

STATEMENT OF THE AFRICAN GROUP DURING THE 4TH ANNUAL SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE CPR TO UNEP, 6-9 MARCH 2017

Agenda item 3: UN ENVIRONMENT WORK ON CHEMICALS AND WASTE

Chairperson,

1. I have the honour to make the following few comments on behalf of the African Group. At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on chairing this segment of our meeting. The Group is confident of your ability to successfully conduct the activities of this Meeting and I wish to assure you of the Group's full support.

2. The African Group wishes to thank Ligia Noronha, Maarten Kappelle and your team, for introducing this agenda item and for preparing the relevant documents that we are considering today.

3. The paradox of the conversation that we are having today is that, chemicals are an integral part of manufacturing processes and by extension to global economies. In this light, it therefore becomes critical to have sound management of chemicals throughout their life-cycle.

Chairperson,

4. We wish to point out that work of the sub-programme on chemicals and waste is very important in the overall scheme of the work of UN Environment. This is against a background of unsustainable production and consumption patterns, continued growth of global production, trade and use of chemicals, in turn exerting increasing chemical management burden predominantly on developing countries and economies in transition that are hamstrung on capacity to handle such multifarious challenges.

5. As a result, there is urgent need to use chemicals in a sustainable manner so as not to endanger the environment and the health of generations to come.

6. The African Group welcomes UN Environment's coordinated approach of working with governments, industries and the private sector, as well as civil society to ensure that chemicals are used and produced in ways that lead to the minimisation of significant effects on humans and the environment. Also your multi partnership approach with UNIDO, GEF, the Global Mercury Partnership is commendable and we would encourage you to continue on the same trajectory.

7. Regarding the work that UNEP is doing on Mercury, we note the progress that was made in 2016, albeit at a slow pace, that 15 countries ratified the convention, with three additional ratifications in 2017. It is encouraging to note that the majority of those countries are in Africa. This is ample testimony that Africa shares the same concerns about rising mercury levels in oceans and seas and its impact on the health of people and the environment, and that in a small way we can contribute to a better environment. We are happy that, through the support of UN Environment, countries have been able to build capacity and more successfully move through the ratification process. We therefore encourage the Secretariat to continue the good work to ensure that we get the required ratifications for the convention to enter into force.

8. The Group welcomes the work being done on phasing out or banning lead in paint. It is encouraging to note that in 2016, seven additional countries, through the support of UNEP, adopted policies to put in place lead paint control frameworks, including my own country, Zimbabwe. In line with decisions made at UNEA 2, we also note that some work has begun on addressing the challenge of lead in batteries and we request UN Environment to assist build the capacity of African countries in this regard. We further request the Secretariat to continue mobilising resources to implement this resolution.

9. Another area which deserves mention is that UN Environment has engaged the private sector to phase out lead in their manufacturing processes and of note in your presentation is PPG Industries, a US company and global supplier of paint which has developed a phase-out plan for lead in paint by 2020. We therefore encourage UN Environment to continue their good work and engage other private sector players in different countries and regions to follow the good example of PPG. This is an important area where UN Environment can have a synergetic relationship with the private sector.

10. The Africa Group pronounced itself clearly in our position paper on the Theme of UNEA 3 about the importance we attach to addressing the challenges of e-waste, among other focus areas of land, water and air pollution. We therefore believe that if properly handled, this area could combine a threat to the environment with opportunities in business, job creation and poverty reduction.

11. With regards to financial performance, the Group notes that a big percentage of the funds are earmarked and therefore there is little flexibility in the manner the Secretariat can utilise those resources in carrying its mandate and assist Member States, especially those from the developing world and Africa in

particular. This is an area of concern that the international community must seriously look at. In this regard, we must collectively interrogate the current financing model for UNEP and the UN system as a whole to ensure that we achieve the balance in terms of implementation of projects in the various geographic regions.

12. With these remarks, I wish to thank you Chair for giving me the floor

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