



UNEP OECPR-2 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 17 FEBRUARY 2016

Delegates at OECPR-2 met in plenary all morning, where they discussed the role of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN Environment Assembly of the UNEP (UNEA) in delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They also considered the draft of the Global Thematic Report on “Healthy Environment, Healthy People.”

In the afternoon and evening, negotiations on draft resolution text continued in Clusters 1 and 4. Clusters 2 and 3 were originally scheduled to meet in the late afternoon, and were rescheduled for Thursday as negotiations in Clusters 1 and 4 extended into the evening.

PLENARY

On Wednesday morning, delegates observed a moment of silence in honor of the former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) Chair Julia Pataki (Romania) then opened a brief stocktaking session and the cluster Chairs provided updates on progress made the previous day.

STOCKTAKING: Cluster 1 Chair Pedro Escosteguy Cardoso (Brazil) said the group had consolidated proposed texts on investing in human capacity, and strengthening education for sustainable development. He expressed concern, however, at the large number of new texts submitted under the 2030 Agenda resolution and urged delegates to work informally to arrive at consensus, to enable consideration of the final three resolutions.

Cluster 2 Chair John Moreti (Botswana) reported encouraging progress on two of its four resolutions, on environmentally sound technologies in relation to waste management, and sound management of chemicals and waste, noting proposals to consolidate them into a single draft text.

Cluster 3 Chair Corinna Enders (Germany) noted encouraging progress on the draft resolution on oceans and seas. She said the group would finalize consideration of the marine plastic debris and microplastics text, and reported that the group would also consider consolidating some of the resolutions so as to reduce duplication.

John Moreti (Botswana), who also chaired Cluster 4, reported that the group had completed a first reading of two of its five resolutions, on management of natural capital, and illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products. He regretted that discussions on the former had become bogged down in issues of definition.

Cluster 5 Chair Raza Bashir Tarar (Pakistan) expressed hope that the group would maintain the brisk pace established during discussions on its first two draft resolutions, on integration of biodiversity, and on synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S PRESENTATION: UNEP

Executive Director Achim Steiner presented a concept note on “Delivering on the Environmental Dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” He highlighted UNEP’s 2018-2021 Medium-Term Strategy as a stepping stone for facilitating SDG delivery, and stressed UNEA’s key role in facilitating synergies across the UN system, saying that the UN should develop a less “New York-centered” institutional focus. Regarding the Global Thematic Report on “Healthy Environment, Healthy People,” he highlighted areas of health-environment synergy that could be scaled up in UNEP’s Programme of Work (PoW), including marine debris, chemicals and sustainable consumption and production.

MINISTERIAL PANEL: Judi Wakhungu, Kenya, highlighted her government’s reorganization following adoption of the Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa to bring about closer cooperation on these two issues. Samuel Manetoali, Solomon Islands, noted the pronounced interplay between environment and health on small islands and described his country’s efforts to review and reform legislation to ensure sustainability is central to its development aspirations. Kare Chawicha Debessa, Ethiopia, underscored health challenges arising from: a changing climate; lack of safe drinking water and adequate sanitation; indoor and outdoor air pollution; and handling of obsolete chemicals. Herman Sips, the Netherlands, emphasized that integration underpins the 2030 Agenda, and highlighted his country’s engagement with local authorities on de-carbonization, as well as partnerships on waste management with countries and partners in the Caribbean region.

OPEN DEBATE: On institutional arrangements of UNEP and UNEA, NEW ZEALAND commended the concept note as an important tool for policymakers. NORWAY, the EU, BELGIUM and others, stressed the need for UNEA to contribute to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), with the EU calling for the report to clearly articulate the role of UNEA. BELGIUM noted UNEP’s role in setting norms and standards for global environment issues, as well as its convening role in galvanizing partnerships for implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

On health-environment linkages, many delegates welcomed the draft of the Global Thematic Report. NORWAY suggested the report also focus on security elements. SUDAN proposed the report outline UNEP’s role in addressing the environmental impact of intra-national conflicts. BRAZIL proposed that health-environment linkages be considered either in a paragraph in a relevant resolution, or as part of the UNEA outcome document.

In closing remarks, ministers highlighted: localizing the SDGs, including through development planning; the need to explore security elements in the health-environment nexus;



and the “UN reality” that requires aligning to global reporting requirements while working across the health and environment sectors at the national level.

Steiner called for the outcome of UNEA-2 to capture these messages.

PREPARATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS

CLUSTER 1: In the afternoon, Cluster 1 addressed two of its five draft resolutions. Cluster Chair Escosteguy Cardoso requested delegates to promptly forward any new proposed language for the resolution on “Roles of UNEP and UNEA in delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda” to the Secretariat, and encouraged delegations to work on consensus language on the resolution on “Promoting the effective implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement,” ahead of Thursday’s discussion.

Delegates then discussed the resolution relating to the SAMOA Pathway, proposed by Samoa.

The role, functions and modalities for UNEP’s implementation of the SAMOA Pathway as a means to facilitate achievement of the SDGs: The Chair noted that this paragraph had enjoyed wide support in the intersessional period, when many paragraphs were agreed *ad ref.* In the ensuing discussion, delegates proposed various new paragraphs, while several previously agreed paragraphs were reopened.

After extended discussion, delegates agreed to favor a general formulation, rather than a detailed list, of how UNEP could enhance and support SAMOA Pathway implementation. A developed country delegate opposed developing countries’ proposals to include references to UNEP resource allocation for specific actions, and also opposed language on strengthening the UNEP Caribbean and Pacific sub-regional offices, saying it would be more appropriate to address this in the resolution on PoW and budget. Countries differed strongly on whether to include a specific reference to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Many different views were expressed on a paragraph about UNEP contributing to the HLPF, which states the HLPF “shall” devote adequate time to discussing sustainable development challenges facing developing countries, including small island developing States. Some stressed the importance of UNEA speaking to the HLPF, while others said the language was too prescriptive.

Role, functions and follow up to the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific: Iran introduced this draft resolution, indicating that the proposal was developed after the First Forum of Asia-Pacific Environment Ministers and Authorities in Bangkok in May 2015, where participants had concluded that such meetings should be held regularly to enable effective follow-up from UNEA meetings. He noted that UNEP already provides support, in various forms, for existing regional processes. A number of developing country delegates expressed support, and some proposed that the resolution could be broadened to apply to other UNEP regions. Developed country delegates welcomed the draft but suggested there were institutional and budget issues which Cluster 5 could consider in the context of the resolution on PoW and budget.

CLUSTER 4: In the afternoon, the group began consideration of the next three of its five draft resolutions, relating to issues of environmental protection in conflict-affected areas.

Protection of the environment in areas affected by armed conflict: Chair Moreti invited delegates to discuss bracketed preambular text in this draft resolution, submitted by Ukraine and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. One country opposed referencing specific UNEP reports, as well as UNEP’s Expert

Advisory Group on Environment, Conflict and Peace-building, and suggested alternative preambular text “welcoming the work of UNEP in environmental protection in conflict-affected areas.” Delegates then engaged in a lengthy exchange on whether to encourage countries to “enforce” applicable international law, with one delegate arguing that this could open a Pandora’s box. Others said it would be unrealistic to expect countries to protect the environment during war if they cannot even safeguard human life. Some suggested clarifying that the resolution is focused on post-conflict rehabilitation. Several delegations also opposed referring to language from the Human Rights Council on “the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.” Noting that there was no bracketed text in the operative paragraphs, Chair Moreti closed discussions on the resolution and invited countries with text proposals to forward them to the Secretariat.

Impact of the Syria crises on the natural environment in neighboring hosting countries: Responding to the draft text submitted by Jordan, delegates proposed that its relevant, non-political elements be included in the resolution on “Protection of the environment in areas affected by armed conflict.” Jordan then provided an alternate draft. After prolonged discussions, a developing country suggested that the relevant paragraphs be included in the Ukrainian proposal, and circulated for consideration at the next meeting of the cluster.

Field based environmental assessment of the effects after the November 2012 and July and August 2014 Wars on Gaza Strip: Chair Moreti invited delegates to consider this resolution, which had been proposed by Morocco and the Arab States. Many countries highlighted earlier calls to avoid discussing resolutions on specific conflicts or countries and expressed concern that the “politicized” tone of the resolution would deter progress. Several speakers suggested extracting any general elements from the text with a view to possibly combining them with the other draft resolutions on armed conflict, and stressed the need to focus on the “technical” aspects of UNEP’s mandate. However, other delegations preferred considering the text as circulated, stressing that it is derived from a UNEP Governing Council decision. Noting that it was not feasible to begin a line-by-line review, Chair Moreti invited the resolution’s sponsors to convene informal consultations with other interested parties to explore the best way forward.

IN THE BREEZEWAYS

Cracks in the cooperation façade began to spread on Wednesday, as negotiators in the clusters discussed the text prepared by the CPR and continued to reopen many previously resolved paragraphs.

Some delegations questioned the authority of the Nairobi-centered CPR to “ad ref” any of the material forwarded to the OECPR, and others complained of late circulation of the prepared drafts, which had not allowed sufficient time to consult with colleagues in other departments or ministries. Others still noted that, in any case, ministers at UNEA-2 in May will have the final say.

Meanwhile, the Secretariat scrambled to maintain order, as scheduling went out the window and confusion reigned over meeting rooms and start times of the various clusters.

Despite some ruffled feathers, a UN administrator on the sidelines expressed some degree of satisfaction. “This process is drawing out the arguments behind the various positions, and delegations will be able to resolve many of them in advance of UNEA,” he explained.