



**Draft Resolution on Agenda Item 116
"Follow-up to the outcome of the
Millennium Summit"**

**Strengthening the environmental activities
in the United Nations system**

Comments of the European Union
to the draft presented on 2 May 2008

The EU would like to once again stress its support to the work of the Co-chairs: on one hand for the draft resolution that makes skilful use of developing room for manoeuvre, and on the other hand for the proposed way forward, which is wisely drawing on the increasingly positive atmosphere. We believe that both proposals contribute to the maintaining of momentum and encourage further progress.

Preamble

The preambular part is in general good. It is essential that there be no weakening of existing agreed language on IEG, for example the Cartagena package, the Millennium Review Summit 2005, UN resolutions, UNEP's mandate, the Rio principles, the 1997 Nairobi Declaration etc.

In view of the above, the following issues should be added in the preambular part:

- reference to the Cartagena package as the basis for further strengthening of IEG
- exact reflection of the UNEP mandate
- a balanced reflection of the Rio Principles

We welcome the focus on strengthening UNEP, in line with its mandate, in its role as the principle UN actor for environment and the leading global environmental authority. At the same time, the EU welcomes the overall text's recognition on the need for evolution.

More emphasis should be given to the fact that there is a need for reform and for a faster strengthening of IEG. There should be mentioning of UNEP's Medium-term Strategy in the preambular part.

The preambular part should as well highlight the particular dependence on the natural environment of the world's poorest communities and the increasing threat posed by environmental change to sustainable development and the achievement of MDGs. When reflecting upon this dependence, it is important to consider all three pillars of sustainable development.

Scientific assessment, monitoring and early warning capacity

The EU believes that further strengthening of the scientific possibilities of UNEP is important.

The proposal of a Chief Scientific Capacity is an interesting proposal that deserves further thought. In principle, the EU believes that micromanagement should be avoided and that the scientific capacity in general needs to be strengthened. We would be interested in hearing further clarification that would facilitate our further deliberations and discussions.

We think that the MEAs should build upon the scientific work provided by UNEP, which will ensure the creation of synergies and the avoiding of unnecessary duplications. This will give a broader overview of what scientific work is being carried out where, yet still keep the important diversity. In addition, we would like to ask the Co-chairs to further clarify their idea on the consolidated research strategy, how it relates to the already existing Medium-term Strategy and GEO.

The EU would like to highlight the call for cooperation by the scientific bodies of MEAs with the Environment Watch Strategy of UNEP.

Coordination and cooperation at the level of agencies

The EU believes that coordination and cooperation at the level of agencies is one of the important elements of UNEP's mandate and has at various occasions expressed the need for enhanced coordination and cooperation and for a strong environmental pillar in the UN.

We acknowledge the need for a strengthened Environment Management Group (EMG), to remain located in Geneva to ensure the continuation of good existing communication, and believe the proposal to place it under the direct authority can be looked at positively, as it would encourage enhanced cooperation on environmental issues within the UN system. At the same time, the proposal needs further consideration and clarification, especially with regards to the relation with the CEB. The overall consistency of the UN system in the field of environment must be ensured.

The EU believes that the EMG should work on thematic areas, rather than on ecological procurement matters, as they are currently doing. UNEP, through the EMG, should take a more strategic role in coordinating and integrating the environmental activities of different international bodies. At the same time, members of the EMG themselves should also make sure to foster better integration and coherence among policies.

We support the further cooperation between UNEP and UNDP in the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan. The major role of UNEP and MEAs in this partnership needs to be the strengthening of the environment side through policy advice on implementation and programmes. UNDP should further pursue the mainstreaming of environment in its activities on the ground.

The EU supports strengthened cooperation between UNEP and international economic, trade and financial organizations, as well as the formal inclusion of UNEP and MEAs as observers on relevant WTO committees, which would increase coherency among policies.

The proposal to introduce an annual consolidated appeal is an interesting and ambitious innovation, which merits consideration, especially in terms of factual assessment of the needs required. It is important to ensure the reliability of data and the relations to the GEF. We would like to ask the Co-chairs for further clarifications on the following issues, which will be of assistance in further considerations of the group:

- purpose of the proposal
- in what way would this work be undertaken in practice.

The EU would like to call on the Co-chairs to avoid any confusion on the mandate of UNEP.

Multilateral Environmental Agreements

The call for an increased cooperation and coordination between different MEAs, the need for greater synergies between local and regional offices and a better cooperation between UNEP and the MEAs are strongly supported by the EU. Coherence in positions of individual State parties vis-à-vis the various MEAs concerned is key to a successful implementation.

The EU supports the idea of cooperation and coordination among MEAs, especially its thematic clustering. This will enhance complementarities and synergies, but will in no way harm the legal autonomy of MEAs. It is important to adopt a bottom-up approach, whereby the processes for enhancing cooperation and coordination are driven by Parties and respond to the specific needs of countries in their implementation of the conventions. We believe that the role of UNEP in submitting proposals for strengthened cooperation should be enhanced. OP13 and OP16 cover a similar notion, thus there is room for their merging. There is a need to have a clear understanding what activities are being undertaken in the system.

We could look positively into the proposal for UNEP to be invited to join the Group and believe it could provide the secretariat service to the Group.

The EU believes that the implementation of MEAs by Parties has to be in consensus with the BSP and the needs of recipient countries. This notion should be better reflected in the resolution text. These concepts should not be mixed up with the general duty of a Party to implement a Treaty after its ratification.

A factual correction is as well needed in OP15, as implementation is carried out by Parties and not by the Conferences of the Parties.

Regional presence and activities at the regional level

The EU fully supports the need to strengthen IEG at a regional level. When discussing the role of UNEP at the regional level, all of its functions must be remembered. Keeping this in mind, the role of UNEP in providing policy advice is very important. Keeping a balance between the national and regional dimension is important.

The message of OP19 and OP20 goes in a similar direction. Therefore, we suggest the focus of OP19 to be on strengthening the strategic presence of UNEP within the regions, thus making it possible to also address other offices, which UNEP uses as entry points to pilot countries and its involvement there.

Bali Strategic Plan, capacity building, technology support

The EU believes that all elements of the Cartagena package, and the Bali Strategic plan for technology support and capacity building should be implemented with a sense of urgency.

The building block on the BSP, capacity building and technology support should include a reference to mainstreaming environment in development cooperation activities. This would reinforce the relation between environment and development.

Despite MEAs and UN agencies usually having their own strategies, programmes of work and so forth, the BSP could usefully act as an overarching guiding framework when it

comes to environmental capacity building. We believe that the reference should be strengthened, and the BSP should be endorsed by all UN agencies as the guiding framework.

The Resident Coordinator and the UN Country Team should make full use of the capacities of the UN system, particularly those of UNEP, to respond to the needs of countries.

OP23 – does the UNDG approve policies and procedures?

Information Technologies, partnerships and advocacy

The EU supports that information technologies should be made available to the IEG system. We wish to highlight the importance of the organizational structures in which the use of such technology is applied to get the full benefit of their potential. At the same time, we would like to ask for clarification about the meaning of the paragraphs in the building block addressing Information technologies, partnerships and advocacy, and its budgetary implications in view of the value added. In general, micromanagement should be avoided.

Financing

The EU believes that, in view of increasing environmental degradation in developed and developing countries, more efficient use of existing resources is needed, as well as ensuring adequate global financial means.

The creation of a Global Environmental Financial Tracking System could in general be useful to identify gaps and deficiencies in spending and lack of coordination between donors. Nonetheless, we have doubts whether a voluntary self-reporting system would work. At the same time, we are concerned that the creation of a Tracking System would not lead to duplications. In order to avoid this, a link could be made to the existing mapping activities - the OECD/Development Assistance Committee which publishes statistics and reports on aid and other resource flows to developing countries. This is the only source, which disposes over reliable data that are being gathered according to specific rules and are being kept under review. The flows into environment or implementation of the Rio Conventions can be easily extracted since there are specific markers to that effect.

The EU would be interested in further clarifications of the Co-chairs on the meaning of OP29. We believe that the introduction of new focal areas of the GEF would need to be carefully assessed, including with regards to its benefits but also in light of potential impacts on the availability of resources for other areas.

The EU supports an enhanced role for UNEP. This may require additional resources. The EU is still examining the financial implications arising from this section of the resolution. Despite some concern regarding the issue, we believe that at this stage further discussion on the roles and activities of a strengthened UNEP would be important in order to address the question of budget.

Broader transformation of the international environmental governance

The EU welcomes the resolution's emphasis on the need for evolution and the paragraphs, which leave room for the opening to a broader transformation of the existing IEG system. We would be interested in the Co-chairs' clarification to the meaning of the continuation of informal consultations (OP34).

We believe that formal consultations should start during the sixty-third session of UNGA, and that an open-ended working group with a clear mandate should be established to consider further strengthening of the environmental governance system and explore the possibilities for a broader transformation of the system.

Follow-up

The EU welcomes the provisions for follow-up and implementation. We would be interested in for the report of the SG to be submitted to the GA during the sixty-third session of UNGA.

17 June 2008