



SOUTH AFRICA'S INTERVENTIONS DURING THE 151ST MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

- **Report by the Executive Director**

My delegation wishes to thank the Executive Director for her report covering implementation and activities between April to June 2020. The global COVID 19 pandemic has indeed had a huge impact on the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living. My delegation, in this regard takes note with appreciation the report on the four areas for COVID 19 response and the development of the roadmap on recovery. There is an imperative need to ensure that our response remains just, green, inclusive and youth and gender-responsive.

We agree that the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) provides an opportune platform towards building back better. PAGE has a huge potential to contribute effectively to sustainable economic development and job creation as we seek to achieve the sustainable wellbeing of the people and protection of environment concurrently.

My delegation wishes to welcome the initiative by UNEP of hosting regional consultations based on the resolutions adopted at UNEA. This approach is indeed in line with taking Action for Environmental Sustainability and Prosperity – as member States get to share best practices and it also allows for participation by various stakeholders. In this regard, my delegation looks forward to more consultations on other resolutions in particular on the poverty environment nexus and the one on addressing environmental challenges through sustainable business practices. We believe that these resolutions speak directly to the current unprecedented challenges brought about by COVID 19 pandemic and an opportunity for views by various stakeholders would be of great value.

Finally, Mr Chair my delegation wishes to join the previous speakers in thanking the secretariat for details on gender and geographical representation and therefore wishes to underscore the importance of ensuring equitable geographical balance in its composition of staff. We look forward to continuous updates in this regard.

We look forward to further deliberations on the hosting of UNEA5 and wish to call upon all delegations to put the principle of effective and inclusive participation at the centre of this discussion.

- **Consultation on the Medium-Term Strategy 2021- 2025 and Programme of Work and Budget 2022-2023**

My delegation wishes to align its intervention with that delivered by Palestine on behalf of Group of 77 and China. Allow me to thank the secretariat for their presentation and revised document on the Medium-Term Strategy and Programme of Work and Budget. We see a lot of progress in the revised narrative.

Mr Chair, allow me to however, make the following comments:

- On the situational analysis it is noted that some of the very important issues affecting the world and the African region in particular may have been missed and these include desertification and land degradation and its impacts on humans and the environment. The trajectory in the situational analysis over emphasizes climate change and minimizes the other environmental problems.
- On the strategic approaches – As previously indicated there should more detail on the strengthening of regional offices and their presence which would not only assist in helping UNEP to deliver as one but would also highlight UNEP's work through the regions as per paragraph 88 of the Rio +20.
- We have taken note of the discussions and the clear call for UNEP's collaboration with MEAs, however, there may be an over emphasis of the legislation approach. It is well understood that MEAs deliver substantive programmes, policies and actions on the ground that are not necessarily legislation. The world needs more programmes than laws in order to allow for effective implementation and development to strive. Clarity is also needed on the MEAs being referred to in the document – whether it is those administered by UNEP or all the MEAs.
- On climate action
Mr Chair, there seems to be an over emphasis on mitigation actions. Our vulnerability to climate change is exacerbated by economic inequality and poverty; therefore there is a need to have more detail on adaptation and creating resilience of countries and communities. What we have also noted as missing is linking climate change to national development aspirations. This is at the core of our country's aspirations.

My delegation wishes to caution against overstressing the work and mandates of other institutions and call for more focus on UNEP's core mandate – which is supporting countries to adapt and mitigate impacts. For instance, the reporting of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) is a mandate of UNFCCC.

➤ On nature action

All the UNEA resolutions on desertification, land degradation, natural capital, innovative solutions and sustainable pastoralism cannot be traced in the current document and yet the policy actions therein are at the core of nature action. These must be brought in and implemented in the MTS. In this regard, the use of Regional MEAs on nature Action becomes vital and should be included.

➤ On environmental governance

Mr Chair, policy drives change and actions. There is an absence of policy frameworks. Therefore, the focus should be on the three arms: policy, institutions and legal frameworks. We can safely say that many countries already have many laws. What is needed is strengthening the institutions to implement those laws.

We wish to thank the secretariat for continued transparency and consultation in developing the MTS and we look forward to further engagements.

- **UNGA 73/333 process**

My delegation wishes to thank the co-facilitators for their report and the document providing a summary of the discussions held during the first informal substantive consultation meeting on United Nations General Assembly resolution 73/333 in July 2020. At the outset my delegation wishes to reiterate its previous position as expressed regarding the Political Declaration and the timing thereof. We are still of the view that UNEA-5 will be too soon for a full declaration as well as a discussion on what should be contained in such a declaration, especially given the method of our meetings.

There still exists no 'real agreement' per se on the specific, envisaged mandate for a Political Declaration therefore expecting to have an agreement on the 'building blocks' for the Declaration is going to be a huge challenge.

Nonetheless, Mr Chair, we wish to emphasise that the 'predictability' of the means of implementation, is as important as the "availability" of the means of implementation to developing countries. There is a further need for new, additional and at-scale financial support for developing countries, particularly in the form of predictable public sector grants from developed to developing countries for transformative projects.

Financing, technology transfer and capacity building becomes even more crucial in the context of efforts by developing countries to ensure that recovery from COVID-19 is green, sustainable and supportive of a just transition nationally.

With regards to UNEP and MEA cooperation, it is recommended that some form of formal agreement is entered into to ensure that elements pertaining to the respective organisations concerning mandates, financial and regulatory mechanisms (i.e. rules of procedure and decision-making) and membership (participation), are maintained.

In conclusion Mr Chair, while we continue to call for an outcome that is action-oriented and people-centred with the eradication of poverty remaining the overarching objective to free

our people from want; it is my delegation's view that further clarity on the Political Declaration is required (i.e. For Whom is it for? For What Purpose at this current stage? And For What Purpose Going Forward.

Lastly, the format of the next meeting needs to be clarified and so do the specifications of the proposed procedural resolution. This should be done well in advance of the UNEA session.

I THANK YOU!