



## FIRST MEETING OF THE OPEN-ENDED COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES (OECPR) TO UNEP HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 24 MARCH 2014

Delegates at the OECPR to UNEP convened in the morning for the opening of the meeting, consideration of organizational matters, and a report by UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner. In the afternoon, delegates considered progress on the implementation of the Programme of Work (POW) for 2012-2013, as well as POW and budgets for 2014-2015 and 2016-2017. Draft decisions from governments were also introduced.

### OPENING OF THE MEETING

Amb. Julia Pataki (Romania), Acting Chair of the CPR, welcomed incoming CPR members and thanked the outgoing members. Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director, expressed appreciation for stakeholders' interest in contributing to the new UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) of UNEP.

**ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS:** Delegates adopted the minutes of the 125th meeting of the CPR (UNEP/CPR/126/2), the provisional agenda (UNEP/CPR/126/1) and the programme for the week (UNEP/CPR/126/1/Add.1/Rev.1) with minor amendments.

Amb. Sunu Soemarno (Indonesia) was elected by acclamation as CPR Chair, replacing Amb. Chan-Woo Kim (Republic of Korea).

**REPORT BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:** Steiner presented highlights from his report (UNEP/CPR/126/3), calling this week's OECPR a "special moment" in the evolution of UNEP, and thanking delegates for their support. He said that UNEP is actively engaged in providing input on targets and indicators for the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals (SDGs). Steiner noted improved efficiencies and increased productivity across UNEP despite reduced staff, and said that UNEP is continuing to improve its "value-for-money" proposition. He concluded with the announcement of a number of changes to senior management and noted that four of the five divisions of UNEP are now led by women.

**COUNTRY INTERVENTIONS:** Delegates congratulated Steiner on his reappointment. KENYA urged member states to contribute resources for: structural economic transformation and inclusive growth; science, technology and innovation; people-centered development; natural resources management and use; peace and security; and finance and partnerships.

The EU said an outcome-oriented high-level segment at the UNEA in June 2014 could provide input to the SDGs process and make progress on addressing illegal trade in wildlife and timber. He stressed that the current revision of UNEP's stakeholder policy should not fall below current practice.

Thailand, for G-77/CHINA, proposed debating adoption of rules of procedure covering participation of non-resident permanent representatives and stakeholders in UNEA.

On the preparation of draft decisions, SWITZERLAND stressed that they should be essential, streamlined, focused and results-oriented with a clear link to the budget. Supported by NORWAY, he added that decisions should be clustered. With the US, he called for clarity on the forthcoming Global Environment Outlook (GEO 6) process.

NORWAY called for further dialogue towards a more "streamlined and lean" meeting that will have strategic focus, with shorter documents containing better analyses and budget implications of proposed actions.

JAPAN called for an end to the "meaningless enlargement of the organization," and with the US, recommended using limited financial resources effectively.

Zimbabwe, for the AFRICAN GROUP, welcomed the upcoming global adaptation gap report to be released by UNEP during this year. On strengthening regional presence, he noted that only one out of five subregional offices in Africa had been created.

The US expressed "frustration, disappointment and concern" with organizational aspects of the meeting. Looking ahead she called for better documentation to be prepared for UNEA and enhanced member state involvement.

Colombia, for the GROUP OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (GRULAC), highlighted priorities including: focusing on the appropriate management of chemicals and wastes; efficient and transparent use of resources by UNEP; and supporting sustainable development in Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Stressing the importance of involving all stakeholders in achieving agreement on sustainable development, URUGUAY called for leadership to ensure that UNEP has the necessary budget to deal with the challenges ahead.

NEW ZEALAND supported UNEP's involvement in the SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda discussions to ensure the environmental pillar is embedded in the outcomes, and urged that environmental issues in the Pacific region be prioritized.

CUBA, with BOLIVIA, underlined the importance of focusing on the commitments agreed at Rio+20, and urged the OECPR to stick to the agreed programme and financial commitments.

In closing, Steiner noted, *inter alia*, that many are looking to UNEA for principles and concepts that may be implemented in partnership with others, for example on green economy and illegal trade on wildlife.



**DRAFT DECISIONS:** CPR Chair Amb. Sunu Soemarno invited governments to introduce their draft decisions. UGANDA introduced draft text on ecosystem adaptation, noting in particular the vulnerability of developing countries to climate change and calling for support for the development and implementation of adaptation programmes.

SWITZERLAND introduced proposed additions to the omnibus decision on chemicals and waste tabled by the US, calling for greater attention to lead and cadmium, mercury, the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), and enhanced international cooperation. The US welcomed an integrated approach to financing chemicals and waste issues, and proposed the adoption of terms of reference for a special programme to support implementation of related conventions.

#### **HALF-YEARLY REVIEW OF THE PROGRESS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POW, INCLUDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GOVERNING BODY DECISIONS:**

CPR Vice-Chair, Amb. Bart Ouvry (Belgium), invited the Secretariat to introduce the agenda item on the half-yearly review of the implementation of the POW and budget for 2012-2013 (UNEP/EA.1/INF/5 and UNEP/EA.1/INF/6). Presenting the programme performance report, J. Christophe Bouvier, UNEP, noted 64 percent of expected accomplishments had been met, while 85 percent of indicator targets were achieved or surpassed. He highlighted the reduction of core UNEP staff, consolidation of projects, and increased multi-stakeholder partnerships as key achievements. He explained that performance reports are increasingly focusing on providing assessments of change over longer timeframes, and highlighted success in phasing out leaded petrol globally between 2002 and 2014 as one example.

Bouvier outlined steps towards: enhancing results-based management; improving the quality of monitoring and reporting; investing in new systems and partnerships; increasing sensitivity towards social and economic safeguards; and sharpening communications and knowledge management strategies, including the use of the UNEP-Live platform.

Sheila Aggarwal-Khan, UNEP, discussed key achievements under the six UNEP sub-programmes during the past biennium, highlighting, *inter alia*: integration of ecosystem-based adaptation within national planning processes; reports on bridging science and policy on resource efficiency; and mainstreaming environmental management in humanitarian and peacekeeping and post-crisis recovery. She reported that global multi-stakeholder partnerships had been established on finance, food and agriculture, buildings, tourism and insurance, which represent US\$8 trillion in assets.

BRAZIL, supported by NORWAY, expressed concern about the rate of under-achievement of the POW, and the doubling of earmarked contributions to over US\$300 million, compared with US\$150 million in contributions to the Environment Fund, saying earmarked contributions may not be in line with UNEA priorities. NORWAY also welcomed the move towards reporting on the longer-term impacts and relevance of UNEP's work, asking to what extent this is reflected in the new results framework.

Greece, for the EU, welcomed UNEP's "value for money" approach and called for further efficiency gains.

Ibrahim Thiaw, UNEP, noted implementation constraints, including recruitment and procurement delays, late funding, and internal coordination issues in participating countries. He assured delegates that all activities would be completed in the next biennium.

#### **CONSIDERATION OF PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POW AND BUDGET 2014-2015 and 2016-2017:**

Bouvier explained that drafting of the POW has become more complex given the implications of

Rio+20 for UNEP funding. He noted that UNEP must now deal with two channels of approval: the CPR, which proposes the POW, and the UN General Assembly, which, in accordance with Rio+20 outcomes, allocates more of its regular budget to UNEP. Bouvier said that beginning this year, UNEP's balance sheet would carry a larger percentage of UN regular budget funds, and thus any difference between the CPR's POW and the amount disbursed by the UN General Assembly would necessitate revision of the POW. Aggarwal-Khan added that the Secretariat had tried to keep the 2014-2015 and 2016-2017 POWs in line with the medium-term strategy and its focus on partnerships.

The US expressed concern that the 2016-2017 framework was moving funds away from activities central to the POW. BRAZIL said fundraising for the Environment Fund should correspond with the level of ambition set out in the POW. JAPAN suggested that the budget should be based on zero nominal growth.

Kenya, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, stressed that core activities should be financed through regular budget resources. CUBA underlined the importance of focusing on the analysis of the POW rather than the budget itself. On management of ecosystems in the POW for 2016-2017, he called for including soil degradation.

Bouvier requested guidance on striking a balance between proposing a budget that is both realistic and compatible with the expectations created by Rio+20. In response to the Secretariat's proposal to establish minimum thresholds for establishing trust funds, BRAZIL cautioned against thresholds that could discourage donors from making contributions.

On staffing, Bouvier reported that UNEP currently employs 828 staff, with an additional 313 staff attached to MEA Secretariats and the Multilateral Fund. He said there has been a progressive decrease in the proportion of core staff covered under the Environment Fund to free up resources for direct programme implementation. He identified gender parity at senior management level as a persistent challenge, noting that on average less than 30% of candidates globally are women. He highlighted initiatives to remedy the situation, including partnerships with the UN Staff College and UN Volunteers aimed at enhancing gender mainstreaming and creating effective partnerships with youth.

#### **IN THE CORRIDORS**

Despite a heavy agenda, the mood was upbeat as delegates made their way into plenary on Monday morning. With the door now opened to non-accredited states, 293 participants representing 97 countries had registered for the meeting. Half the delegates had jetted in from capitals – a much expanded group from the 50 or so Nairobi-based permanent representatives at previous CPR meetings.

According to insiders, issues that will keep the OECPR busy this week are the budget and Programme of Work, amending the rules and procedures, and the draft stakeholder engagement policy.

The budget received quite a bit of airtime with some delegates noting that while funding to UNEP from the UN's regular budget has increased, there is a bigger challenge of defining UNEP's role vis-à-vis other actors in sustainable development policymaking. Views on stakeholder engagement remain divided between some developed countries that favor more flexible arrangements and developing countries who call for maintaining the integrity of the intergovernmental process. "There is a real danger of regressive action if countries decide to limit participation to organizations with a specific interest in the environment," remarked one civil society veteran. One way or another the week promises to be full of many firsts for the emerging UNEA.