

**UNEA Bureau Retreat
Windsor Golf Hotel & Country Club in Nairobi
27 October 2016**

**Discussion Paper:
How can the Assembly be made more visible to a worldwide public audience
and its resolutions more relevant to the lives of the planet's population?**

The goal of UN Environment's Communication Division is to make the UN Environment Assembly visible to a global audience by demonstrating its relevance to people's lives. For the second session of the UN Environment Assembly, the team engaged the world's media, including attracting 255 journalists to the event. More than 12,000 pieces made it into the media, a 19% increase from the first assembly. Sixteen articles and op-eds were placed in media, including Time, Al Jazeera and Huffington Post. Some 55 stories were posted on the UN Environment website. Outreach within Kenya included a media field trip and a press conference with the Kenyan President.

Original multimedia stories were distributed through UN Environment's channels, including a dedicated UNEA website. On social media, 583 tweets were seen nearly 7.5 million times. Facebook posts reached over 158,000 people. The multimedia team produced 63 videos and uploaded over 500 photographs to Flickr. The division launched the #WildforLife campaign.

These successes were largely achieved due to the high quantity of original content that the communication team produced and disseminated itself. A limiting factor to attract greater visibility was that the resolutions were not binding and were perceived by journalists to have limited immediate impact. This created limited buzz outside the environment community. Of the 12,000 media pieces, only 8% mentioned the resolutions. The coverage came from the reports that were released and interviews journalists did with attendees on the side-line of the event.

The limited public interest in the event itself was also evidenced on social media. Typical social media posts by UN Environment get about 50 retweets, while posts about the second session of the UN Environment Assembly were typically only retweeted by the public 4-5 times.

Another challenge at the second session of the UN Environment Assembly was budget. Only 63% of the required funding was made available. As a result, many planned activities were cancelled. For example, the assembly's website, many press releases, multimedia products and other outputs were only available in English because there was no funding for translation.

Looking forward, the Communication Division recommends adequate funding be available. This would enable development of a cutting-edge website, increased multimedia storytelling in at least the six official UN languages, and field visits for journalists so they can produce stories that connect the resolutions with people's lives.

Looking at the event itself, it would be beneficial if the adoption of the resolutions could be staggered throughout the event, rather than in the early hours of a weekend when most journalists have already left. Make them public instantly.

To better focus the organization's communication, a maximum of five headlining reports with clear news value and wide appeal should be launched at the event – and they need to be finalized well in advance. The division should produce a drumbeat of op-eds, but each must focus on something new and powerful. We should invite high-profile journalists to attend – but resources must be made available to cover their travel costs. Members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives should be invited to engage their capitals to secure editorials and other content from Ministers, and partner with state broadcasters. Government representatives should also be encouraged to use the UN Environment Assembly as a platform to make environment-focused announcements from their home countries (Country A announces a new law that will cut air pollution by 50%).

Finally, to help journalists covering the UN Environment Assembly in person, more space should be provided for the media to ease the severe congestion that hampered some events at the second session.

Drafted by the Communication Division

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