

Meeting of the Bureau of the UN Environment Assembly
1 July 2022
16:30 – 18:30 (GMT+3)
Online meeting

Agenda Item 2: Introduction to the work of the UNEA Bureau

This note, entitled “Role and responsibilities of the President and Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly”, serves as a background document for consideration under agenda item 2 - Introduction to the work of the UNEA Bureau. It is based the UNEA rules of procedure, on the final outcome of the Consensual Process for Review by the Committee of Permanent Representatives, and on established practices.

Bureau Members are invited to take note of the information provided and ask for any further clarifications, as needed, with a view to ensure broad understanding of the role and responsibilities of the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

Role and responsibilities of the President and Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly

1. Summary

The role of the President and Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly is formally regulated under the [UNEA rules of procedure](#) (ROP). It is also guided by the [final outcome of the Consensual Process for Review by the Committee of Permanent Representatives](#), and by established best practice. In summary, the roles and responsibilities of the UNEA President and Bureau can be reflected as follows:

- The UNEA Bureau consists of a **President, eight Vice-Presidents and one Rapporteur**, elected during the final meeting of a regular session of UNEA. All Bureau Members are elected by name as a representative of his/her Government and hold office until their successors are elected, normally at the closure of the next regular session. The current composition of the UNEA Bureau is available [here](#).
- The **UNEA President controls the proceedings and the maintenance of order** at the Assembly meetings, directs discussions, ensures observance of the ROP (including with regards to voting), accords the right to speak, announces decisions, and rules on points of order. The President can also represent the Assembly in intergovernmental meetings.
- The **UNEA Bureau assists the President** in the general conduct of business. If the President is no longer in a position to perform his/her functions, the Bureau will designate one of the Vice-Presidents as Acting President.
- An overview of the UN Environment Programme Governance Structure, including the UNEA Bureau and other governing bodies, is available as [Annex 1](#).

2. The role of the UNEA President

The primary source for the powers of the presidency can be found in the rules of procedure of the Environment Assembly ([UNEP/EA.3/3](#)), as follows (rules 32, 33, 34, 35):

- The President shall declare the opening and closing of each meeting of the Assembly, shall direct the discussion, ensure observance of these rules, accord the right to speak, put questions to the vote and announce decisions.
- The President shall rule on points of order and, subject to these rules, shall have control of the proceedings of the Assembly and over the maintenance of order at its meetings.
- The President may propose to the Assembly the limitation of time to be allowed to speakers, the limitation of the number of times each representative may speak on any question, the closure of the list of speakers or the closure of the debate.
- The President may also propose the suspension or the adjournment of the meeting or of the debate on the question under discussion.
- The President shall call upon speakers in the order in which they signify their desire to speak.
- The President may call a speaker to order if remarks of the speaker are not relevant to the subject under discussion.
- When debate is limited and a speaker has spoken her or his allotted time, the President shall call the speaker to order without delay.
- During the course of a debate the President may announce the list of speakers and, with the consent of the Assembly, declare the list closed.
- The President represents the Environment Assembly in relevant intergovernmental meetings, such as the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (see [UNEA resolution 3/3](#)), in particular to convey key outcomes of UNEA or to facilitate preparations for an upcoming UNEA session; the President may also designate another Bureau Member to perform such functions.

According to established practice, the President also prepares a draft UNEA ministerial declaration, with a focus on the theme of the upcoming session (see section 3). The preparatory process requires a broad consultative process to ensure the broadest possible ownership, where the Presidency holds the pen and issues several iterations based on comments and inputs shared by Member States in writing. The process involves regular communication to all Member States and Stakeholders, inviting them to contribute to several iterations of a draft, starting with key elements and followed by a “zero draft”, a first full draft, and a final draft. The process does not require a line-by-line negotiation. Consultations are usually held with CPR,

the OECPR and may involve other international meetings such as MEA meetings, as well as informal bilateral meetings in conjunction with international meetings. While the full ownership of the draft lies with the President, the Secretariat provides support throughout the process by providing elements and text proposals, organising meeting venues and sending invitations. A dedicated open web portal will be set up to reflect all drafts and written inputs (as an example, see <https://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/inputsministerial-declaration-unea-5>).

3. The role of the UNEA Bureau

The Bureau shall assist the President in the general conduct of business of UNEA, in accordance with ROP rules 17 and 18). On this basis, the Bureau is expected to consult with members of their respective regional group, to:

- Carry out the tasks entrusted to it by the Environment Assembly and the President.
- Review meeting credentials.
- Prepare for upcoming UNEA session, including by
 - providing guidance on the selection of an overarching theme (*Note: UNEA Decision 5/4 requests the Bureau, in consultation with the CPR, to define a theme for UNEA 6 no later than 12 months in advance of the session, i.e. by February 2023*);
 - advising and providing input on the preparation of the provisional agenda, draft programme of work of the session, and scheduling of items;
 - facilitating the negotiation of draft resolutions and decisions, for consideration by UNEA, including through the selection of facilitators;
 - recommend the allocation of items to subsidiary bodies of the Environment Assembly;
- Provide guidance on the organization of relevant informal meetings related to UNEA.
- Coordinate with the Bureau and Chair CPR, to ensure that the work of the Committee is coherent, complementary and in support of the decision-making process of UNEA.

4. Bureau meetings

The UNEA Bureau meets when necessary, as decided by the Bureau Members. Meetings are presided by the UNEA President and shall generally take place in Nairobi but may also meet at a location outside Nairobi, for example hosted by the UNEA President. Regardless of the venue, all Members – including the President – may attend the meetings fully online. In practice, Bureau meetings are predominantly held online, with some representatives who are based in Nairobi joining in-person at the UN Environment Programme premises. The Bureau conducts its business in English.

Depending on the agenda, the President, after consultation with the other members of the Bureau, may invite observers from Member States or members of UN Specialized Agencies as well as from organizations.

Meeting invitations are sent at least 14 days in advance, and related documents are as a general rule made available online at least 10 days in advance.

In accordance with a decision taken at the second Joint Meeting of the Bureaux of UNEA and of the CPR on 22 May 2017, the Chair of the Committee is invited to participate at all UNEA Bureau meetings in an *ex officio* capacity.

In line with rule 32 of the ROP on quorum, the President may declare a meeting open when at least one third of Bureau Members are present. For a decision to be taken, a majority of Members must be attending. As per established practice and without prejudice to rule 49 of the ROP, the Bureau takes its decisions by consensus.

A draft roadmap of meetings of the Bureau, including joint meetings, is prepared and regularly updated by the Secretariat in consultation with the UNEA President and CPR Chair, for information and consideration

by the Bureau. All meetings, including Bureau meetings, have a dedicated open webpage, with agenda, background documents and a meeting summary. In addition, all meetings of UNEP's governing bodies are listed in an online roadmap of meetings, available here: <https://www.unep.org/resources/other-evaluationreportsdocuments/roadmap-un-environment-programme-governing-bodies>. Upcoming meetings are also listed here: <https://www.unenvironment.org/cpr/meetings>.

5. Joint Bureau Meetings

To facilitate consultations between the UNEA and CPR Bureaus, joint Bureau meetings are regularly organized, co-chaired by the UNEA President and the Chair of the CPR. Meetings may take place in Nairobi or at a location outside Nairobi, for example hosted by the UNEA President. Regardless venue, all Members – including the President and Chair – may attend the meetings fully online.

Some joint meetings take the form of a “retreat”, often with a specific topic to be discussed; these meetings are typically longer (1-2 days) and may be hosted by the President.

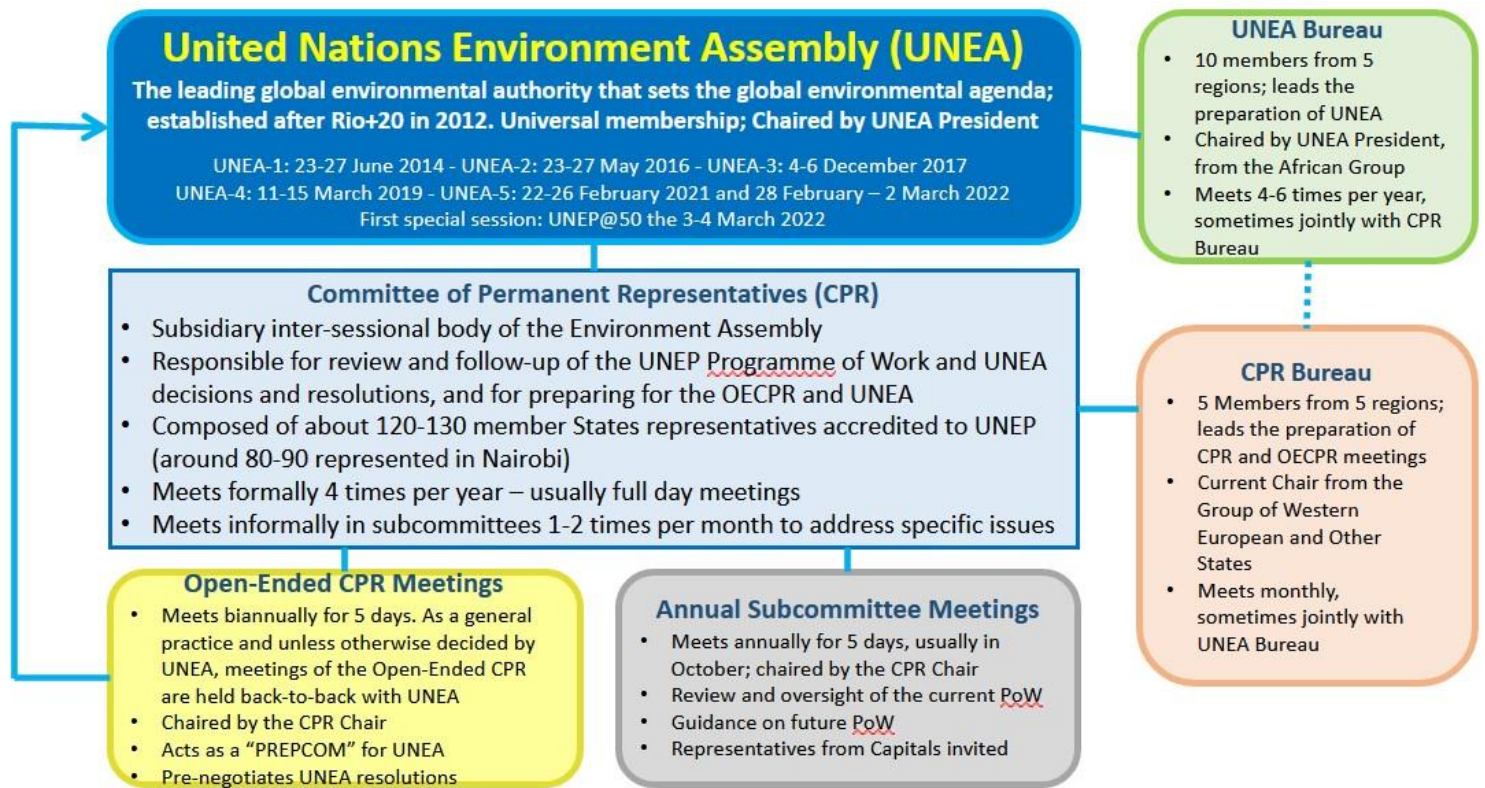
Relevant decisions are taken separately by each Bureau, in accordance with mandates provided by UNEA mandate (e.g. regarding the selection of a theme) and established practice.

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Annexes:

1. UN Environment Programme Governance Structure
 2. Relevant resolutions and decisions relating to the role and function of the UNEA President and Bureau
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ANNEX 1: UN Environment Programme Governance Structure



ANNEX 2: Relevant resolutions and decisions relating to the role and function of the UNEA President and Bureau

I. Governing Council decision 13/2. Establishment of a Committee of Permanent Representatives

13/2. Establishment of a Committee of Permanent Representatives

The Governing Council,

Recalling its decision 11/2 of 23 May 1983 on the periodicity and duration of Council sessions,

Conscious of the need to establish for the intersessional period prior to the fourteenth session of the Council a more formal and regular system of consultation among Governments and between Governments and the Executive Director,

Bearing in mind the positive results achieved by the meetings of permanent representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme during the past two years, in particular as regards preparations for Council sessions,

Taking into account the fact that an increasing number of Governments have permanent missions accredited to the Programme,

1. Decides to establish, in accordance with rule 62 of its rules of procedure, an open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives, consisting of permanent representatives to the Programme and/or Government-designated officials, to consider and make recommendations to the Council on the matters mentioned in decision 11/2, paragraph 3, and to take action on any other matters specifically entrusted to it by the Council;

2. Further decides that the Committee will meet regularly with the Executive Director or his representative on the first Wednesday of February, September and December each year, and will also meet six weeks prior to the opening of the fourteenth session of the Council and whenever deemed necessary by the Committee or by the Executive Director;

3. Invites Governments that have not accredited a permanent mission to the Programme to designate a focal point to whom information and documentation pertaining to the meetings of the Committee can be conveyed;

4. Requests the Executive Director to take the necessary measures, in accordance with rule 62, article 3 of its rules of procedure, for the implementation of the present decision, within available resources, by providing to the Committee services and facilities of the same kind as those he has provided in the past to meetings of permanent representatives;

5. Decides to review the present decision at its fourteenth session.

13th meeting
23 May 1985

II. Governing Council Decision 19/32. Governance of the United Nations Environment Programme

8. *That the Committee of Permanent Representatives shall consist of the representatives of all States Members of the United Nations and members of its specialized agencies, and the European Community, accredited to the United Nations Environment Programme, whether based in Nairobi or outside;*

9. That the Committee of Permanent Representatives shall elect a Bureau composed of a Chairperson, three Vice-Chairpersons and a Rapporteur, for a period of two years, taking into account the principles of rotation and equitable geographical representation;

10. That the **Committee of Permanent Representatives shall hold four regular meetings a year**. Extraordinary meetings may be also convened by its Chairperson, after consultation with the other members of the Bureau or at the request of at least five members of the Committee. The Committee of Permanent Representatives **may establish subcommittees**, working groups and task forces as deemed appropriate to carry out its mandate;

III. Governing Council Decision 27/2: Implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

1. Recommends to the General Assembly that the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, an intergovernmental body established pursuant to article 22 of the United Nations Charter, be **renamed as the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme**;

2. Decides that the governing body of the United Nations Environment Programme will convene its sessions in Nairobi **on a biennial basis, starting in 2014**, and will carry out its mandate as set out in General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972 and all other relevant resolutions that reinforce its mandate as well as the 1997 Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme, the 2000 Malmö Ministerial Declaration, the 2010 Nusa Dua Declaration and paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development as endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 66/288;

4. Decides to **discontinue** the Global Ministerial Environment Forum;

5. Decides that **each session** of the governing body of the United Nations Environment Programme **will conclude with a two-day high level segment** as an integral part of the governing body of the United Nations Environment Programme, which will take strategic decisions and provide political guidance and will perform inter alia the following functions:

- (a) Setting the global environmental agenda;
- (b) Providing overarching policy guidance and defining policy responses to address emerging environmental challenges;
- (c) Undertaking policy review, dialogue and exchange of experiences;
- (d) Setting the strategic guidance on the future direction of the United Nations Environment Programme;
- (e) Organizing a multi-stakeholder dialogue;
- (f) Fostering partnerships for achieving environmental goals and resource mobilization;

6. Decides that the Bureau of the governing body of the United Nations Environment Programme shall be composed of 10 members to reflect the universality of the governing body, in accordance with equitable geographical distribution, and will assist the governing body and perform the functions as set out in the rules of procedure of the governing body;

9. Decides that **an open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives** will be the intersessional subsidiary body of the governing body of the United Nations Environment Programme and, in addition to its mandate [Governing Council decision 19/32, paragraph 7] and in open and transparent manner, will perform the following functions:

- (a) Contributing to the preparation of the agenda of its governing body;
- (b) Providing advice to its governing body on policy matters;

- (c) *Preparing decisions for adoption by its governing body and overseeing their implementation;*
- (d) *Convening thematic and/or programmatic debates*
- (e) *Promoting effective ways and means to facilitate participation of the non-resident members of the Committee, particularly from developing countries* (f) *Performing any other functions delegated to it by its governing body;*

12. *Decides that the Committee of Permanent Representatives will consider the frequency, schedule and programmatic focus of its meetings to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness and will improve upon its working methods;*

IV. UNEA Decision 2/22. Review of the cycle of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme

- 1. *Decides to hold its regular sessions in odd numbered years commencing with its third session in 2017;*
- 2. *Also decides that the above-mentioned cycle shall also apply to the open-ended meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to be held in accordance with Governing Council decision 27/2;*

V. Decision 3/2. Provisional agenda, date and venue of the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

- 3. *Decides to hold the sessions of the United Nations Environment Assembly, following the fourth session of the Environment Assembly, **during the last week of February**, unless otherwise decided by the Environment Assembly, at its headquarters in Nairobi, consistent with rule 4 of the rules of procedure;*

VI. UNEA Decision 5/4 Provisional agenda, date and venue of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

- 2. *Decides to hold the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Headquarters in Nairobi.*
- 3. *Decides that the sixth session of UNEA will take place on **26 February to 01 March 2024**. Also decides that, in accordance with paragraph 10 of Governing Council decision 27/2 of 22 February 2013, the sixth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives will take place from **19 to 23 February 2024**, and requests the Committee of Permanent Representatives to discuss, in consultation with the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and decide on the format and agenda of the meeting.*
- 4. *Requests the Committee of Permanent Representatives, in consultation with the **Bureau** of the United Nations Environment Assembly, **to contribute to the preparation of the annotations to the provisional agenda** set out in paragraph 4*
- 5. *Requests the **Bureau** of the United Nations Environment Assembly, in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives, **to define a theme for the Environment Assembly no later than twelve months in advance of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly** Strongly encourages **Member States to submit draft resolutions** for consideration by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its sixth session preferably **at least ten weeks in advance of the***

sixth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives, taking into account the theme of the sixth session of the Environment Assembly and the limited time and resources available for the negotiation of the resolutions during the sixth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives and the sixth session of the Environment Assembly, without prejudice to the rules of procedure, in particular rule 44;