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**Global Major Groups & Stakeholders Meeting Prior to
the Open Ended Meeting of the Committee of Permanent
Representatives**
Nairobi, 23 March 2014

**Report of the Global Major Groups & Stakeholders Meeting
Prior to the Open Ended Meeting of the Committee of
Permanent Representatives****I. Opening of the meeting**

1. The first Global Major Groups & Stakeholders Meeting Prior to the Open Ended Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives was held at the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme in Nairobi on Sunday, 23 March 2014, one day prior to the first open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
2. The meeting was opened at 10.15 a.m. by Ms. Norine Kennedy, Co-Chair, Major Groups Facilitating Committee of UNEP. Welcoming participants, she thanked UNEP for the opportunity given to major groups and stakeholders to participate in the open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and to provide comments on the new UNEP stakeholder engagement policy and other issues under consideration by the Committee. Major groups, regional representatives and stakeholders had agreed on core principles to improve stakeholder involvement in UNEP in the belief that good governance required transparency and giving stakeholders the opportunity to inform the work of UNEP at every stage. The history of UNEP had demonstrated that openness and interaction with stakeholders strengthened its intergovernmental nature.
3. Opening remarks were made by Ms. Julia Pataki, Acting Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives; Mr. Alexander Juras, Chief, Major Groups and Stakeholders Unit, UNEP; and Ms. Maggie Comstock, regional representative for North America.
4. In her opening remarks, Ms. Pataki said that dialogue with major groups and stakeholders was essential to the work of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and to the development of environmental policies, and she stressed that the Committee looked forward to hearing the views of major groups and stakeholders on the draft stakeholder engagement policy. She extended a warm welcome to participants and wished them fruitful deliberations.
5. Mr. Juras, speaking on behalf of the Executive Director of UNEP, Mr. Achim Steiner, welcomed participants to UNEP headquarters. He said that the current meeting would help major groups and stakeholders to prepare for the open-ended meeting of the Committee, during which they would be able to provide input on the draft stakeholder engagement policy as well as other important substantive issues, including the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals, the state of the environment, chemicals and waste and the illegal trade in timber and wildlife. He expressed the hope that input from major groups on those and other issues would enhance the outcomes of the open-ended meeting.

6. In her remarks, Ms. Comstock said that regional representatives, who were elected each year as a result of stakeholder consultations within each region, added a regional dimension to the UNEP stakeholder consultations. Together with the major groups and stakeholders they offered a wide range of thematic competencies, substantive contributions and regional diversity to UNEP and the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

II. Open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives: its role in a strengthened UNEP and opportunities for stakeholder engagement

7. A presentation was made by Mr. Jiri Hlavacek, Secretary of Governing Bodies, followed by a question and answer session.

8. In his presentation, Mr. Hlavacek stressed the importance of the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly not only in setting the Assembly's tone and functioning as the governing body of a UNEP strengthened and upgraded to serve as the leading global authority for the environment but also in furthering the integration of the environmental dimension into the negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda under way at the global, regional and national levels, with a particular emphasis on ensuring that sustainable consumption and production were included among the sustainable development goals. Its success in both those regards would, he said, depend on the outcome of the discussions, especially during the high-level ministerial segment, which, unlike the Global Ministerial Environment Forum, would have decision-making powers, enabling the participating environment ministers to send a powerful message to the world. That, in turn, would depend on the quality and relevance of the draft decisions prepared by the Committee of Permanent Representatives, which would meet once every two years to act as a preparatory committee for sessions of the Assembly.

9. Outlining the mandate of the Committee, as set out in paragraph 9 of Governing Council decision 27/2 of 22 February 2013, he said that the key draft decisions for the first session would focus on, among other things, the Assembly's rules of procedure, linked to the UNEP stakeholder engagement policy; the programme of work and budget; a United Nations system-wide strategy on the environment; capacity-building to enforce the environmental rule of law; the science-policy interface; the sound management of chemicals and waste; water guidelines; the promotion of air quality; and ecosystem adaptation.

10. The Committee would benefit from the active participation of all 193 member States of UNEP, of which 34 of the 97 that had registered to date were not resident in Nairobi. Bearing in mind that the work of the Committee remained an intergovernmental process and that Governments were responsible for the outcome, the major groups and stakeholders would have the opportunity to interact with member States, and they could participate most effectively in the work of setting the agenda through sharing their views on the main environmental challenges, the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals.

11. In the ensuing discussion, one representative expressed concern that the heavy schedule of high-level meetings on climate change and the post-2015 development agenda taking place before and after the first session of the Environment Assembly might deter environment ministers from coming to Nairobi in June and that the Assembly's second session, in 2016, would happen too late to influence the negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda. Collaboration between UNEP and stakeholders to formulate a strategy to prevent that from happening should therefore be considered a priority.

12. One representative, calling for vigilance to ensure that the major groups and stakeholders had unrestricted access to Committee members, requested clarification on the Environment Assembly's relationships with the Economic and Social Council and the World Trade Organization (WTO), including whether it could override the Council in response to the final report to be submitted to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and challenge WTO on the issue of illegal trade in wildlife and timber. Another representative asked whether the Environment Assembly could introduce punitive measures against States complicit in that trade and what it could do to promote the environmental rule of law in countries where it was not taken seriously. Another asked whether UNEP had discussed that subject in the context of assisting indigenous peoples in poor countries in the struggle to defend their lands and resources against private-sector corporate interests. One representative asked whether contact groups could be established to work on key items at the open-ended meeting of the Committee, as the major groups and stakeholders might wish to take part in them and in any further discussions during the intersessional period.

13. Mr. Hlavacek, responding to the various questions, said that UNEP was well aware of the busy schedule of high-level meetings in June and July and that it was important to improve coordination with the other processes, and he expressed the hope that environment ministers would respond positively to the Executive Director's letter urging them to prioritize the Assembly's first session so as to allow the ministerial segment to contribute. Meanwhile, member States could consider holding the second session of the Environment Assembly in 2015, which would also bring it into line with United Nations programming and budgeting cycles.

14. On the interlinkages with the Economic and Social Council, he said that the Environment Assembly did indeed have to report to the General Assembly through the Council, but member States would have a chance during the thematic debate at the open-ended Committee meeting to discuss ways of streamlining the relationship and improving cooperation within the United Nations system, including with WTO on the issue of illegal trade in wildlife and timber. Regarding the latter, which was one of the two themes of the ministerial segment, more legally binding measures could be included in the relevant Assembly decision as well as in the session's outcome document, and the secretariat would be ready to assist in an advisory capacity and in organizing discussions on the issue.

15. On the matter of whether UNEP had discussed the concerns of indigenous peoples in the light of the environmental rule of law, he said that those concerns had been addressed in the organization's policy guidance on indigenous peoples, endorsed the previous year,¹ and that ways in which it could reflect them in its activities with other United Nations entities would be considered at two side events during the first session of the Assembly.

16. Regarding the establishment of contact groups at the open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, he said that it was a matter for the Committee to decide upon, although the Bureau was reluctant to recommend it as the 30 countries with single-member delegations would be excluded from taking part; if it did prove necessary to set up groups to work on items such as the programme of work and budget, however, the secretariat would provide all the support required. The participation of major groups and stakeholders in the groups – as well as in any subsequent intersessional work through to the last Committee meeting before the first session of the Assembly – was also a matter for decision by the member States.

III. Stakeholder engagement with UNEP

A. Draft policy on stakeholder engagement

17. Ms. Fatou Ndoeye, Major Groups and Stakeholders Unit, presented a draft policy on stakeholder engagement with UNEP, which had been prepared pursuant to UNEP Governing Council decision 27/2 on the implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), entitled "The future we want". The draft policy had been developed in consultation with member States with stakeholder input, including through surveys and expert meetings held before the twenty-seventh session of the Governing Council of UNEP. Work conducted since December 2013 included a review and comparison of stakeholder engagement practices and rules of multilateral organizations within the United Nations system and an examination of how UNEP might use them; consultations with stakeholders at the regional level; and a review by the Committee of Permanent Representatives of various draft versions of the policy at three meetings held since January 2014.

18. The mandate to develop a stakeholder engagement policy focused on three issues, namely, a process for the accreditation and participation of stakeholders; mechanisms and rules for expert stakeholder input and advice; and working methods for stakeholder participation in sessions of the United Nations Environment Assembly and its subsidiary organs. Once adopted, the policy was expected to result in an amendment to rule 69 of the UNEP rules of procedure, which enabled international organizations focused on the environment to participate in meetings of the governing bodies of UNEP and left to the discretion of the chairs of those meetings the possibility for them to make oral statements. New features of the draft policy included opening UNEP accreditation to national organizations, which was expected to increase stakeholder ownership and interest in UNEP processes; enabling organizations to propose agenda items; and the possible establishment of a self-organizing stakeholder mechanism to facilitate communication between stakeholders and UNEP, the details of which would be provided in a handbook to be developed by the secretariat in consultation with the major groups and stakeholders.

¹ Available from: http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Portals/24105/UNEP_IPPG_Guidance.pdf.

19. She highlighted a number of issues that remained unresolved owing to a divergence of views among member States, including whether only organizations legally registered at the national level should be accredited to UNEP; whether accreditation should be limited to organizations working on the environment or extended to include those working in the wider field of sustainable development; and whether organizations accredited by multilateral environmental agreements and at Rio+20 should be automatically accredited to UNEP. Also unresolved were whether stakeholders should be able to participate in all meetings or just public meetings and whether categories of meetings where stakeholders could engage should be defined; whether stakeholders should be allowed to submit draft decisions; whether meetings between stakeholders and the bureaux of UNEP governing bodies should be held prior to regular meetings of those bodies; what kinds of documents and information would be shared with stakeholders, which was an issue that an access-to-information policy to be developed by the Executive Director would also address; whether there should be additional categories of stakeholders, for instance those listed in paragraph 43 of “The future we want”; and whether environmental non-governmental organizations should be accorded special status given the nature of UNEP work.

20. At its forthcoming meeting, the open-ended Committee was expected to discuss the rules of procedure of UNEP and to review a proposal by the Group of 77 and China regarding stakeholder accreditation and participation rules. Major groups and stakeholders were therefore encouraged to engage with the Committee during the meeting on both the draft stakeholder engagement policy and the proposed changes to the rules of procedure.

B. Open dialogue on stakeholder engagement: common principles and next steps by major groups and stakeholders

21. In the ensuing discussion, many representatives welcomed the draft policy as a positive step forward for stakeholder participation and offered comments on how to improve or clarify it. One representative said that it tended to mix the rules of procedure with modalities determining how meetings should operate and that the latter should be the prerogative of the secretariat. He cautioned against attempts to define categories of meetings and suggested that a reference be made instead to the progressive rules contained in General Assembly resolution 67/290, on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

22. One representative said that the UNEP stakeholder engagement practices were relatively conservative compared to those followed by the United Nations in New York or Geneva and that the reform process should be revolutionary if UNEP was to engage effectively at the global level. He also said that the draft policy no longer made reference to the Commission on Sustainable Development or to the High-level Political Forum into which the Commission had evolved.

23. One representative expressed regret that issues such as participation in agenda setting or stakeholder engagement principles had been removed from the draft policy. She welcomed a shift in the policy’s focus from environment to sustainable development, suggesting that this would be beneficial to both UNEP and stakeholders and make it easier for them to jointly address issues of importance to them.

24. One representative said that the policy should follow applicable United Nations rules on the participation of civil society, including those contained in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and applicable under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as the practices of the Policy Board of the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD) and the Participants Committee of the World Bank’s Forest Carbon Partnership Facility.

25. On the issue of new categories of stakeholders, one representative said that the list of stakeholders referred to in paragraph 43 of “The future we want” was not comprehensive and that creating new groups might lead to future problems. Another said that there was a need to conduct a survey of major groups before creating any new categories and said that it was essential to integrate sustainable development issues into the activities of organizations working on the environment. One representative noted that the non-governmental organizations major group was the largest existing stakeholder group.

26. One representative said that it had been a mistake not to create a major group for environmental non-governmental organizations at the outset, given the nature of UNEP work. Another, noting that the draft policy contained inconsistent definitions of environmental non-governmental organizations, said that it was difficult to define such organizations since many of them worked on the environmental dimension of sustainable development. He urged that reference be made to the “dimensions” rather

than the “pillars” of sustainable development in the draft policy. Another suggested making reference to “environmentally sustainable development”.

27. Regarding accreditation, one representative said that the draft policy should require stakeholder organizations to be not only non-profit but also non-governmental entities in order to be accredited to UNEP. He expressed support for requiring organizations to be legally registered and enabling the participation of stakeholders at all meetings unless otherwise decided. Another representative said that limiting stakeholders to non-governmental organizations would limit the participation of local and subnational authorities. One representative said that no Government could overrule the accreditation rules of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

28. One representative asked whether rule 69 of the rules of procedure implied that national-level non-governmental organizations, which tended to be smaller and lack a voice, could not participate as observers during UNEP meetings. Another asked whether the rule that enabled Economic and Social Council accredited organizations to obtain immediate UNEP accreditation was reciprocal.

29. Issues raised by individual representatives included the need to address regional-level arrangements in the proposed implementation handbook; the importance of considering the issue of funding for stakeholder engagement; and the need for major groups and stakeholders to coordinate with each other beyond the framework of UNEP.

30. One representative sought clarification on the proposed stakeholder mechanism, while another asked whether accredited organizations could access UNEP project funding. Another said that young people and children were not receiving enough attention or Government support even though they made up the largest part of the global population and were the future handlers of the Earth’s natural resources. He suggested the development of a mechanism through which accredited organizations could create links with young people in schools and universities.

31. Regarding process, one representative said that there was a need to discuss unresolved questions related to the policy and to establish a clear and common position prior to engaging with Governments at the open-ended meeting of the Committee. Another sought clarification regarding the organization of work of the upcoming open-ended meeting and whether separate decisions on the rules of procedure and the draft stakeholder engagement policy would be adopted. One representative suggested that participants in the current meeting agree to request the establishment of a working group during the open-ended Committee meeting to discuss the draft stakeholder engagement policy.

32. Responding to comments, Mr. Juras expressed appreciation for the reminder that UNEP should not fall behind the progressive mechanisms applied in the United Nations, especially given that “The future we want” had called on UNEP to draw on best practices from relevant multilateral institutions. He suggested that UNEP accreditation practices were actually superior to those of the Economic and Social Council, as accreditation to the Economic and Social Council could take up to six years. Ms. Ndoye added that while the UNEP accreditation process built on the Economic and Social Council criteria, the review and approval process at UNEP was managed by the secretariat, whereas at the Economic and Social Council it was in the hands of a committee. One representative said that dealings with the Economic and Social Council were often cumbersome and he clarified that his earlier suggestion had been that paragraph 49 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 (on the consultative relationship between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations), which did not differentiate between different types of meetings, should represent a minimum standard for UNEP.

33. He said that the proposal to create a new major group for environmental non-governmental organizations had come from civil society and sought to address a current imbalance among major groups. In practice, any organization that did not fit into one of the other major groups fell into the non-governmental organizations category and even though 80 per cent of major groups fell into that category they did not have a stronger voice than groups with considerably fewer members. Regarding apparent inconsistencies in the definition of environmental non-governmental organizations, he said that a reference in the draft policy to a proven track record in environmental issues did not define environmental non-governmental organizations but applied to all organizations.

34. On the stakeholder mechanism, he said that stakeholders should organize themselves and find ways to improve regional-level mechanisms. This could be addressed in the implementation handbook to be developed by the secretariat in consultation with the major groups and stakeholders. Regarding rule 69, even though it had not been amended UNEP participation practices had evolved considerably since its adoption, as demonstrated at the current meeting.

35. With respect to funding, the draft policy stated that a portion of the UNEP budget should be earmarked to support stakeholder participation. The provision was relatively small, however, because some member States were of the view that priority should be accorded to assisting developing

countries given the intergovernmental nature of UNEP. He suggested that stakeholders engage with member States on this issue in the runup to the first session of the Environment Assembly.

36. Concerning the proposal to limit stakeholder participation to public meetings, Ms. Ndoye explained that some member States wanted to maintain the right to convene at very short notice meetings that might or might not be closed.

37. She said that the secretariat had sought to examine best practices for stakeholder engagement in relation to agenda-setting, decision-making and implementation, which were the three issues around which the policy had initially been structured. The secretariat had planned to examine safeguards on the participation of civil society and indigenous peoples in implementation processes such as for the UN-REDD programme, but implementation aspects had since been removed from the draft policy. UNEP was, however, working on its own environmental, social and economic safeguards.

38. Noting that the reference in the policy to the Commission on Sustainable Development had been deleted at the request of some member States, she suggested that it was the collective responsibility of stakeholders and member States to develop innovative approaches not currently reflected in the policy to ensure more active stakeholder engagement with UNEP. In that context, the major groups could engage with the Committee to examine whether a provision similar to that set out in paragraph 15 of General Assembly resolution 67/290, which provided for stakeholder participation in all official meetings of the high-level forum on sustainable development, might be useful.

39. On proposals to request the Committee to establish a working group, Mr. Juras said that some member States would be represented in the open-ended meeting by a single representative and might therefore oppose the convening of parallel sessions. In order to prepare for that eventuality, the major groups might want to draft a statement containing their key messages for the consideration of member States. Ms. Ndoye said that a working group or process might be established to deal with stakeholder participation during the intersessional period and major groups could seek opportunities to participate therein. As for the expected outcomes regarding the rules of procedure and the stakeholder engagement policy, it was envisioned that two draft decisions might be approved for the consideration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its first session and that, if so, the draft decision on the rules of procedure would make reference to the policy.

IV. Key issues on the agenda of the open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

40. The session was facilitated by Mr. Marcos Orellana, co-chair of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee. Presentations were made by Ms. Maryam Niamir-Fuller, Special Advisor to the Executive Director on the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals, and Mr. Arnold Kreilhuber, Legal Officer, Division of Environmental Law and Conventions, UNEP.

A. Sustainable development goals and the post-2015 framework

41. Ms. Niamir-Fuller gave a presentation on developments relating to the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals of the General Assembly and the ways in which UNEP was supporting the Group's work. She said that the Open Working Group was driven by States Members of the United Nations and was composed of their representatives. As at February 2014, the Group had held eight meetings, in New York, focusing on the development of a set of sustainable development goals, following the agreement in that regard reached at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). Environmental issues had been dealt with at some of the meetings, refocusing the attention of the Group on planetary boundaries, and there had been a strong focus by most Member States on the post-2015 development agenda as a sustainable agenda and on the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of that agenda. Different definitions had emerged, however, of what constituted integration. The ninth meeting of the Group had taken place from 3 to 5 March 2014 and four more meetings were planned with the aim of elaborating the "architecture" of the sustainable development goals, including the number of goals and their targets and indicators.

42. She explained that several key issues remained unresolved. The first was the specific number of focus areas, specifically whether there should be 19, as proposed by the co-chairs of the Open Working Group, and whether the top 10 or 12 should be prioritized. Various views had been expressed on the second unresolved issue: how to address the rule of law, governance, and peace and security. Many Member States saw security as the prime concern of the United Nations Security Council and wanted to separate the objectives of the sustainable development goals from those of the Security Council. The third issue was that of the universality of the sustainable development goals. Some Member States favoured the application of common but differentiated responsibilities, whereas others said that

although the concept was relevant to areas like the environment it was not relevant in areas such as human rights. The final issue that remained unresolved and required further consideration was the means of implementation, including aspects such as finance, technology transfer, capacity-building, access to information, partnerships and institutional reforms.

43. Turning to the contribution of UNEP to the meetings of the Open Working Group, she said that UNEP had been working as part of an inter-agency technical support team and had co-led discussions on five of the focus areas while contributing to discussions on other focus areas. UNEP had recently been working with other United Nations entities on the identification of goals and targets to match the 19 potential focus areas. She urged participants to get involved in a series of e-consultations on the focus areas that had been launched on the UNEP website. She suggested that although the focus areas were comprehensive, their structure did not lend itself to an integrated viewpoint; the achievements of one focus area could contradict those of another, so more work was needed to enhance coherence. Further work was also required on the convergence of the Rio+20 process and the Millennium Development Goals, which should involve discussions with civil society. UNEP had identified around 20 top environmental challenges – directly linked to the social and economic agendas – and had also collaborated with multilateral environmental agreements, in particular in order to ensure that the sustainable development goals did not contradict or duplicate the Millennium Development Goals. She stressed the importance of participation by major groups and stakeholders in the many environmental conferences of the United Nations in 2014, describing the various events as a series of building blocks that could culminate in a change of mindset at the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, to be held in September 2014. She underlined the particular significance of the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP, to be held in Nairobi in June 2014, and of the second meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, to be held in New York from 30 June to 9 July 2014.

44. In the ensuing discussion, several representatives said that UNEP should provide stronger input to the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. One representative asked whether UNEP would become more involved in the framing of environmental objectives and targets so as to aid the delivery of results in addition to its involvement in the thematic areas being focused on by the Open Working Group. Another representative suggested that too great an emphasis was being placed on economic growth in the work on the sustainable development goals and that UNEP should play a more active role in order to increase the emphasis on environmental issues. She said that she would welcome the engagement of UNEP with different partners, involving a range of expertise and avoiding reliance on the private sector.

45. Another area of interest was the timing of the meetings of the Open Working Group and the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP. One representative suggested that any discussion on the Open Working Group should take place in the following week at the open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives rather than at the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. Another representative said that reference to the sustainable development goals should be made in declarations emanating from the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP in June. Lastly, one representative asked how UNEP was linking the climate change agenda to the sustainable development goals.

46. Responding to comments, Ms. Niamir-Fuller elaborated on the role of UNEP in the evolution of the sustainable development goals. She said that UNEP could best contribute by facilitating greater coherence in the ongoing discussions, which were currently taking place in “silos”. The inter-agency technical support team had consolidated all the existing global environmental goals and had submitted them to the Open Working Group, and had also worked on possible targets and indicators pertaining to the sustainable development goals. Referring to the apparent emphasis on economic growth, she stressed that UNEP was focusing on areas such as green employment, natural capital, and sustainable consumption and production, in an effort to demonstrate the linkages between environmental and economic issues. Addressing comments on the timing of the Open Working Group and the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, she said that the Group was expected to have elaborated goals and targets as well as information on key controversial areas by June 2014, in time for consideration at the first session of the Environment Assembly. She expressed the hope that the Environment Assembly would be supportive of the Group’s work and suggested that it could focus on the means of implementation of the goals. She acknowledged that the linkage between the climate change agenda and the sustainable development goals needed to be made more apparent; the two processes should, however, be kept separate and have different targets, and if the sustainable development goals were to focus on solutions rather than problems the two processes could be complementary.

47. Two representatives said that although the sustainable development goals should be on the agenda for the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP it would be impracticable to deal with them definitively in any declarations emanating from that session because the negotiations on the goals would not be completed until 2015. Turning to the second meeting of the High-level Political Forum, one representative asked about the degree of UNEP involvement in the review mechanisms of the Forum. He expressed the view that the rule of law extended to human rights and should therefore be incorporated into the sustainable development goals. Another representative said that UNEP needed to build stronger partnerships with a range of organizations, developing policies that were both environmentally and socially sustainable. One representative stressed that in the discussions on the sustainable development goals the fourth pillar – culture – was being overlooked. He asked how sustainable development for indigenous peoples could be promoted without their cultural rights being overlooked.

48. Responding to the comments, Ms. Niamir-Fuller said that both the United Nations Environment Assembly and the High-level Political Forum were at an early stage of their development and needed to be nurtured. She stressed that discussions on the review mechanisms of both forums were continuing and she referred to the possibility, in that context, of developing an “SDG Live”, similar to the “UNEP Live” platform. UNEP was doing as much as it could to integrate the rule of law into the focus areas for the goals as the principles underpinning them could not be achieved without justice. She acknowledged that the cultural dimension of sustainable development was of great importance and that neither culture nor governance had been accorded sufficient attention by the Open Working Group until recently. Cultural issues were relevant to every focus area and she encouraged participants to consider how best to address indigenous peoples’ issues at the indicator level and possibly the target level under every goal, adding that the same approach could be applied to gender issues.

B. Environmental rule of law with special focus on illegal trade in wildlife and timber

49. Introducing his presentation, Mr. Kreilhuber said that the environmental rule of law was important in terms of justice, human rights and sustainable development. Addressing the special focus on illegal trade in wildlife and timber, he said that trade in wildlife had reached crisis levels in many parts of the world, being worth between \$15 and \$20 billion (excluding timber) annually; illegal trade in wildlife and timber was the fourth largest form of transnational organized crime behind trafficking in drugs, humans and arms, and there was increased anecdotal evidence that its revenue was being used by terrorist groups and was fuelling many conflicts. The illegal trade in timber had created a huge loss of revenue for Governments and communities and had huge implications for economic and social well-being; between \$30 million and \$100 billion was lost each year through illegal logging, and organized crime was estimated to be responsible for between 50 and 90 per cent of deforestation in tropical countries. Referring to the scope of UNEP work on illegal trade in wildlife and timber, he outlined three major areas of concern: maintaining and strengthening political momentum; strengthening the environmental rule of law; and awareness-raising and communication. In this context, he anticipated that the forthcoming open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives would result in recommendations to the Environment Assembly on how to deal with the illegal trade in wildlife and timber, which was expected to be the subject of a ministerial dialogue during the Assembly’s first session. A review of the Fourth Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law (Montevideo Programme IV) would also be considered by the Assembly.

50. He emphasized that the environmental rule of law had a key role to play in sustainable

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