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ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT GROUP



Mid-Term Technical Segment of the 27th Senior Officials Meeting

EMG SOM27/mid-term/04x

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Distribution: EMG members

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from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Geneva time.

Proposal by UNEP

A UN system Contribution by the EMG to the Stockholm+50 Conference

Background

In June 2022, the international community will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. The 1972 conference marked a historic turning point by forging global commitments on the environment and establishing the foundations of today's international environmental governance system. It led to the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) later that year and the birth of many multilateral environmental agreements in the years that followed.

Most importantly, the Conference launched a new era of global cooperation on reconciling economic and social development with environmental management. It focused the world's attention on achieving sustainable development by engaging the environmental and socioeconomic sectors, including those of UN bodies and institutions. The Stockholm Conference tasked UNEP, amongst other institutions, with promoting coordination on the environment at all levels, including within the UN system itself. The Environment Management Group (EMG) and, more recently, the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) have played a key role in raising awareness, promoting programmatic collaboration, supporting funding and advancing the implementation of environmental activities through system-wide engagement of UN entities and their governing bodies.

In the past fifty years, the unprecedented environmental changes and their adverse impacts on socio-economic, humanitarian, and political development have been increasingly acknowledged by UN entities and their governing bodies, and environmental action has been integrated into an increasing number of activities, programmes and initiatives, linked with a broad range of areas. Many UN institutions today are involved in the acquisition of environmental data and information through research, modelling, monitoring and observations, as well as in efforts to ensure a responsive and cohesive approach to meeting country

needs in the face of environmental challenges through capacity-building, technology support, the provision of financial support, the development of partnerships and networks.

More than 500 international treaties and other agreements (both global and regional), today, are related to the environment and many of these involve UN system agencies in their governance, funding or implementation.

As such, the UN system as a whole, as represented by its programmes, agencies, secretariats and coordinating mechanisms, has collectively amassed a unique combination of institutional and human capacities for addressing environmental change.

To commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Stockholm Conference and its outcome documents, on 24 May 2021 UNGA adopted the resolution A/75/L.88. The Resolution called for convening an international meeting called “Stockholm+50: a healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity” and requested UNEP to serve as the focal point for providing support to the organization of the meeting, with appropriate support of the UN Secretariat and other relevant UN entities.¹

Stockholm+50 will be an opportunity to highlight the environmental dimension of sustainable development at the highest level and accelerate the implementation of international commitments in the context of the Decade of Action, the Sustainable Development Goals as well as other UN initiatives, such as the Decades for Ocean Science and Ecosystem Restoration, including in the context of a sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Conference will also provide a platform to: take stock of the system-wide efforts undertaken by the United Nations in addressing the environmental agenda since the 1972 Stockholm Conference; reflect on related achievements and results; and develop future perspectives for coherent, coordinated action in tackling the three planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

In this context, there is opportunity for the EMG to engage in a system-wide contribution to the Stockholm+50 conference; one which reflects the level of engagement of UN entities in the global environmental agenda and can spur increased mobilization and collaboration for stronger collective results. Such engagement could, in particular, provide the following results:

1. A system-wide picture of the role of the UN system in addressing the environmental agenda since the Stockholm Conference, including successes and challenges;
2. A system-wide picture of how the environmental agenda has been integrated into, and implemented within, the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and other related initiatives and frameworks; and
3. A system-wide perspective on the UN-system contribution to accelerating actions that address the three planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

Activities and scope

¹ The UNGA resolution, moreover, invited UNEA at its fifth resumed session in 2022, including through its intersessional subsidiary CPR and other UN bodies that are conducting relevant intergovernmental processes, to provide input leading up to Stockholm+50 as appropriate (OP7) and decided to consider the modalities of the international meeting before the end of the 75th session of GA with the support of UNEP (OP8).

It is proposed that the EMG considers the timely creation of a task team that would steer the formulation of the EMG's contribution to the Stockholm+50 Conference. The task team could operate from July 2021 until June 2022. Its suggested activities could include:

1. The preparation of a survey to collect inputs from UN agencies on the above-mentioned contributions of the UN system;
2. The organization of a series of nexus dialogues on the UN system's contribution to addressing the three planetary crises in the next 50 years;
3. The organization of executive-level interviews with heads of UN agencies to solicit their high-level, strategic perspectives on addressing the three planetary crises;
4. The preparation and submission of an EMG report to the Conference;
5. The facilitation of the engagement of EMG members in supporting roundtables and other Conference events as contributors or speakers; and
6. The provision of outreach and communication support in the lead up and during Stockholm+50 and related initiatives.