



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 7 July 2016
(OR. en)

10622/16

ENV 451
DEVGEN 148
ONU 79

INFORMATION NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-2) of
the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
(Nairobi, 23-27 May 2016)
- Statements by the European Union and its Member States

Delegations will find in the [Annex](#) for information a compilation of statements, as agreed, on the main UNEA-2 agenda items, including the High-level Segment, which were delivered during the meeting.

**Second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-2)
of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
(Nairobi, 23–27 May 2016)**

- Statements by the European Union and its Member States -

Opening statement

Madam/Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished colleagues,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the EU and its 28 Member States.

First of all, let me take the opportunity to express our appreciation to the Government of Kenya for hosting this second meeting of the United Nations Environment Assembly. We also extend our sincere appreciation to the Executive Director Mr. Achim Steiner, to the UNEP Secretariat, the Committee of Permanent Representatives and to the UNEA Bureau for their hard work in preparing this session.

Furthermore, we would like to congratulate Mr. Erik Solheim on his recent election as UNEP's next Executive Director.

The EU and its Member States are pleased to see such a large number of delegates attending this session and we are delighted that a high ministerial participation is expected during the High Level Segment on Thursday and Friday. Together with the large variety of issues addressed in the resolutions to be agreed at this meeting, this reflects the crucial role of UNEA and reaffirms UNEP's strengthened mandate as *the* global environmental authority.

Madam/Mr. President,

This second session of UNEA convenes at an important moment in time. In 2015 the international community made remarkable breakthroughs. Last September we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a new universal, transformational and integrated paradigm for sustainable development. Further, the Paris climate agreement represents a turning point in our fight against climate change.

However, the most important work remains to be done: putting these and other important commitments, including Multilateral Environmental Agreements, into practice. UNEA-2 is the perfect occasion for governments from around the globe to demonstrate they stand ready for the integrated, coordinated and effective implementation of these commitments. The outcome of this second session of UNEA should demonstrate and strengthen the roles of UNEP, as the leading UN authority on the environment, and UNEA, as the collective voice for the environment, in the implementation process. UNEP has to enhance its leading role to foster multilateral coordination for integration of environmental management, including among UN agencies.

Serious challenges remain for us as the international community. For instance, around 25 percent of the global burden of disease is environment related nowadays. Further, environmental degradation may provoke serious consequences in terms of social and economic instability, including forced displacement.

UNEA should therefore demonstrate that global action on a healthier planet is urgent. Ensuring waste prevention and the sound management of chemicals and waste is an essential element in this. For the EU and its Member States, it is also important that this UNEA promotes action to improve the marine environment, which will make a valuable contribution to achieving sustainable development. UNEA should commit to promoting sustainable consumption and production, which is relevant to achieving many of the SDGs, and demonstrate how the transition to a circular economy can contribute to sustainable economic growth and new jobs.

Another priority for this week is concluding our discussion on UNEPs stakeholder engagement policy. [Under your personal guidance] we arrived at a good compromise; with the necessary constructive spirit we are confident that a final agreement can be reached this week.

We attach a lot of value to flexible partnerships between UNEP and other UN organisations, national governments, NGO's, the private sector and other partners. The goals and targets of Agenda 2030 cannot be achieved without active participation of all relevant stakeholders. We need all actors, governments, science, industry and civil society alike, to boost the efforts necessary for its implementation. We therefore look forward to the multi-stakeholder discussions as part of our meeting. In particular, partnerships will be essential for following up on the Financial Inquiry and making the financial system more sustainable, and in mobilizing resources for sustainable investments.

Regarding the preparation of resolutions for adoption at UNEA a lot of ground has been covered in the intersessional period from OECPR-2, but still there is a big workload ahead of us for the coming days. The EU and its Member States are ready to collaborate on this, building on the progress achieved so far and fostering consensus.

Madam/Mr. President,

The EU and its Member States are committed to work together with other partners in ensuring the best possible outcome from this second session of the UNEA.

Thank you.

Agenda item 4): International environmental policy and governance issues

We would like to thank the Executive Director for all the reports. They demonstrate important progress made in many areas in implementing the mandates of UNEA-1 and we share many of their conclusions.

We would like to take this opportunity to highlight a number of points.

Regarding the **Science-Policy Interface**, The EU and its Member States want to emphasize UNEPs added value in interpreting scientifically sound evidence into useful assessments for policy and decision makers.

Given the very limited time available to complete the global GEO-6 assessment, we support the UNEP approach that the global assessment builds on the regional assessments and encourages UNEP to make use of information from other relevant global assessments, for example from IPCC, International Resource Panel and IPBES.

Regarding UNEP Live, EU and its Member States would like to repeat the call in resolution 1/4 for a long term strategic plan which clearly goes beyond technology developments. It is essential to put a clearly structured process and mechanisms in place in order to ensure UNEP Live's continued value for countries and other stakeholders. The ED report does not address this aspect adequately.

On **coordination across the United Nations system**, we would like to highlight that strengthening the integration of the environmental dimension into all UN activities has become even more crucial in order to successfully implement the universal and integrated 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The EU and its Member States have proposed text setting out how the process should be taken further for inclusion in the resolution on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We also welcome the UN Secretary General's report on the System-Wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment for the UN system. However, we think that UNEA's role as the global environmental authority could have been reflected more prominently in the document. In our opinion UNEA could give guidance and recommendations on implementation of the environmental dimension to other respective governing bodies of other UN organizations, naturally through appropriate channels and respecting reporting obligations of individual organizations.

Also the High Level Political Forum should be engaged: for example the Syntheses report, that will be developed, could after UNEA's guidance be presented to the HLPF.

We encourage all UN organisations to contribute to this effort and to report to their governing bodies on progress. Only through joint action across the UN can we ensure most efficient support to Member States for integrating the environment.

(g) Global Environment Monitoring System/Water Programme

- The European Union and its Member States would like to thank the Executive Director for his report on the implementation of UNEA resolution 1/9 on a revised Global Environment Monitoring System/Water Programme (GEMS/Water) and, particularly, for the work undertaken by UNEP in this area.
- The report provides an overview of the key components of the revised GEMS/Water programme and the underlying new partnerships, the initial steps following its transition towards regional implementation and capacity development and its embedment in the UNEP programme of work. The report also considers the linkages between the revised GEMS/Water programme and the recently adopted 2030 Agenda, which explicitly addresses water issues in a number of interlinked SDGs and targets, specifically goal 6.

- We agree with the outlined role and objectives of GEMS/Water as well as the outlook on future activities and welcome the overall workplan of the revised GEMS/Water programme addressing the activities of the GEMS/Water Global Programme Coordination Unit, Capacity Development Centre, Data Centre and regional hubs.
- We share the conclusion of the report that “GEMS/Water will be instrumental in implementing the Agenda 2030” and that “GEMS/Water – through its Data Centre, including the GEMStat system, and its Capacity Development Centre – will be a key component of the emerging monitoring framework for Goal 6 in supporting the reporting process from the national to the global levels”.
- With this in mind, it will be critical to maintain the funding support for all GEMS/Water components throughout the entire implementation period of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. Since GEMS/Water relies fully on financial and in-kind support from donor countries, we encourage Member States to join the GEMS/Water network.

Agenda item 5): Medium-term strategy, programme of work and budget, and other administrative and budgetary issues:

- (a) Revisions to the programme of work and budget for the biennium 2016-2017**
- (b) Proposed medium-term strategy for 2018-2021**
- (c) Proposed programme of work and budget for the biennium 2018-2019**

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Executive Director for his report on the implementation of its Programme of work and budget 2016-2017 and for its proposal for an ambitious medium-term strategy for 2018-2021 and programme of work and budget for 2018-2019.

The period 2018-2021 will be of particular importance as the implementation of 2 important commitments taken in 2015 will start where UNEP has an important role to play. I refer to the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and the Paris Agreement. Within the MTS period we should also achieve important targets that have been set for 2020 including the Aichi targets for biodiversity and the 2020 goal on the sound management of chemicals and waste. For that reason, it is crucial that UNEA-2 adopts a strong, prioritized MTS and POW which will allow UNEP to play its role as the global environment authority within the UN system. Of course we also need a solid budget that will help UNEP to implement its programme of work.

The EU and its Member States welcome and support the proposal made by the Executive Director on the MTS 2018-2021 and the POW 2018-2019 and thank UNEP for the constructive and numerous consultations held with the CPR which helped to prepare and finalize these documents.

Regarding the budget, the EU and its Member States would like to highlight the need to ensure secure, stable and adequate financial resources for UNEP, especially for the Environment Fund. We support the zero nominal growth proposed for the contributions from the UN Regular Budget and the Environment fund for 2018-2019. We also support and consider realistic the foreseen increase in earmarked funds and the GEF funding, which are based on the amount received by UNEP in the last biennium. We consider that all UNEA members need to contribute resources to achieve our ambitious goals and we strongly urge all Member States, to increase their funding to the Environment Fund in accordance with their Voluntary indicative Scale. As has been shown in a number of reports, it is necessary to broaden the pool of contributors and ensure a more balanced sharing of the burden by Member States for the Environment Fund based on ability to pay.

Agenda item 7): High-level segment

Ministerial Dialogue on the Environmental Dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The EU and its Member States welcome that "delivering on the environmental dimension of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" has been selected as the overarching theme for this UNEA.

Taking place only a fortnight before the meeting of the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, this Assembly is the right moment to discuss the 2030 Agenda, which presents a unique opportunity to put the world on a more sustainable development path that is long overdue. Now we need to put the 2030 Agenda to work, to make it a success in each of our countries, as well as globally. We cannot achieve sustainable development unless environmental aspects are fully taken into account and unless the planetary boundaries are fully respected.

What can we, the world's environment leaders, do to make this happen?

We see four key areas where we as UNEA can and should act:

- **First, we should advocate for integration of the environmental dimension across implementation plans at global, regional and national levels;**
- **Second, we should discuss and agree actions that we can take domestically or collectively, in collaboration with our colleagues working in other relevant areas, to deliver on the environmental dimension.** This should include how to transform our lifestyles and the way our economies work so that they help achieve poverty eradication, well-being and healthy ecosystems as well as economic growth. We all know how closely the goals are interlinked and I look forward to our discussions on "healthy environment, healthy people" to provide some examples of this;

- **Third, we should find ways to engage civil society, science communities and the private sector in an effective manner.** Central elements will include mobilizing investments and promoting innovations that help to decouple growth from environmental degradation or increase resilience and simultaneously strengthen social cohesion or deliver benefits in areas such as public health, and taking into account the ways in which gender considerations can help achieve the goals;
- **Fourth, we should commit as UNEA to regularly reviewing delivery of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and passing key recommendations to the HLPF.**

We also see this Assembly as an opportunity to establish the modalities by which UNEP, the leading global environmental authority, can contribute to delivering the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda. I wish to highlight a few key areas:

- **UNEP should help ensure the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda is fully integrated into UN system support for implementation of the Agenda at regional and country level.** We call on UNEP and other UN agencies to collaborate to provide countries with the integrated support required;
- **UNEP should promote the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development at global level, across the United Nations system,** for example by continuing the work on the system-wide framework of strategies for the environment with other UN bodies and secretariats and promoting MEA synergies;
- **UNEP should ensure active participation of all relevant stakeholders and explore new mechanisms to promote transparency and the effective engagement of civil society, including through initiating or strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships;**
- **UNEP should continue to foster partnerships with the private sector to boost innovation, highlight effective technologies and methods, create synergies and leverage investments. UNEP's support for boosting the environmental dimension of upcoming UN conferences is important and particularly topical with respect to the Habitat III Conference to be organized in Quito, Ecuador, next October;**
- **UNEP should play a key role in monitoring and review of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. UNEP should provide this input to the global follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

We have taken this opportunity to propose a resolution to advocate these clear roles for UNEP and UNEA in delivering the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We thank all Member States for their constructive discussions on this and look forward to its adoption.

**Agenda item 8): Provisional agenda, date and venue of the third session of the Environment
Assembly
- UNEA cycle**

The EU and its Member States heard the USA statement.

We are glad that there is a consensus to change to a 2-year cycle based on odd years, the same rhythm that applied to all the regular sessions of the Governing Council. The change to odd years is needed both for technical budgetary reasons and for policy reasons, namely the ability of UNEA to feed into the summit level sessions of the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, in a timely manner.

Changing to an odd year now means either having successive UNEA sessions in 2016 and 2017 or waiting until 2019 for UNEA 3.

For the EU and its Member States, the state of the world's environment means we cannot wait until 2019.

Like the USA, we recognise that the extra meeting in 2017 is not currently funded. I am proud to announce that a EU pledge of US\$ 500,000, subject to the normal EU legislative process to support the necessary costs.

The EU and its Member States are glad that this pledge helped to enable the meeting to reach consensus on changing the cycle in 2017 and we thank our partners for the negotiations.

Agenda item 12): Closure of the session

We are really deeply sorry for the latest developments that have taken place in the last couple of hours.

We would like to express our appreciation and our full support to the President of UNEA. We also want to pay tribute to the work that has been carried out by all the delegations on the 25 resolutions. It has been an extraordinary work from all. All 25 resolutions were adopted and no one questioned the quorum.

We remain deeply committed to and confident in UNEP, a flagship organisation in Africa.

Achim Steiner has provided leadership, ambition and vision for this organisation for the last 10 years and we want to pay tribute to him, to what he achieved. We thank the colleagues of UNEP and of the Conference Service in Nairobi for their support.

We have not made as much progress as we would have liked during this UNEA 2, but we remain deeply committed to UNEA and to UNEP.

=====