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ПРОГРАММА ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ОБЪЕДИНЕННЫХ НАЦИЙ ПО ОКРУЖАЮЩЕЙ СРЕДЕ

**Issue Paper by the
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UN REFORM

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT PILLAR

This contribution by the UNEP secretariat encompasses views and perspectives of relevance to the work of the Secretary-General's high-level panel on UN system wide coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment (the Coherence Panel), as well as to the informal consultations by the General Assembly on system-wide coherence regarding environmental activities (the Informal Consultation), both in follow up to paragraph 169 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome.

This paper contains suggestions of the UNEP secretariat and does not purport to reflect the position of the UNEP governing bodies or UN Member States.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. UNEP was established in 1972 to provide general policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes within the UN system and to review their implementation. Its mandate represented the mix of intergovernmental, secretariat, financial and interagency coordination functions deemed necessary at that time to ensure the system-wide follow-up of the Stockholm Conference. Efforts to enhance system-wide coherence have been a recurrent feature of the governing processes of the ever evolving UN. UNEP has been subject to several reforms and decadal reviews of environmental activities in the UN system.
2. The number of organizations, multilateral agreements, agencies, funds and programmes involved in environmental activities has increased significantly since 1972. Both the Governing Council and the programme operations of UNEP have found it increasingly challenging to perform the original system-wide environmental coordination role. Although the General Assembly reaffirmed UNEP's role as the principal UN body in the field of the environment in 1997, repeated calls for enhanced UN system-wide environmental coordination have been made from the late 1990s onwards..
3. Paragraph 169 of the outcome document of the 2005 World Summit responds to UNEP's own call for a greatly strengthened institutional structure for international environmental governance (IEG). Within its mandate, UNEP is well placed to address the needs for system-wide coherence and more effective environmental activities in the UN system. This is particularly true in areas of demonstrated comparative advantage and expertise, such as in environmental assessments and networking, environmental law and policy guidance, and capacity building. This issue paper provides perspectives and proposals on how to address each of the needs identified in paragraph 169 regarding more effective environmental activities in the UN system.
4. Paragraph 169 also agreed on the need to explore the possibility of a more coherent institutional framework to achieve more efficient UN environmental activities. Such an institutional framework could be based on a clarification and rationalization of the roles, responsibilities and reporting lines of intergovernmental, operative, financial and administrative environmental entities of the UN system, according particular attention for example to UNEP, CSD, FAO, GEF, UNDP, UNESCO, UN-Habitat, WMO, World Bank and the MEAs. In doing so it should take full account of UNEP's role and demonstrated comparative advantage and expertise as the principal environmental UN body.
5. The General Assembly may wish to further empower its subsidiary body, the UNEP Council/Forum, as the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda and promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the UN system. In this regard, the full implementation of the recommendation emanating from the IEG review would be of strategic importance.
6. There is a clear continuum from 1972 to 2006 regarding the importance of UN system-wide coherence in addressing environmental change. Such change may, if not halted or significantly reduced, seriously limit development options of member states and increase their vulnerability in terms of natural disasters and conflicts resulting in need for humanitarian assistance.
7. This contribution by the UNEP secretariat encompasses views and perspectives of relevance to the work of the Secretary-General's high-level panel on UN system wide coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment (the Coherence Panel), as well as to the informal consultations by the General Assembly on system-wide coherence regarding environmental activities (the Informal Consultation), both in follow up to paragraph 169 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome.

I. UNEP'S MANDATE: - FROM STOCKHOLM TO THE 2005 WORLD SUMMIT

1. UNEP's original functions and responsibilities as entrusted to it by the General Assembly in 1972¹ are divided between its four main entities. *The Governing Council*² is set up to promote international cooperation and keep the environment under review. It is to also give policy guidance on the planning, coordination and effectiveness of UN system-wide environmental programmes, as well as on their impact on developing countries and their relation to social and economic policies and priorities. The Council and member states are assisted by *The Secretariat, its Executive Director* and *The Environment Fund*. The fund should finance wholly or partly environmental activities within the UN system, with particular attention to integrated projects, effective programme co-ordination, and development priorities and needs of developing countries³. Efficient programme coordination among UN agencies and the economic commissions was to be assured by *The Environment Coordination Board*.

2. This mix of intergovernmental, secretarial, financial and interagency coordination functions were all deemed necessary in 1972 to ensure the system-wide follow-up of the Stockholm Conference⁴. Such efforts to enhance system-wide coherence have been a recurrent feature of the governing processes of an ever evolving UN. The restructuring of the UN system in 1977, for instance, assigned the functions of the Environment Coordination Board and other similar thematic coordination mechanisms to *The Administrative Committee on Coordination*⁵.

3. The environmental activities in the UN system have been regularly reviewed. The first decadal-review took place at the special session of the UNEP Governing Council in 1982⁶, ten years after Stockholm. The second decadal-review led to the adoption of Agenda 21 by the Rio Conference⁷ in 1992. It did reaffirm UNEP's role with regard to policy guidance and coordination and assigned roles and responsibilities to all relevant entities in the UN system⁸. The establishment of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and the autonomous and semi-autonomous Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) were all major achievements, but it also made the coordination role assigned to UNEP more demanding.

4. Increased calls for enhanced UN system-wide environmental coordination were made from the late 1990s onwards. The General Assembly confirmed UNEP's role as the principal UN body in the field of the environment in 1997⁹. During 1998, within the overall efforts to renew the UN, the Assembly created *The Global Ministerial Environment Forum* (Forum)¹⁰ that would meet annually on the occasion of the UNEP Governing Council. The Assembly also re-established an environmental interagency coordination mechanism, *The Environment Management Group* (EMG).

5. The Forum initiated in 2000 a review of the requirements for a greatly strengthened institutional structure for international environmental governance (IEG). The Council/Forum adopted¹¹ an IEG package which was subsequently endorsed by the third decadal-review at the Johannesburg Summit in 2002¹². The package focused on: i) improved policy coherence – the role of the Council/Forum; ii) strengthening the scientific base of UNEP; iii) strengthening the financing of UNEP; iv) improved coordination among and effectiveness of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs); v) capacity building, technology support and country level coordination; and vi) enhanced UN system-wide coordination.

6. The 2005 World Summit represents the latest international effort in the review of environmental activities in the UN. Paragraph 169 of its outcome document calls for a stronger system-wide coherence within and between the policy and operational activities of the UN, in particular in the areas of humanitarian affairs, development and environment. It called for more efficient UN environmental activities through: i) enhanced coordination; ii) improved policy advice and guidance; iii) strengthened scientific knowledge, assessment and cooperation; iv) better treaty compliance, while respecting the legal autonomy of the treaties; and v) better integration of environmental activities in the broader sustainable development framework at the operational level, including through vi) capacity building. The UN reform agenda for 2005/6 has given environment high importance.

7. There is a clear continuum from 1972 to 2006 regarding the importance of UN system-wide coherence in addressing environmental change. Such change may, if not halted or significantly reduced, seriously limit development options of member states and increase their vulnerability in terms of natural disasters and conflicts resulting in need for humanitarian assistance. The process led by the Coherence Panel is vital for effective mainstreaming of environmental considerations into the wider development agenda as articulated in MDG 7. Furthermore, the UNGA Informal Consultations on UN environmental

activities are critical for strengthening the environmental institutional framework needed to backstop this mainstreaming.

I. THE ROLE OF UNEP IN CONTRIBUTING TO UN COHERENCE

8. Within its mandate, UNEP can in principle contribute to addressing the needs for system-wide coherence identified in paragraph 169 through four mechanisms. *First*, through the functions of the Council/Forum as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly. The further enhancement of the role Council/Forum and its subsidiary may be needed. *Second*, through the activities of the Executive Director and the Secretariat's global and regional presence as outlined in the programme of work. The programme can be further focused in support of the operations of the Council/Forum, and on assisting, upon request, MEAs, regional ministerial fora and member states. *Third*, through the Environment Fund that determines the magnitude of UNEP's programme operations, and its mandated ability to finance environmental activities in the wider UN system as a whole. *Fourth*, through the Environment Management Group (EMG). EMG can within the wider UN coordination structure further promote interagency coordination and complementarity.

9. The changing global, political and economic context has influenced the organisation of work of UNEP. UNEP's mandate has been implemented through three distinct institutional and programmatic approaches: first, an issue based approach with a high degree of attention to core natural resources elements and monitoring (1972 – 1992); second, a structural approach responding to Agenda 21 (1993 – 1997); and third, an approach based on key functions: notably assessment and early warning; policy development and law; policy implementation; production and consumption; environmental conventions; regional cooperation; and communication and public information (1998 – 2006).

10. The Environment Fund budget for the 2006-2007 programme of work, as approved by the Council/Forum, is 130 million US dollars, including 10 million from the UN regular budget. The fund has been increasing steadily over the last few years, amongst others due to the establishment of a voluntary indicative scale of contributions. However, the fund still covers only a fragment of the total investments in environmental activities by the international community. UNEP in addition administers several trust funds, receives some funds from the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol and is one of the implementing agencies of the GEF. A combination of increased investments and more targeted use of the Environment Fund would enhance the ability of UNEP to carry out its normative and operational functions and be a more effective agent for UN system-wide coherence.

II. RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS IDENTIFIED IN PARAGRAPH 169

11. The following sections provide views and perspectives on how to address each of the needs identified in paragraph 169 regarding more effective environmental activities in the UN system.

A. Enhanced coordination

12. The responsibility for UN system-wide environmental coordination constituted a core component of UNEP's original mandate. The task was to be achieved through a mix of efforts ranging from intergovernmental considerations by the Governing Council, programmatic efforts by the Executive Director, financing of integrated system-wide programmes, and practical interagency cooperation by the Coordination Board. However, both the Council and the programme operations of UNEP have during the last few decades found it challenging to perform the original system-wide environmental coordination role. The number of organisations, multilateral agreements, agencies, funds and programmes involved in environmental activities has increased exponentially since 1972. Further enhancement of the coordination of environmental activities would require the strengthening of several mutually supportive functions, which have to be applied in the right mix.

13. The following system-wide approaches for enhanced coordination of environmental activities could be considered:

(a) Clarifying the roles, responsibilities and reporting lines of intergovernmental, operative and administrative environmental entities of the UN system, as well as consideration of possible rationalization of those entities, according particular attention for example to UNEP, UNEP, CSD, FAO, GEF, UNDP, UNESCO, UN-Habitat, WMO, World Bank and the MEAs;

(b) Strengthening the operations of inter-governmental processes for system-wide environmental coordination;

(c) Expanding the current synchronized biennial programme planning and budgeting processes within the SGs secretariat to the wider UN system, supported by the necessary systems to facilitate exchange of information to reduce overlap and increase synergy among programme activities in environment and other fields;

(d) Ensuring greater financial stability and mobilization of resources by examining ways of increasing the financial investment in environmental coordination. In this regard special attention should be given to the Environment Fund and the GEF in view of the benefits stemming from programme and project complementarity;

(e) Further strengthening relevant existing interagency coordination mechanisms¹³ and harmonizing administrative processes. Such efforts should ensure that EMG has the necessary authority high-level attendance and is integrated in the formal UN management and coordination structures.

► ***The role of UNEP***

14. UNEP can contribute to enhanced coordination of environmental activities in the UN system through the following measures:

(a) Strengthening the operations of the Council/Forum for giving guidance on system-wide coordination of environmental activities based on enhanced support from the Executive Director through the secretariat, programme of work, the Environment Fund and the EMG;

(b) Enhancing the coordination role of the Council/Forum as a subsidiary body to the General Assembly by requesting other intergovernmental environmental fora to report to the Assembly through the Council/Forum;

(c) Strengthening the coordinating role of the Executive Director by requesting that inputs to environmental UN system reports by the Secretary General are submitted through the Executive Director for compilation.

B. Improved policy advice and guidance

15. UNEP was established to provide environmental policy advice and guidance in the UN system and to member states. The UN system has however over the last two decades seen a steady increase in intergovernmental fora providing environmental policy advice and guidance at the international level. This on one hand advanced international cooperation on specific environmental challenges and increased national attention to them. However, on the other hand, the proliferation of international processes has placed a particularly heavy burden on developing countries which are often not equipped to participate meaningfully in the development of international environmental policy. Improved policy advice and guidance is therefore to some extent dependant on improved coordination in policy development among the existing policy fora, including the MEAs and regional environmental ministerial fora. Further measures to improve policy advice and guidance could include those under section III.A above on coordination.

16. The capacity of the environmental pillar of the UN system to provide policy advice and guidance was greatly enhanced by the establishment of the annual Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF) by the GA with universal participation at the ministerial level. It has resulted in a renewed focus on high level environmental policy discussions under the auspices of UNEP. GMEF has now been in operation for five years with steadily increasing participation. However, calls were made at its last session for the Executive Director to consider measures for enhancing the effectiveness of its operations based on this experience.

17. Policies and norms must be periodically reviewed, adapted and renewed in light of new emerging issues, new scientific findings and changes in the magnitude of the environmental challenges. An important aspect of improved policies is the opportunity for policymakers and scientific experts to interact so that policy relevant knowledge is brought to the forefront of decision making in a timely manner. Measures to that effect are proposed under section III.C below. Furthermore, any improvement of policy advice and guidance needs to be based on a review of their effectiveness. The decisions of international fora often

address different aspects of the same management issues at national level, such as for instance water management. An issue based approach could help to harmonise and rationalize policy review efforts.

► ***The role of UNEP***

18. UNEP can contribute to environmental policy advice and guidance in the UN system through the following measures:

a) Further strengthening the GMEF by enhancing its role in terms of providing overarching environmental policy advice and guidance and on reviewing the effectiveness of environmental policy advice and guidance provided by the UN system;

b) Further focusing UNEP's programme of work on issue based proactive reviews of the effectiveness of environmental policy advice and guidance provided by the UN system.

C. Strengthening scientific knowledge, assessment and cooperation

19. UNEP has, in accordance with its mandate, undertaken a wide range of collaborative processes for monitoring, observing, networking, managing data, developing indicators, carrying out assessments and providing early warning of emerging environmental threats. Achievements include the ozone and climate assessments and more recently the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) process and its network of collaborating centres and individual experts. A number of national and international institutions, including UN bodies, are active in the field of environmental assessments, monitoring and observing systems, information networks, research programmes. These include at the global level the global observing systems¹⁴ and the newly established Group on Earth Observations and its implementation plan for a Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS)¹⁵. Efforts also include international scientific programmes, including those operating under the International Council for Science (ICSU).

20. Most MEAs have their own subsidiary scientific advisory bodies which to varying degrees analyse scientific information. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change is in addition to its subsidiary scientific advisory body also supported by a corresponding assessment mechanism, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), for which WMO and UNEP jointly provide the secretariat. Calls have been made for a similar assessment mechanism based on the achievements of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment on biodiversity and ecosystems to support the ecosystem-related MEAs, although the usefulness of such a mechanism is still being debated among governments and experts. In addition, the GEF has its own Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP), for which UNEP provides the secretariat.

21. The IEG process highlighted that the increasing complexity of environmental degradation now requires an enhanced capacity for scientific assessment, monitoring and early warning and called for a further strengthening of UNEP's scientific base. At its 22nd session in 2002, the Council/Forum initiated a broad based consultative process on strengthening the scientific base of UNEP, often referred to as the Science Initiative (see <http://science.unep.org>). The process identified a number of gaps and needs which has helped further focus UNEP's programmatic activities and collaborative efforts in this area.

22. The needs identified in the Science Initiative include:

(a) Strengthened interaction between science and policy particularly by strengthening the credibility, timeliness, legitimacy and relevance of environmental assessments including in the GEO process and promoting complementarity among them.

(b) Enhanced focus on scientific inter-linkages between environmental challenges and responses to them as well as between environmental and development challenges as a basis for environmental mainstreaming and development of scenarios and modeling about plausible futures.

(c) Improved quantity, quality and accessibility of data and information for most environmental issues including for early warnings related to natural disasters. Standardization and interoperability of data sets should be improved to facilitate exchange of environmental information.

(d) Enhanced national capacities in developing countries, and countries with economies in transition, for data collection and analysis and for environmental monitoring and integrated assessment.

(e) Improved cooperation and synergy among UN bodies, MEAs and regional environmental fora, scientific and academic institutions and networking among national and regional institutions.

► ***The role of UNEP***

23. Drawing and building on its original mandate and demonstrated comparative advantage and expertise, UNEP can contribute to environmental scientific knowledge, assessment and cooperation in the UN system in particular through the following measures:

(a) The incremental establishment of a coherent system to connect and build scientific, regional and national capacities for environmental data collection, research, monitoring, observing, assessment, early warning, reporting and networking at multiple scales. Such a system (called ‘Environment Watch’) has already been proposed by the Executive Director and would draw on existing institutions and networks as well as UNEP’s experience with current and past networks¹⁶. The latest iteration of the proposal¹⁷ was considered by the Council/Forum at its ninth special session in 2006. Current activities are responding to calls from Governments for a further refinement of the proposal amongst others by exploring its implications at national level.

(b) Strengthened interaction between environmental science and policy at many levels through enhancing the operations of the Council/Forum in keeping the state of environment under review. The Council/Forum could, for instance, through an in-session committee, systematically review scientific assessment findings, identify assessment needs, and oversee the evolution and implementation of the proposed Environment Watch system.

(c) Continuing to undertake, support and catalyse timely, relevant and credible participatory assessment processes¹⁸ such as the ongoing Global Environment Outlook report (GEO-4) (to be published in 2007) which assesses the role of environment for development using the report of the Brundtland Commission (1987)¹⁹ as its baseline. It responds to the directions given by a broad based global intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder consultation held in 2005²⁰, which amongst others called for a combination of the widely regarded, bottom-up participatory GEO process with elements from the well-proven scientific assessment processes such as the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

D. Better treaty compliance, while respecting the legal autonomy of the treaties

24. The development of international environmental law over the last decades has been remarkable. It is estimated that there are more than 500 international treaties and other agreements related to the environment of which 323 are regional and 302 date from the period between 1972 and the present²¹. UNEP has contributed significantly to this development and is providing administrative support to a number of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). The sheer number of environmental agreements has placed an increasing burden on Parties to meet their collective and differentiated individual obligations. Better treaty compliance requires increased efforts by the international community for addressing financial and institutional constraints in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. While compliance with and enforcement of treaty is first and foremost the responsibility of the Parties to the conventions, the Parties frequently call on support from other institutions, collectively and individually. UNEP is among the institutions regularly called upon by the Conferences of Parties (COPs), their subsidiary bodies and parties to provide support in this respect.

25. UNEP offers limited support to developing countries for the implementation of conventions through its role as an implementing agency of the GEF together with the other implementing and executing agencies. UNEP’s programmatic activities in environmental law are also geared towards supporting better treaty compliance. They include: the third Montevideo Programme for development and periodic review of environmental law for the first decade of the twenty-first century²² and UNEP’s guidelines on compliance with and enforcement of multilateral environmental agreements²³. UNEP also has a separate sub-programme on Environmental Conventions which is promoting collaboration in the field. The IEG process noted that a periodic review of the effectiveness of MEAs is critical to their success.

► ***The role of UNEP***

26. UNEP can contribute to environmental treaty compliance in the UN system through its wide programme activities and in particular the following measures:

(a) Further strengthening the Council/Forum of UNEP by enhancing its role in terms of reviewing the effectiveness of the implementation of MEAs and promoting system-wide support for their

implementation. Such reviews could be based on a thematic approach to allow for efficient reviews while fully respecting the legal autonomy of the treaties.

(b) Refocusing, in support of the Council/Forum, the programme of work along clusters of MEAs for reviewing the effectiveness of implementation of MEAs, and providing, upon request, support for treaty compliance, having particular regard to issue based implementation of MEAs at national level.

E. Better integration of environmental activities in the broader development framework at operational level

27. The integration of environmental activities into the broader development framework is at the heart of MDG 7 on achieving environmental sustainability. The recognition of the need for integration of environmental concerns into public and private social and economic sector institutions has increased tremendously over the last decade at both national and international level. The need for integration of environmental considerations was greatly enhanced by the vision put forward by the Brundtland Commission, which UNEP contributed to. UNEP has worked with partner agencies in the UN system since its inception, including by using up to 40 per cent of the Environment Fund in support of environmental activities of other UN entities. However, UNEP's ability to fund system-wide activities declined after the Rio Conference due to a dramatic reduction in financial contributions to the Environment Fund. New efforts by UNEP include work on the trade and environment nexus, the poverty and environment nexus, renewable energy, payments for ecosystem services, sustainable consumption and production patterns and partnerships with the private sector.

28. Although achievements have been made, they have not kept up with the pace of the accelerating environmental degradation including climate change, degradation of ecosystem services, and release of chemicals into the environment. Mainstreaming of environmental concerns into other sectors requires collaborative efforts across existing sectors. It remains a formidable challenge for all sectors, but in particular for the environmental institutions both at national and international level. It requires a systematic and sustained effort by these institutions comparable with those of more established coordinating sectors, such as finance and planning. Mainstreaming is knowledge intensive and the establishment of the proposed Environment Watch system could facilitate the provision of knowledge and information at multiple scales based on the latest conceptual developments on the links between ecosystem services, human wellbeing, and poverty reduction as *inter alia* developed by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and furthered by the ongoing GEO-4. The reform process may want to consider the need for the development of a more systematic and coherent UN system-wide approach, including the development of new and innovative tools, for mainstreaming of environmental concerns into the wider development agenda.

► The role of UNEP

29. UNEP can contribute to better integration of environmental activities in the broader development framework at operational level in the UN system in particular through the following measures:

(a) Strengthening the role of the Council/Forum through the evolution and implementation of a UN system-wide approach for mainstreaming of environmental concerns into the wider development agenda. The approach should be results-oriented and based on a regular review of expected environmental accomplishments for all relevant parts of the UN system. A more coherent system-wide biennial programme and budget cycle for the UN system as a whole would greatly facilitate the development and operation of a mainstreaming approach;

(b) Refocusing the programme of work, in support of the system-wide mainstreaming approach, having specific regard to the following functional and thematic programme elements: i) keeping the environment under review; ii) environmental law and mainstreaming; iii) "green" environmental issues including ecosystems and the natural resources sectors; and iv) "brown" environmental issues including industry and trade sectors.

F. Capacity building: - linkages between the normative work and operational activities

30. Capacity building, technology support and support to implementation of international obligations are key components of UNEP's operational activities. The need for capacity building was a key consideration

from the time that UNEP was established in 1972. UNEP has over the years contributed to capacity building through its programme of work as funded by the Environment Fund, by partnering with other institutions and by serving as an implementing agency for GEF. Although the resources for capacity building are very limited UNEP has over the last few years made some progress in raising significant additional financial resources through cooperation with donor countries in the form of partnership agreements. The need to strengthen and coordinate capacity building in the field of the environment was brought to the front of UNEP's priorities through the IEG process and the adoption of the Bali Strategic Plan on Capacity Building and Technology Support (BSP) in 2005.

31. The BSP is an inter-governmentally agreed approach to strengthening technology support and capacity building in developing countries, as well as countries with economies in transition, taking into account international agreements and based on national and regional priorities and needs. The plan takes into account activities undertaken across the UN system as a whole, including by MEA secretariats as well as by international financial institutions, relevant partners at regional and sub-regional levels, bilateral donors, NGOs and the private sector. It should support improved interagency coordination and cooperation with a special focus on the role UNEP should play in enhancing an effective response to identified needs. It provides the basis for UNEP to play a more substantive role in the UNDG framework based on its demonstrated comparative advantage and expertise. To this end, cooperation between UNEP and UNDP should be enhanced in line with the MOU between them, including at the country level.

► ***The role of UNEP***

32. UNEP can contribute to environmental capacity building in the UN system in particular through the following measures:

(a) Strengthening the role of the Council/Forum in promoting the capacity building efforts of the UN system as laid out in the Bali Strategic Plan in cooperation with UNDP, GEF, regional ministerial fora, regional commissions and other relevant institutions;

(b) Using UNEP's programme of work as a key vehicle for a coherent and multi-scaled implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan, focusing on its areas of comparative advantage in response to regional and national needs and priorities within the wider context of the Common Country Assessments (CCAs) and the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). A further strengthened Environment Fund could in accordance with its intended system-wide use, strengthen the UN's country level environmental operations in accordance with "the one UN" approach.

IV. EXPLORING A MORE COHERENT UN ENVIRONMENTAL INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

33. Paragraph 169 also agreed on the need to explore the possibility of a more coherent institutional framework to address the above reflected need, including a more integrated structure, building on existing institutions and internationally agreed instruments, as well as the treaty bodies and specialized agencies. Such an institutional framework must respond effectively to the needs and functions addressed above. It could be based on a clarification of the roles, responsibilities and reporting lines of intergovernmental, operative, financial and administrative environmental entities of the UN system, as well as consideration of possible rationalization of those entities, according particular attention for example to UNEP, UNEP, CSD, FAO, GEF, UNDP, UNESCO, UN-Habitat, WMO, World Bank and the MEAs. In doing so it should take full account of UNEP's role and demonstrated comparative advantage and expertise as the principal environmental UN body.

34. The explorations may also take into account that the MEAs have a strong legal mandate and an autonomous character in the UN system. Any coordination of an institutional framework which includes the MEAs would therefore need a clear authority and mandate by the General Assembly.

35. The General Assembly may wish to consider how to further strengthen its subsidiary body, the UNEP Council/Forum, as the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda and promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the UN system²⁴. Measures may include:

(a) Finalizing the consideration at its sixty-first session of the important but complex issue of universal membership of the Council ;

- (b) Requesting other intergovernmental environmental fora to report to the Assembly through the Council/Forum via ECOSOC;
- (c) Strengthening the regional presence of UNEP in particular for supporting regional ministerial environment fora and responding to regional and national capacity building needs;
- (d) Investing in UNEP and the Nairobi offices as the UN's only headquarter in the developing world by piloting it as a centre of excellence in terms of governance, openness and transparency, facilities, administration, information and communication technology, budget and finance support systems, personnel management, document management, and 'green' institutional management and operations.

¹ UNGA/XXVII/2997

² The Governing Council consists of 58 members. With regard to the membership of the Governing Council, Governing Council decision SS.VII/1 on international environmental governance identified the need to consider whether membership should be made universal. This matter has been considered at the recent sessions of the Governing Council, and now will be considered at the sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

³ It should i.a. finance programmes, such as: global monitoring, data, assessment and information exchange systems and costs for national counterparts; management; research; public education and training; assistance for national, regional and global environmental institutions; and the promotion of studies for the development of industrial and other technologies best suited to a policy of economic growth compatible with adequate environmental safeguards

⁴ The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (1972)

⁵ UNGA/32/197

⁶ The 1982 special session of the UNEP Governing Council considered the first ten years of the implementation of the Stockholm Action Plan for the Environment and on priorities and institutional arrangements for the 1980s.

⁷ The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) (1992)

⁸ Chapter 38 of Agenda 21 on the International Institutional Arrangements

⁹ The Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of UNEP, adopted by the nineteenth session of the Governing Council in February 1997 as well as by the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, adopted by the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly in June 1997 stated that “UNEP has been and should continue to be the principal United Nations body in the field of the environment. The role of UNEP is to be the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, that promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and that serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.”

¹⁰ Resolution UNGA/53/242 (based on the recommendations from the United Nations Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements.

¹¹ UNEP/SS.VII/1 (2002)

¹² *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August–4 September 2002 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex, chapter XI, entitled “Institutional framework for sustainable development”, paragraph 140, subparagraph (d).

¹³ A number of system-wide interagency coordination mechanisms are in place, including The High-level Committee on Coordination of Programme (HLCP), The High-level Committee on Coordination of Management (HLCM), and thematic coordination mechanisms including the UN Development Group (UNDG), UN System-wide Earthwatch, UN-Water, UN-Oceans and the EMG.

¹⁴ Including the Global Climate Observing System, the Global Ocean Observing System and the Global Terrestrial Observing System.

¹⁵ The Group on Earth Observations, is an intergovernmental mechanism established to develop a 10-year implementation plan for building a coordinated, comprehensive and sustained Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). GEOSS focuses on nine social benefit areas from a coordinated global observation system. The nine social benefit areas are warning and mitigation of natural and human-induced disasters; environmental factors affecting human health and well-being; management of energy resources; climate variability and change; the water cycle; weather information, forecasting, and warning; protection of terrestrial, coastal, and marine ecosystems; sustainable agriculture and combating desertification; and biodiversity.

¹⁶ This include the network of GEO collaborating centres, the Global Environmental Monitoring System (GEMS), the UNEP Global Resource Information Database (GRID) and Global Environmental Information Exchange Network (Infoterra) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and UNEP jointly coordinated Global Land Cover Network (GLCN).

¹⁷ UNEP/GCSS.IX/3/Aad.2.

¹⁸ Programme activities include follow up to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and the Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA), cooperation with the World Bank, UNESCO, FAO, WHO and UNDP on the International Assessment on Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD), cooperation with FAO and the Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA), cooperation with the International Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO on the Regular Process for Assessment and Reporting on the Marine Environment, the Africa Environment Outlook and GEO Latin America and the Caribbean Environment Outlook as well as support to sub-regional and national environmental assessments.

¹⁹ The World Commission on Environment and Development: *Our Common Future*, (1987)

²⁰ UNEP/GC.23/CRP.5.

²¹ Of the 302 agreements negotiated, 197, or nearly 70 per cent, are regional in scope as compared to 60 per cent for the earlier period. The emergence of regional integration bodies concerned with the environment in regions such as Central America and Europe have contributed to this trend. In many cases, regional agreements are closely linked to global ones. Of greatest impact has been the emergence of the 17 multi-sectoral regional seas conventions and action plans embracing 46 conventions, protocols and related agreements.

The largest cluster of multilateral environmental agreements is related to the marine environment, accounting for over 40 per cent of the total, the most notable being the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982), new IMO marine pollution conventions and protocols, the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (1995) and regional seas agreements and regional fisheries conventions and protocols.

Biodiversity-related conventions form a second important but smaller cluster, including most of the key global conventions: the Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) (1973), the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) (1979) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992).

In contrast to the pre-1972 period, two new important clusters of agreements have emerged: the chemicals-related and hazardous-waste-related conventions, primarily of a global nature, and the atmosphere/energy-related conventions. The first include several ILO conventions that address occupational hazards in the workplace. Most recently, we have had the adoption of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (1998) and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, adopted in May 2001.

At the forefront of the atmosphere/energy-related conventions are the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer (1985) and its Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (1987), and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992).

²² Decision UNEP/GC.21/23 of 9 February 2001

²³ Decision UNEP/GCSS.VII/4 of 15 February 2002

²⁴ See endnote 9.