with major groups and stakeholders, the private sector and the secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, also expressed appreciation to the secretariat for preparing the synthesis report on the informal dialogues (UNEP/CPR/169/3) and for incorporating input from Member States in the annotated draft outline.

92. The bilateral engagement between Member States and the secretariat had been valuable, said one representative, and several others said that they looked forward to contributing further to the development of the draft strategy. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, recalled the request in paragraph 9 of Environment Assembly decision 6/7 and said that equal consideration should be given to addressing all environmental challenges, including desertification, land degradation and drought. One representative said that, as the draft strategy was to be endorsed by the Environment Assembly at its seventh session, its development should be in line with what Member States could agree on at that session.

93. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed support for the proposed structure of the strategy, with one saying that the draft strategy was comprehensive and reflected the calls for a holistic approach to environmental issues.

94. As for general requirements for the strategy, individual representatives, including several speaking on behalf of groups of countries, said that it should be: more comprehensive in order to address weaknesses in the current strategy; responsive to regional needs and priorities; efficient in meeting sustainability and inclusivity objectives; respectful of human rights; responsive and efficient; agile; forward-looking, ambitious and transformative, with measurable outcomes; based on available

scientific knowledge; and based on a cross-sectoral, integrated approach, while allowing for the flexibility to respond to emerging challenges.

95. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the priorities and objectives of the strategy should be guided by the needs of Member States and focus on critical and emerging issues. He highlighted the need for sufficient emphasis on climate adaptation, waste management infrastructure, land degradation and drought resilience, and equitable access to green technology, and on just transitions to promote low-carbon, resilient and environmentally sustainable economies and societies.

96. Many representatives stressed the importance of prioritizing programmatic activities relating to minerals and metals as matters of global importance and cross-sectoral relevance, in particular for the energy transition and circular economy. One representative noted that UNEP had led activities related to the environmental aspects of minerals and metals as part of past mandates.

97. Several representatives stressed the importance of a people-centric approach, with one emphasizing the critical connection between social development, poverty eradication and environmental sustainability, while another stressed the importance of science-driven policy support that allowed scientific communities from developing countries to contribute to the UNEP science-policy formulation process.

98. Many representatives, including several speaking on behalf of groups of countries, urged the secretariat to expand the scope of the strategy to place greater emphasis on desertification, land degradation, drought, water scarcity, food security, floods and sand and dust storms. One urged UNEP to strengthen support for drought resilience and land restoration and called for increased investment in nature-based solutions, climate-smart agriculture and land rehabilitation initiatives, particularly in African dryland regions.

99. Several representatives emphasized the need to ensure that sufficient attention was given, in the strategy, to capacity-building, knowledge-sharing, technical assistance and technology transfer to developing countries, including in the context of land degradation, desertification and drought. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, asked the secretariat to provide regular updates to the Committee on UNEP work in that area, taking into account the outcomes of the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and international initiatives on drought, such as the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership. One representative, emphasizing the need to adapt to new challenges by incorporating emerging scientific insights, highlighted the importance of prioritizing areas in which environmental risks were increasing, such as land degradation and desertification. Another representative urged UNEP to build on the momentum from the Riyadh Action Agenda by scaling up the deployment of advanced technologies and data-driven solutions.

100. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the normative role of UNEP should be safeguarded, including through the allocation of adequate resources to its foundational subprogrammes.

101. One representative cautioned that, to maintain its legitimacy and efficiency, UNEP should remain within the bounds of its mandate. Geopolitical and societal shifts were relevant to global environmental governance, but their analysis was not among the core UNEP functions. The role of the organization should be to highlight environmentally sound behaviour such as sustainable consumption and production. An expansion into economic and governance territories that belonged to other institutions should also be avoided, and the role of UNEP should remain advisory. He also noted that the reference to General Assembly resolution 76/300, on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, should be framed carefully, with UNEP in a supportive rather than an enforcement role.

102. One representative stressed that the impact of geopolitics on UNEP work was relevant to the achievement of circular economy and sustainable consumption and production objectives. He therefore welcomed the attention UNEP had given to current realities of the world, understanding them to be part of the situation analysis.

103. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the situation analysis should include the socioeconomic impacts of land degradation, desertification, drought and water stress. Another commended the efforts of the secretariat in conducting a thorough analysis. One representative noted that it was essential to include an assessment of developments in environmental governance and related emerging issues, in particular those identified by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

104. Many representatives, including several speaking on behalf of groups of countries, noted with satisfaction that the draft strategy would build on the current medium-term strategy. Some representatives emphasized the importance of continuity in relation to past strategic documents and of taking into account lessons learned from the implementation of the current strategy. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the lessons learned should include addressing the specific development needs of all developing countries, perhaps on the basis of the outcomes of regional environmental forums.

105. Another representative welcomed the intention, expressed in the lessons learned section, to strengthen the commitment of UNEP to the United Nations resident coordinator system. Several others, including one representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the new strategy should support enhanced collaboration and coordination with resident coordinators, with one noting that UNEP should work in full alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. One representative welcomed the intention to take into account the assessments of various inspection bodies and to build on experience gained in the implementation of the current strategy. Another representative expressed confidence that the lessons learned would be reflected throughout the new strategy and programme of work.

106. One representative, welcoming the focus on improving geographical representation in the UNEP workforce, said that he looked forward to seeing concrete results, in particular regarding the increased representation of Latin American and Caribbean nationalities among UNEP staff. Another representative said that he opposed the inclusion of the topic of geographical representation among UNEP staff, noting that it had no place in the medium-term strategy.

107. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the intention to address the specific development needs of least developed countries, small island developing States, landlocked least developed countries and all countries affected by disaster and conflict. Another representative asked the secretariat to clarify the reasons for that approach, as those categories were typically applied to specific challenges and not defined as a generalized priority.

108. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the inclusion of information on how the new strategy would deliver added value to national stakeholders, and noted that it would also be beneficial to include information on best practices and success stories.

109. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, emphasized the need to enhance synergies with the secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements, in line with Environment Assembly resolution 6/4. Several representatives also highlighted the need to ensure coordination with other United Nations entities. One representative said that the new strategy should make explicit how UNEP intended to ensure the alignment of development processes under new multi-year strategies that complemented and reinforced each other at all levels. The representative encouraged UNEP, as a largely non-resident agency, to continue to take full advantage of United Nations coordination mechanisms at the country level in order to mainstream and elevate the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

110. With regard to the strategic objectives of the draft strategy, one representative said that they should be derived from current pressing environmental crises and challenges, with the goal of addressing them and achieving the aspirations of UNEP for a resilient and sustainable world.

111. One representative sought clarification on how the new “land degradation neutrality and living in harmony with nature” pillar differed from the corresponding pillar in the previous strategy, in particular regarding any strategic shifts that the change would entail. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that, in addressing the changes in the global water cycle, the strategic objective answered the calls of Member States for strengthened work relating to water. The same representative added that the strategic objective of a pollution-free planet should include UNEP support for the work of the science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution. She expressed the hope that the panel would be established after the resumed third session of the ad hoc open-ended working group on the science-policy panel. Another representative underlined the importance of strengthening the commitment of UNEP to legal and institutional frameworks, in particular the conventions on chemicals and waste, and their close links to the proposed new science-policy panel.

112. Regarding the thematic subprogrammes, a representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries said that limiting the focus of the draft strategy to three themes – climate action, land and nature action and chemicals and pollution action – neglected high-priority environmental challenges for his group, including desertification, land degradation, drought and water stress, and deforestation

and food security. He therefore requested that the secretariat organize further discussion among Member States on the matter.

113. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed UNEP efforts to broaden the scope of its thematic subprogramme on nature action in order to adequately reflect the issue of land degradation, desertification and drought in the draft strategy, which, another said, it was appropriate to address under the “Land and nature action” subprogramme, while still another welcomed the inclusion of an explicit reference to land degradation. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the crisis of land degradation, desertification and drought should be considered independently and prioritized, as was the case for climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, and that the land and nature action subprogramme should be renamed to reflect those issues of primary concern. Another representative said that his delegation would support the draft annotated outline if the subprogramme were renamed accordingly. One representative requested information on whether significant changes in the names of subprogrammes or the creation of a new pillar might create process-related barriers for the draft strategy once it was approved by the Committee, for example in the relevant committees in New York.

114. One representative sought clarification regarding the change in the wording of one element of the triple planetary crisis from “biodiversity loss” to “land and nature action”. Another representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, reiterated that his group’s reservations about the use of the term “triple planetary crisis” were not allayed by the addition of land loss to the nature pillar, while another expressed reservations about integrating land degradation, desertification and drought into the “land and nature action” subprogramme. One representative noted that, while desertification had been explicitly included in one of the thematic subprogrammes, drought did not receive the same level of attention. He said that drought and desertification should be included as a dedicated pillar of the draft strategy in order to address the general lack of appropriate focus and the insufficient international action on those issues.

115. One representative cautioned against grouping biodiversity loss with land degradation, as they did not always go hand in hand. His delegation had repeatedly called for a balanced approach to biodiversity, ensuring that all three principles set out in the Convention on Biological Diversity (conservation, sustainable use, and fair and equitable benefit-sharing) were fully reflected. Renaming the subprogramme “Biodiversity” would capture those three objectives more accurately.

116. In relation to the chemicals and pollution action subprogramme, one representative urged UNEP to strengthen its waste management support for Member States, in particular for developing countries. Regarding the climate action subprogramme, one representative called for closer collaboration with the secretariats of relevant multilateral environmental agreements in order to better support the implementation of national policies and programmes.

117. One representative suggested exploring synergies with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through which the new strategy could emphasize the social dimension of sustainable development and support the timely achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals using an approach that highlighted the interconnectedness of environmental management, sustainable development and poverty eradication.

118. One representative welcomed the emphasis on the role of partnerships and multilateral cooperation, which several others said could be strengthened through public-private partnerships and collaboration with Governments, the private sector and civil society. A representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries said that the new strategy should support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with an adequate focus on the Sustainable Development Goals related to the environment, especially those on which progress was lagging.

119. Several representatives addressed cross-cutting issues mentioned in the draft annotated outline, including land degradation, drought and water resources management; disasters and conflict; sustainable consumption and production; poverty and meaningful youth engagement; a human rights-based approach; gender; risk management; and oversight, audit and ethics issues. One representative, supported by another, emphasized the need to include the ocean, Indigenous knowledge, equity and inclusion for persons with disabilities, and gender in the list of cross-cutting topics in the section on thematic subprogrammes.

120. Many representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, highlighted the need to emphasize sustainable production and consumption and circular economy in the draft strategy. The representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries suggested that enhancements to the work on circular economy could fall under the enabling subprogramme on finance and economic transformations. Many representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noted

the importance of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns and its One Planet network as an effective multilateral framework to advance sustainable consumption and production, including circular economy. One representative said that integrating the 10-Year Framework into the strategy would enable UNEP to drive transformative change and accelerate progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda.

121. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed appreciation for the proposed sections on the enabling subprogrammes. Another representative said that the digital transformations subprogramme would help to extend the support that developing countries needed in order to use innovations and technologies for environmental sustainability. In relation to the section on that subprogramme, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that it might be useful to elaborate on how the work on circular economy would be enhanced; another suggested reviewing the use of the word “green”, which had been the subject of debate in the past, and possibly aligning it with internationally agreed terminology; another encouraged UNEP to enhance its work on bioeconomy and payment for ecosystem services.

122. One representative requested that the secretariat ensure adequate integration of the United Nations system-wide strategy on water and sanitation into the medium-term strategy, and another said that the highly prevalent issue of water scarcity needed to be better reflected in the strategy.

123. One representative congratulated the children and youth major group on its outstanding contributions, noting that they should be taken into account in the strategy for the benefit of the next generations. Another expressed the hope that the meaningful engagement of young people in the development of the draft strategy would be maintained and enhanced. The representative of the children and youth major group expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate, for the comments made in support of the group’s efforts and for the commitment of UNEP to ensuring that youth perspectives were integrated into the draft strategy, echoing the call for the continued and enhanced participation of young people throughout the process.

124. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the foundational subprogrammes (environmental governance and science-policy) would help to generate the ambition required of the final medium-term strategy in the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development. He added that it was essential to prioritize the development and monitoring of the environmental governance subprogramme, with particular emphasis on the formulation of specific outputs and outcomes in the strategy and programme of work, in support of the thematic programmes.

125. One representative expressed support for maintaining the two foundational subprogrammes and highlighted their respective benefits. Another representative said that the analysis by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of mutually reinforcing levers and entry points should be taken into account in the environmental governance subprogramme. One representative called for continuous alignment of the strategy with global and regional frameworks. Another highlighted an opportunity to further nurture and strengthen the Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment under the science-policy foundational subprogramme.

126. One representative noted with satisfaction that due consideration would be given to the UNEP mandate to identify and discuss forward-looking solutions, including for emerging issues. The question of how UNEP could contribute to accelerating systemic change for future generations would be key for achieving future-proof solutions.

127. Several representatives highlighted the need to better reflect the topic of environmental education in the draft strategy, in order to create a bridge between education and decent green jobs, in particular for young people from developing countries.

128. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, proposed additional sections to emphasize just transitions and highlight UNEP approaches to promoting their key enablers and to scaling up efforts to provide technical capacity-building and technology transfer. Another representative, also speaking on behalf of a group of countries, emphasized the importance of focusing on the human rights-based approach and on the UNEP approach to providing enabling elements for developing countries, with particular emphasis on technology transfer.

129. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the new strategy should include a refined results framework, reflecting the results of the normative work of UNEP. The representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries said that the strategy should demonstrate how that normative work would enable and support the operational work of UNEP and other actors on the ground, in accordance with the UN80 Initiative of the Secretary-General. She asked

how the secretariat would adjust the strategy to prioritize key strategic objectives and align with the mandate of UNEP within the United Nations system.

130. With regard to the budget, one representative commended UNEP for its realistic approach. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that UNEP should diversify its funding base to ensure stable, adequate and predictable financial resources and should embed a robust risk management framework in the strategy. Another representative said that UNEP would need to strengthen partnerships with non-traditional donors, the private sector, financial institutions, philanthropic foundations and other possible sources in order to enhance its ability to deliver on its mandate.

131. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed support for including social considerations in the new strategy, as they were central to leaving no one behind. Another representative emphasized that the new strategy should continue to mainstream the empowerment of women and girls, who were disproportionately affected by environmental issues. Another requested an update on the new UNEP gender policy and strategy.

132. One representative said that the strategy should not apply a “one size fits all” approach and should instead account for national circumstances. Several representatives highlighted the need to consider regional and national needs, circumstances and priorities. One representative highlighted the paramount importance of inclusivity and the alignment of the strategy with regional priorities. Another mentioned the need to strengthen the role of UNEP regional offices. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, requested that all environmental challenges and priorities specific to regions be reflected in the strategy and the programme of work and budget in an equal, inclusive and transparent manner.

133. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the strategy should include requests made in Environment Assembly resolutions. Another representative expressed surprise at the fact that the Assembly was mentioned only once in the draft programme of work and not at all in the draft annotated outline. He sought clarification as to how those resolutions would be reflected in the strategy.

134. One representative said that public access to environmental information and inclusive participation in decision-making should be strengthened in order to enhance transparency, accountability and stakeholder engagement, thereby reinforcing the leadership role of UNEP in advancing environmental governance at all levels.

135. Several representatives referred to the road map approved by the Committee at its 167th meeting and circulated by the secretariat (UNEP/CPR/167/5) and requested the timely dissemination of the full first drafts of the medium-term strategy for the period 2026–2029 and the draft programme of work and budget for the period 2026–2027. Given the recent dissemination of the draft documents, and in the light of their stage of development, some representatives reserved the right to provide additional comments at a later time. One representative asked why the presentation of the situation analysis and of the first drafts of the strategy and programme of work had been postponed from the 169th to the 170th meeting of the Committee.

136. Several representatives welcomed the envisaged length of the strategy document, noting their preference for a succinct strategy that was easy to communicate to a broad group of stakeholders. One expressed surprise that the document would be limited to 15 pages, noting that it would be challenging to integrate the priorities, analysis and lessons learned into one short document.

137. Regarding the next steps in the process, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noted the short time frame and encouraged UNEP to provide more content in the coming meetings. Another representative asked when the Committee could expect a more detailed first draft of the strategy and programme of work and budget, noting that a thorough discussion of the draft at the upcoming subcommittee meeting would be essential. Several other representatives said that they looked forward to receiving more substantive drafts in the near future.

138. The Executive Director assured representatives that their statements had been noted. She noted that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions had approved seven UNEP subprogrammes, which translated into seven subprogramme coordinators and seven staff members in each regional office. An eighth subprogramme would be submitted for approval in 2026. She stressed the need to work within existing limits, noting that the regular budget allocation to UNEP had been reduced. She urged interested representatives to confer and coordinate with regard to land degradation, desertification and drought.

139. Regarding the objection to changing the second pillar, she asked for understanding with regard to the countries enduring significant harm from environmental degradation, land loss, desertification and drought. Biodiversity loss was also clearly an important issue, but it was certainly possible to combine the responses to those two crises in a single pillar in the medium-term strategy. She thanked representatives who had suggested wording to that end. She requested the Committee to work towards an agreement on the issue in order to meet current priorities, to avoid losing what had been gained and to approve a strategy with strong support across the membership of the United Nations.

140. A representative of the secretariat responded to several specific questions on the next steps, the timeline and the expected dissemination of documents. He said that the first full draft of the medium-term strategy for the period 2026–2029 was scheduled for release on 15 May 2025, after which another draft would follow on 12 June. Additional subcommittee meetings would be held in order to enable further discussions, including on the synthesis report. In response to the question on the indicator framework, he said that UNEP planned to apply results-based management principles and complement the quantitative element with a qualitative element in order to deliver added value.

141. With regard to the Environment Assembly resolutions, he said that they were typically embedded in the programmes and the indicator framework. UNEP could provide explicit references in the programme of work, which would be annexed to the medium-term strategy. As for the gender policy and strategy, an internal final draft was under review and would be presented to the Committee at a future subcommittee meeting. The comments and suggestions of Committee members would be taken into account in the next iteration of the draft strategy.

Agenda item 6

Preparations for the seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

142. The Committee deferred consideration of the agenda item to a forthcoming meeting of the subcommittee.

Agenda item 7

Consideration of relevant evaluation reports and audits

143. The Committee deferred consideration of the agenda item to a forthcoming meeting of the subcommittee.

Agenda item 8

Report of the subcommittee

144. Introducing the item, the Chair drew attention to the draft report of the subcommittee (UNEP/CPR/169/6/Rev.1) and the draft recommendations that had been circulated, as proposed by members of the Committee at its subcommittee meetings for consideration by the Committee at its 169th meeting.

145. In the absence of agreement on the draft recommendations at the subcommittee meeting held on 18 March 2025, the Committee had deferred consideration of the draft recommendations to a subsequent meeting, on the understanding that a non-paper containing streamlined wording proposals from the proponents of the draft recommendations would be circulated by the secretariat. The non-paper had been circulated on 18 March 2025. The Chair thanked Yorita Yume, second secretary and UNEP focal point at the Embassy of Japan, for agreeing to facilitate informal consultations on the non-paper. He then recommended that the draft recommendations be considered by the Committee at a subcommittee meeting held in advance of the 170th meeting, which was scheduled for 23 June 2025.

146. One representative recalled that it was in the interest of Member States to provide recommendations on procedural and substantive matters falling within the scope of the Committee's responsibilities. As the draft recommendations related to a relatively new process, established to improve the working methods of the Committee, he urged representatives to ensure that they provided clear guidance on the matter to their respective Governments and to place their trust in multilateral processes. He noted that, in accordance with discussions at the subcommittee meeting, the merit of each draft recommendation should be considered on an individual basis.

Agenda item 9**Any other business**

147. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that it was unfortunate that some Member States had broken the silence procedure on the contribution by the Environment Assembly to the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Although the group she represented had accepted the revised version of the submission as a compromise, it was regrettable that important messages on the environment would not now reach the forum. She requested guidance from the presidency of the seventh session of the Environment Assembly on the matter.

Agenda item 10**Closure of the meeting**

148. The meeting was declared closed at 6.25 p.m. on Thursday, 20 March 2025.
