



UNEA-2 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 25 MAY 2016

The drafting groups continued to meet at the second UN Environment Assembly of the UN Environment Programme (UNEA-2) on Wednesday. In the Committee of the Whole (COW) plenary, all groups reported progress and briefed delegates on outstanding matters to be resolved. Discussions in all three drafting groups continued late into the evening.

Two symposia took place during the day, on “Mobilizing Investment for Sustainable Development” and “Environment and Displacement: Root causes and implications.” The Environment Management Group (EMG) launched the UN System-Wide Framework of Strategies for the Environment at a lunchtime event. The Sustainable Innovation Expo (SIE) hosted a Business Dialogue for Environmental Sustainability in the afternoon, and many other events took place around the conference venue.

COW PLENARY

REPORT BACKS: From Drafting Group 1, Co-Chair Tita Korvenoja (Finland) reported that delegates had reached agreement on the resolution on investing in human capacity for sustainable development, with its final paragraph agreed “pending decision on the UNEA cycle.” She noted all preambular paragraphs, and 75% of the operative text of the resolution on role, functions and follow up to the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific had been agreed.

Co-Chair Hesiquio Benitez Diaz (Mexico) said a new version of the resolution on desertification, land degradation and drought, and pastoralism and rangelands had been made available, following a series of modifications introduced on Tuesday. He noted the need for further discussion on the sand and dust storms resolution. Describing progress on sustainable and optimal management of natural capital as “more modest,” Benitez said a small group was working on developing core points of consensus.

From Drafting Group 2, Co-Chair John Moreti (Botswana) said the group had made progress on the omnibus resolution on sound management of chemicals and wastes, noting it represented “three resolutions in one.” He said informal consultations were ongoing to address outstanding issues, and expressed hope that the group would progress on a number of other resolutions through the day.

Drafting Group 3 Co-Chair Mohammed Khashashneh (Jordan) said the group’s discussions had concluded late on Tuesday. On the MTS 2018-2021 and biennial PoW and budget 2018-2019 resolution, he noted that two paragraphs remain bracketed. He explained that delegates had not been

able to approve the resolution on trust funds and earmarked contributions as presented, and said discussions would continue on the basis of an amended text.

Khashashneh said that after intense discussions on review of the UNEA cycle, the group had agreed to amend the procedures for electing Bureau members, to enable the election to take place at the end of each UNEA session. He said the group had yet to resolve the question of whether to hold the next UNEA session in 2017 or 2018.

On the resolution on the relationship between UNEP and the MEAs for which it provides the Secretariat, Co-Chair Corinna Enders (Germany) reported that Member States had engaged in good discussions on its general content, and provided many textual proposals for the preamble.

RESOLUTION AND REPORTS: CHILE introduced a new draft resolution, co-sponsored by Costa Rica, on the Application of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (UNEP/EA.2/CRP.2), to promote access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters. The US and the EU supported the draft resolution being considered in Drafting Group 3 and the COW endorsed the decision.

Delegates continued discussions on international environmental policy and governance issues, addressing a series of reports from the UNEP Executive Director (ED).

Science-policy interface: Introducing the relevant reports (UNEP/EA.2/3, INF.17 and INF.24), the Secretariat noted the growing use of UNEPLive to underpin scientific assessments, including the GEO-6 regional assessments.

The AFRICAN GROUP said the regional GEO-6 assessments had identified critical policy issues that had also informed the region’s draft resolution on natural capital. He called on UNEP to better capture national and regional data on the UNEPLive platform.

The US called for completion of the global assessment in 2018 and linking to related data initiatives and assessments to enhance efficiency and improve its quality. He requested clarification on a reference to ongoing work to develop “a set of revised international integrated assessment guidelines and support the development of the data and information gap analysis report,” noting this will likely affect the GEO-6 process.

The EU reiterated its call for a strategic plan to ensure UNEPLive’s continued value. GABON highlighted the impact of deforestation in Central Africa and called for a long-term data collection strategy to monitor progress on global and national commitments. INDONESIA supported actions to extend UNEP’s partnerships with centers of excellence and the dissemination of best practices.

The UN DIVISION FOR OCEAN AFFAIRS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA outlined various intergovernmental activities following the conclusion of the first global integrated marine



assessment. The SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY Major Group welcomed the inclusion of diverse stakeholders, including citizen scientists and indigenous communities, and welcomed the incorporation of grey literature in the inaugural UNEA Science-Policy Forum.

Air Quality: Responding to the report (UNEP/EA.2/6), the AFRICAN GROUP referred to World Health Organization data, highlighting seven million deaths annually from air pollution. He called for dissemination of clean technologies, awareness raising and capacity development to reduce indoor and outdoor air pollution in Africa.

The US highlighted the role of government regulation in the “dramatic” reduction of emissions of hazardous air pollutants in his country, noting it is possible to decouple pollution from economic development. NIGERIA mentioned efforts to establish emission testing centers in his country.

Global Environment Monitoring System (GEMS)/Water Programme: The Secretariat noted the report (UNEP/EA.2/8) contains a revised 2016-17 PoW, budget and progress report. The AFRICAN GROUP welcomed GEMS/Water’s contribution to SDG 6 on water and sanitation, and stressed the importance of ownership at the national and regional levels.

Coordination across the UN system on environmental issues: Delegates discussed the ED’s report (UNEP/EA.2/10), noting the work of the EMG toward UN system coordination in the field of environment in relation to the 2030 Agenda.

The EU welcomed the launch of the UN Secretary-General’s report on the UN System-Wide Framework of Strategies for the Environment, adding that UNEA’s role as the global environmental authority could have been reflected more prominently. The US applauded the EMG’s soft approach to cooperation with UN agencies’ governing bodies.

The UN FORUM ON FORESTS highlighted its participation in the EMG and its work on forest-related indicators in the SDGs.

COW Chair Idunn Eidheim advised delegates that the provisional agenda, date and venue for UNEA-3 will be addressed after the UNEA cycle resolution (UNEP/EA.2/L.26) is agreed. In response to a question from the AFRICAN GROUP, she said that the Stakeholder Engagement Policy would be considered in the final plenary on Friday afternoon.

The COW plenary adjourned at mid-day to resume work in the drafting groups, and reconvened in the evening. The Drafting Group Co-Chairs said numerous informal groups were addressing difficult text, and another full day of negotiations would be needed. Chair Eidheim urged the delegates to speed up their deliberations.

UNEA-2 PLENARY

UNEA-2 President Edgar Gutiérrez Espeleta convened the plenary in the evening to establish a working party to amend the rules of procedure to permit a change in the timing of Bureau members’ election and commencement of service. He invited all regional groups to nominate two representatives to the working party. The plenary approved the proposal and nominated Konrad Paulsen Rivas, (Chile) and Jolyon Thompson, (UK) as Co-Chairs of the working party that will prepare a draft decision and recommend transitional arrangements.

DRAFTING GROUPS

DRAFTING GROUP 1: Role, functions and modalities for UNEP’s implementation of the S.A.M.O.A. Pathway as a means to facilitate achievement of the SDGs: This resolution (UNEP/EA.2/L.5) was agreed following the replacement of one preambular paragraph with a more general reference to UNEP’s institutional strengthening; and reformulation of a paragraph on strengthening UNEP’s regional presence to be in line with GC Decision 27/2. With deliberations on the UNEA

cycle still ongoing, delegates agreed to include a general request to the ED to report to UNEA on progress in the resolution’s implementation, without specifying at which session.

Combating desertification, land degradation and drought and promoting sustainable development of pastoralism and rangelands: Delegates completed a first reading of the merged resolution (UNEP/EA.2/CRP.5), with some delegates noting they would need time to consult on unfamiliar concepts, such as “sustainable development of pastoralism.” Several delegations placed reservations or called for deletion of: preambular text that highlighted the “centrality” of UNEA in the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement processes; a reference to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) land degradation neutrality target; and a recommendation to the UN General Assembly to designate 25 January as the international day of pastoralism. While delegates broadly welcomed paragraphs highlighting the vulnerability of pastoralist and dryland communities and threats to traditional livelihoods and resilience, they deemed many proposed actions to be beyond UNEP’s remit, including: undertaking environmental and socio-economic assessments of soil erosion, land degradation, and land tenure security and water security in rangelands; and strengthening of the science-policy interface for sustainable pastoralism. Delegates also placed a reservation on text calling on the UNEP ED to consider hosting the UNCCD Regional Coordination Unit for Africa.

Roles of UNEP and UNEA in delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda: Delegates began a second reading of this resolution (UNEP/EA.2/L.6) in the afternoon. They agreed to continue discussions on the preambular paragraphs on the basis of a new informal document developed by the EU following informal consultations of 24 May.

Delegates reached agreement on eight of the 14 proposed new preambular paragraphs, with text on involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the 2030 Agenda’s implementation; the importance of human and indigenous rights, and gender equality; and the importance of creating synergies between the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement remaining bracketed. New text introduced by an emerging economy on financial resources, capacity building and technology transfer, also remained bracketed. Delegates agreed to have the set of new preambular paragraphs, including those that remain outstanding, replace the resolution’s existing preamble.

DRAFTING GROUP 2: The group announced the appointment of Pedro Escosteguy Cardoso (Brazil) as the second Co-Chair, and a revised order of work to deal first with the “low-hanging fruit.”

Sustainable coral reefs management: Delegates tackled the bracketed text in the draft resolution (UNEP/EA.2/L.8) proposed by Australia, Indonesia, Norway and Palau, and were able to agree on most issues of concern. They recognized there are numerous other global and regional processes and initiatives attempting to address this issue, and focused most of the remaining discussion on the wording of references to other legal instruments and agreements, and the ability of the Secretariat to deliver assessments by the time of UNEA-3.

Oceans and seas: The Group also considered this draft proposed by Australia, the US and the EU (UNEP/EA.2/L.11). In text recalling a previous decision urging countries to implement relevant commitments to maintain biodiversity, one country suggested including “biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction.” Opposing this, many others stressed that it fell outside the mandate of UNEA, and pointed to ongoing negotiations under the General Assembly. Some questioned whether UNEP has the relevant capacity to enhance cooperation and coordination among international organizations dealing with marine issues.

Marine plastic debris and microplastics: In the evening, delegates considered this draft proposed by Australia, Chile, Indonesia and Norway (UNEP/EA.2/L.12). In their discussions on the title of the draft and how to subsequently refer to the

issue, delegates agreed to “marine plastic litter” rather than “marine plastic debris.” They also agreed that plastics in the marine environment “degrade extremely slowly” rather than “can persist up to a hundred years.”

DRAFTING GROUP 3: Relationship between UNEP and the MEAs for which it provides the Secretariat: The group resumed consideration of the draft resolution (UNEP/EA.2/L.20). Delegates supported the intention of the resolution to strengthen administrative cooperation between UNEP and the MEAs and noted that, in practice, some steps in that direction are already happening. Some developed country delegates expressed concern that the existing operative text was too prescriptive on administrative procedures and that paragraphs on programmatic cooperation dealt inappropriately with matters of substance rather than administration. Some delegates proposed formulations to encourage closer cooperation between UNEP and the MEAs, with details to be agreed subsequently by the relevant parties, rather than set out prescriptively in the current draft resolution. Informal discussions continued.

Protection of the environment in areas affected by armed conflict: In considering preambular text of the resolution (UNEP/EA.2/L.16), delegates generally agreed on language expressing deep concern about environmental damage inflicted by certain means and methods of warfare. They differed on whether the preamble should include a reference to human displacement, in addition to similar references in the operative text. Delegates also differed on the extent to which text should explicitly outline UNEP’s potential activities in relation to protecting the environment in areas affected by armed conflict. Informal discussions to resolve outstanding issues continued.

Enhancing the work of UNEP in facilitating cooperation, collaboration and synergies among biodiversity-related MEAs: In reviewing the draft resolution (UNEP/EA.2/L.19), different views were expressed over the scope of UNEP’s role in supporting the biodiversity-related MEAs, and the relevance of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 to each of the six MEAs.

SYMPOSIUM ON ENVIRONMENT AND DISPLACEMENT

SESSION 1: ROOT CAUSES OF DISPLACEMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT: Moderator Yusuf Hassan Abdi, Kenya, welcomed the speakers and participants.

Achim Steiner, UNEP ED, and Jan Eliasson, UN Deputy Secretary-General, made opening remarks. Steiner said the link between conflict and the environment is more prevalent than we acknowledge, and that there is no legal recognition for climate change refugees. Eliasson noted that disasters caused twice as many displacements in 2015 as conflicts and violence did. He highlighted relevant international processes addressing displacement: the Nansen Initiative, the Sendai Framework on DRR, and the High-Level Meeting on Large Movements of Migrants and Refugees taking place in New York on 19 September 2016.

Anote Tong, former President of Kiribati, called for “compassionate solutions” and a change in attitude to consider the impacts of national economic policies that contribute to climate change. He called on leaders to join him in seeking a moratorium on the opening of new coal mines as a concrete step towards decarbonization, stressing that sea-level rise means that Kiribati will be underwater by the end of the century.

Robert Glasser, Head, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, emphasized the huge costs of displacement and the need to focus on prevention. He said risk can be represented in dollar figures, which facilitates communication with finance ministries.

Shamshad Akhtar, Executive Secretary, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) highlighted that 16.7 million people in the region were displaced by disasters, 80% of the global total. She noted a rise in slow-onset disasters such as increased soil salinity, and that ESCAP

is increasingly working on adaptation, including, for example, collaborating with Iran to set up an Asia-Pacific disaster risk management center.

Participants pointed to various root causes of displacement, including deforestation linked to charcoal production and export in Somalia, and salinity intrusion that is affecting farming and animal husbandry in the Mekong Delta. They called for focusing on the interconnectivity between climate change, conflict, displacement and development.

SESSION 2: IMPLICATIONS OF DISPLACEMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT: Nassim Majidi, Sciences Po, moderated the session.

William Lacy Swing, Director-General, International Organization for Migration, said research shows that human mobility is often not considered when addressing environment and health challenges. He highlighted three main areas of policy action: minimizing forced migration through better DRR planning; using migration as an adaptation strategy; and doing more to bridge policy silos in moving from commitments to action.

Joan Carling, Secretary-General, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact, highlighted the displacement of indigenous communities due to factors including large-scale development, conservation projects, and climate change. She advocated respect for human rights and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities in finding sustainable solutions.

Roula Majdalani, UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, said conflict-related migrations are often exacerbated by environmental factors. She called for integrated solutions that factor in political dynamics in humanitarian responses, working closely with local host communities and learning from past experience.

Dan Magraw, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, recommended contingency planning and due diligence, especially in contracting services such as waste disposal around refugee camps. He described the work of the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination team as an example of flexible and rapid emergency responses.

Anders Oskal, Director, International Center for Reindeer Husbandry, described the impact of climate change in the Arctic region, and called for governance structures to work with traditional land management systems.

Panelists highlighted the need to: build institutional capacities in recipient countries; protect the rights of host communities; ensure compensation for communities displaced by climate change; and adopt flexible policy measures, such as temporary protected status and insurance schemes for migrants.

IN THE BREEZEWAYS

While the UN Environment Management Group launched the UN System-Wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment at lunchtime, some delegates wondered aloud if UNEA resolutions would promote or hinder work being carried out by UN Secretariats in New York and elsewhere. Of particular note was a resolution on oceans and seas, which has direct links to processes under the UN General Assembly, such as the Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, and ongoing negotiations on biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. Although they appreciated UNEA’s interest in the issues, some delegates suggested that the Assembly may be overstepping its mandate in dealing with marine issues.

Expressing concern at these “turf wars,” they suggested that the discussions are tantamount to creating parallel processes dealing with oceans and seas.

Meanwhile, on the sidelines, some stakeholders expressed frustration at having to fight among themselves for the five seats allocated to them in each drafting group. “It’s the world parliament on environment, without the world,” he quipped.



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