

**MISYON NG PILIPINAS SA MGA
NAGKAKAISANG BANSA**



**PHILIPPINE MISSION TO THE
UNITED NATIONS**

550 FIFTH AVENUE
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10036
TEL. NO. (212) 764-1300

0053

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Excellencies,

With reference to Philippine statement in the Informal Consultative Process on the Institutional Framework for the United Nations' Environmental Activities held on 18 January 2007, I wish to forward herewith, for your reference, a copy of the Philippine detailed response to the questions circulated in your letter dated 22 November 2006.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend, your Excellencies, for carrying out the consultations in an open, transparent and inclusive manner.

Please accept, Excellencies, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Very truly yours,


LAURO L. BAJA, JR.
Permanent Representative

H.E. Ambassador Enrique Berruga
Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations
New York

H.E. Ambassador Peter Maurer
Permanent Representative of Switzerland
Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations
New York

PHILIPPINE PAPER

Informal Consultative Process on the Institutional Framework for the United Nations' Environmental Activities

Implementation at the country level

What are the strengths and weaknesses of international actors in the area of environment (UNEP, UNDP, other UN entities, the World Bank, the MEAs) in supporting environmental objectives in your country/your area of activity in terms of scientific knowledge, normative/policy advice and operational support?

The main UN agency handling environmental activities at national level is the UNDP. The UNEP has no country representative in the Philippines. The UNDP and the World Bank also act as the implementing Agencies Global Environment Facility (GEF) that operates the financial mechanism of main Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), and provides funding for other areas of environmental activities. Other international organization, such as FAO and the WHO, or regional financing institutions such as the Asian Development Bank, have country offices that also conduct activities or projects dealing with the environment.

The main strength of these agencies is their capacity to provide the necessary financial resources and technical capacity to provide the necessary financial resources and the technical expertise to assist the country to develop its scientific, policy and operational capacities. The main difficulty lies in ensuring that their activities are coherent with national priorities. In practice, many UN agencies, and through them, international financing institutions, including the GEF, have their own priorities and objectives. UN procedures, as well as financing procedures, often influence the priorities to be adopted by countries in their environmental activities. Availability of financial resources, subject to donor requirements, also determined priorities, instead of the other way around.

According to your national priorities, what activities should be developed in your country regarding scientific knowledge, normative/policy advice and operational support?

First of all, UN agencies should support, rather than undermine, national mechanisms that determine national priorities in terms of scientific knowledge, policy advice or operational support. While most UN agencies, together with bilateral donors and financial institutions, profess to follow a "country-driven" approach, there is no common understanding of this approach would be. Donor priorities often influence which projects or what sectors of activities are undertaken and financed. For example, insofar as climate change activities are concerned, the need for adaptation is a national priority, from the development of scientific knowledge to policy-making and the implementation of concrete operational activities. However, mitigation activities have lone been the focus of donor interests. However, mitigation activities have long been the focus of donor interests, as these also serve the interest of developed countries in the implementation of their commitments under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Adaptation activities have therefore been given a lower priority by UN agencies. Procedures can also be used to serve interests other than national priorities in the provision of financial resources and technical expertise through UN agencies. This is currently one of the main concerns with the GEF financing of national projects.

Insofar as the Philippines is concerned, and probably also many other developing countries, local expertise and capacities are there, but they need to be supported. For various reasons, however, some UN agencies continue to insist on hiring foreign consultants where local consultants are available, for example local agencies, fearing that resources would not be made available to them, have no other option but to agree to accept these foreign consultants. These are real problems encountered at national level, whatever may be the positions enunciated at international level. There should therefore be an open and frank dialogue between a host country and the UN agencies represented in that country without any kind of tacit threat that funding or any kind of support would be affected by positions taken by national authorities.

How can interaction between your country and the different entities as well as among these entities be improved at country level?

The UN Development Assistance Framework could provide the necessary means through which interaction at national level with UN agencies and among entities could be improved. The basis for the provision of technical and substantive support should be the common country assessment, the development of which should be closely consulted with national agencies, and all relevant stakeholders. Ideally, this should result in the harmonization and simplification of the process of provision of technical advice and financial resources to countries. As the UNDAF has only been recently operationalized, it remains to be seen whether the process is effective in ensuring coherence of activities in the field of environment and development. The recommendations of the High-Level Panel in its report, "Deliver as One" are very useful in this context.

There should be a further strengthening of the Resident Coordinator system, and the selection process. Whenever at all possible, a Resident Coordinator that would not

necessarily be the Resident Coordinator at country level. Whenever a situation arises in which an individual wears two hats, one function or the other suffers inevitably.

In this regard, while we find merit in the recommendation of the High-Level Panel to establish a UN Sustainable Development Board to provide oversight for the One UN Country Programme, the recommendation however that the UNDP Administrator serve as the Development Coordinator at UN level would once again only strengthen one half of sustainable development, that of development, without giving the other vital component, environmental management, its due recognition. Perhaps a co-chairing of both the UNDP Administrator and the UNEP Executive Director would then truly reflect the importance of a UN Sustainable Development Board. It would even be better to have an independent UN Sustainable Development Coordinator to manage the UN Sustainable Development Board. At the country level, the UNDP Resident Representative need not be the Resident Coordinator for all UN agencies.

What is your assessment of the advancement of implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan and other elements of the Cartagena outcome and how can implementation be improved?

There can be no assessment of the advancement of the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan for Capacity-Building and Technology Support (BSP) at this point in time, because the BSP has not yet been operationalized, mainly due to lack of funding at UNEP level. Moreover, it must be recognized that the BSP is applicable only to UNEP's activities and not necessarily cover capacity-building and technology transfer activities in other agencies, in most importantly in MEAs. Each MEA has its own capacity-building and technology transfer activities based on decisions taken by its governing body (Conference of Parties). These activities are in fact stronger than capacity building and technology "support", whatever that implies, as envisioned in the BSP. During the BSP negotiations, in fact, developing countries expressed concern that capacity-building activities are weakened, and technology transfer watered down in the BSP.

Implementation therefore cannot be improved until the BSP is fully operationalized. The other elements of the Cartagena outcome are primarily those elements that make up international environmental governance (IEG), which in turn are elements of what some countries, have pushed forward as a UN Environment Organization (UNEO), previously a World Environment Organization (WEO).

How can countries be better supported in their effort to integrate environmental objectives into development planning and operations as well as in economic policies? How can environmental objectives be better addressed in situations of natural disasters and complex emergencies?

Integration of environmental objectives into development planning and operations (through policies and measures) has been a difficult task at national level, due mainly to a

lack of common understanding among national agencies and other stakeholders of the essence and meaning of sustainable development. The Philippines, after long and contentious internal discussions came out with the Philippine Agenda 21 (PA 21) about ten years ago. Despite endorsement at presidential level, PA 21 is a long way off any kind of effective implementation. While some middle-level bureaucrats and other partners (civil society, private sector, labor unions, academe) have a little understanding of sustainable development, there is no appreciation of the role of environmental management as an integral part of economic development at the highest levels of decision-making in the country. There is no long-term perspective for development that would concede that development could not be sustained without environmental management. Development is necessarily short or medium-term, if not accompanied by environmental management. The best plans for infrastructure development can be laid to waste by one huge natural disaster, if there is no early warning system in place, or if construction does not take into account the need for environmental assessments. Coherence at international level can only be achieved if there is coherence at national level.

Enhancement of global governance: Recommendations for the different actors at a global level

What are your conclusions, in the light of experiences at country level, with regard to the cooperation of UNEP and UNDP, UNEP and the MEAs, MEAs among themselves, UNEP and other UN entities, UNEP and the WB?

How can cooperation and coordination mechanisms be improved within the UN system and globally?

There would be better coordination of the UNEP with the other UN agencies and financing institutions if consultations could be started at the level of the development of their programme of work, and the examination of their respective budgets. These could only be made if the positions of Member States in each of these agencies and institutions would be consistent and coherent. If a country has no coherent positions at national level, it would not have coherent positions at international level.

Member States are the ones that determine the programme of work of the agencies, not the agencies by themselves. Member States, through their membership in the respective governing bodies of the UN agencies, would determine the work of these agencies. Coherence in Member States' positions would determine the coherence in the work of the UN agencies. Rationalization of the procedures and clear delineation of responsibilities would be necessary. The process through which this is achieved should however be as open and transparent as possible and take into account the views of all Member States.

Can a strengthened UNEP effectively and fully fulfill its mandate as the environmental pillar of the UN system?

The UNEP can be strengthened if it reverts to its traditional role as the environmental agency, with a strong scientific base, free to take initiatives on emerging issues. It can strengthen its normative, standard-setting function, and its capacity-building role for environmental law. Free from the political considerations that are inevitable in legally-binding conventions, the UNEP can pursue its environmental advocacy. The focus on "globalization and the environment" as a theme of the forthcoming Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum provides a good example. The UNEP would provide a forum for discussions in an open and transparent manner of the positive and negative implications of globalization on environment. It can also bring to fore frank discussions at international level of what happens at national levels, where some multinationals refuse to invest in countries because of requirements of environmental impact assessments in these countries. The UNEP can also enhance the standing of Environment Ministers who are often left out in discussions on economic development at national levels.

What practical measures within existing mandates could be implemented in order to enhance the effectiveness of the UN activities on environment? Are changes in mandate for the different entities necessary?

More than changes in mandate, what would be needed would be a clarification of these mandates, a clear delineation of mandates between agencies, and how each could, within its mandate, coordinate its work with the other agencies. The required financing should also be made available.

Financing (the term "funding" denotes reliance of donor funds)

What are the strengths and weakness of present funding schemes in terms of the timely availability of sufficient funds? How can improvements be achieved?

Current financing of UN agencies leaves much to be desired. Given the importance and urgency of the needs for environmental action, current resources are largely inadequate. Paragraph 79 of the UN High-Level Panel report summarizes the problems faced by UN agencies in so far as funding is concerned. Innovative financing mechanisms should be explored, that would go beyond contributions of States but tap all available resources, including those of the private sector. The UN rules and regulations for financing should likewise be examined. The administrative costs imposed on trust funds for MEAs are a case in point.

Partnerships

How can partnerships of the global environmental governance system with civil society, business and science communities be strengthened?

We have observed that the participation of major groups is one of the unique features of sustainable development, and embodied in Agenda 21. National mechanisms should remain open to all members of civil society, business and science and academic communities. The only way to resolve conflicts would be through open dialogue. Responsibilities differ, but are not irreconcilable. Open and transparent dialogue, access and full participation should be practiced at all levels of sustainable development planning and policy-making.

Thank you, Mr. Co-Chairs.