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**Coordination and cooperation within and outside
the United Nations, including non-governmental organizations**

The role of civil society

**ENHANCING CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN THE WORK OF THE UNITED NATIONS
ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME: STRATEGY PAPER**

Note by the Executive Director

The present document contains a revised strategy paper on enhancing civil society engagement in the work of the United Nations Environment Programme, which has been prepared in pursuance of Governing Council decision SS.VII/5 of 15 February 2002. The strategy paper has been reproduced without formal editing.

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Annex I: Criteria for NGO accreditation as observers to the Governing Council of UNEP and its subsidiary bodies

Introduction and background

In decision SS.VII/5 of the seventh special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Executive Director was requested "to further develop, and review and revise as necessary the strategy for engaging civil society in the programme of activities of the United Nations Environment Programme, in consultation with Governments and civil society. The strategy should provide clear direction to the secretariat to ensure that all programmes take into account opportunities for multi-stakeholder participation in design, implementation, monitoring of activities, and dissemination of outputs."

This decision was a reflection of the keen interest expressed by member states to see the organization playing a stronger role in catalysing effective action to protect the environment through enhanced collaboration with the multitude of civil society actors who share the same purpose around the world. In accordance with this request, the Executive Director has developed the following strategy to enhance UNEP's engagement with civil society, including the private sector, in its programmes and activities.

The strategy proposed in this paper has been derived from consultations and communication over the past year and a half with many representatives of civil society constituencies, as well as with UNEP programmes, the Governing Council and the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR). The strategy takes into account the outcomes of the WSSD, as well as the Report of the United Nations Secretary-General "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (Doc. A/57/387 of 9 September 2002), in particular its recommendations on engaging civil society and the private sector.

a) *Background on UNEP's historical engagement with civil society, private sector and other major groups*

UNEP owes much to civil society for its establishment. The 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment and the accompanying NGO Forum marked a breakthrough in the way major groups related to and sought to influence intergovernmental decision making processes. The Stockholm Declaration recognised the important role of citizens, communities, enterprises and institutions at every level, in achieving its environmental goal. Thus UNEP, at its creation, was encouraged to work together with civil society.

From its inception, UNEP promoted a policy to invite wide NGO input and collaboration. An NGO Section was set up in 1973. This office was charged with coordinating UNEP's programmatic activities with parallel efforts of NGOs. In 1974, an independent coalition of environmental NGOs was established as the Environment Liaison Centre International to connect groups around the world with the work of UNEP. IUCN and WWF were among the pioneer organizations involved and are supporting UNEP since the seventies, especially in the field of biological diversity. Their work, in partnership with governments and UN agencies, led to the release of the World Conservation Strategy in 1980.

The 1980s saw UNEP forging new links with a wide variety of major groups. These included: women's groups (1985 World Conference on Women in Nairobi); religious groups (1984 launching of "UNEP Environmental Sabbath" initiative); business and industry (1984 "World Industry Conference on Environmental Management"); children and youth (Global Youth Forums and a network of youth advisors for various regions). In 1985, a strategy to set up UNEP national committees began. The UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992 is often recognized as the point at which civil society truly became a full player in the global decision-making arena. Civil society had, by then, built up its capacity and legitimacy and had grown to become a prominent voice in policy discussions. Agenda 21, Chapter 28, calls on UNEP to raise "general awareness and action in the area of environmental protection through collaboration with the general public, non-governmental entities and intergovernmental institutions."

In 1995, the Governing Council called upon UNEP to develop a framework for working more closely with NGOs. Consequently, UNEP agreed to support NGO and Major Group input into project design,

implementation and evaluation, policy development as well as environmental governance. These decisions were formalised in UNEP's Manual on Project Formulation, Approval, Monitoring and Evaluation.

b) Overview and definitions

Civil society is a natural ally of UNEP - an ally in working with peoples, governments, and non-state organizations. The role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the design, implementation and monitoring of a range of projects and programmes is widely recognised. Over the past 30 years, UNEP has established a strong linkage with civil society. Through its support to civil society participation in preparations for UNCED, and during the negotiations for the "Rio Conventions", as well as by recognition of the importance of partnerships with civil society organizations in the Nairobi and Malmö Declarations, these linkages have been clearly established.

Engaging stakeholders as partners is important for the following reasons:

- ❑ External stakeholders have many different perspectives to offer in order to foster long-term, broad-based support for UNEP's work.
- ❑ Engaging a wide range of stakeholders in addressing environmental issues expands the reach and impact of strategies far beyond the capability of UNEP's own limited financial and human resources.
- ❑ Active involvement of stakeholders at the national level, where many environmental problems need to be addressed, and where many of UNEP's programme partners are located, complements UNEP's presence at the regional and global levels.

For the purpose of this strategy, civil society encompasses major groups, that is farmers, women, the scientific and technological community, children and youth, indigenous peoples and their communities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, non-governmental organizations as well as local authorities. The strategy focuses on engagement with the organizations established by each of these major groups in so far as they are involved in public interest activities. The majority of these organizations are referred to as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for the purpose of defining the primary operational target group for the strategy.

It should also be noted that the primary target of most of the strategy is organizations and their networks working at the national, regional and international level. While groups working at a local level are vital players in the effort for sustainable development, UNEP's institutional structure makes it operationally difficult to reach them directly. Rather, they will be reached through strengthened engagement with civil society networks and other organizations that have the capacity and the mandate to do so.

Approach to the private sector

Special note must be taken of the approach taken to the private sector in this strategy. While the Governing Council has requested the Secretariat to include the private sector in consideration of ways to enhance engagement with civil society, there have been a number of limitations in fulfilling this prescription. These include:

- Under current ECOSOC and UNEP procedures, private or commercial entities can only be accredited to UN bodies through their non-profit associations.
- The approach to working with the private sector is generally and fundamentally different to most approaches to working with NGOs. For example, in working with the private sector the aim is normally to influence change in their own policies and practices, while working with NGOs most often entails strengthening their effectiveness in influencing change in others. Moreover, according to the "Agenda for further change" of the UN Secretary-General a "number of civil society actors - parliamentarians and private sector groups, to name but two - do not consider themselves to be non-governmental organizations, and the modalities for their participation are not very clear." [para.139(e)]
- UNEP already has in place a specific programme for working with the private sector through the Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE), whereas resources committed to working with NGOs have historically been very limited; this implies that the weight of a strategy for enhancing

engagement with civil society including the private sector must fall on the side of strengthening the role of NGOs rather than the latter.

- There are major ideological differences between most NGOs and private sector organizations which inhibit the formulation and operationalising of strategies requiring them to work jointly or that are based on an assumption of consensus on specific issues.

In light of these limitations, the strategy addresses enhancing engagement with the private sector in two ways: through strengthening current approaches to the private sector (primarily through the activities of DTIE), and through strengthening mediation between the private sector and other civil society organizations, or NGOs. The latter strategies are outlined more specifically under Strategy Pillar II.

A final consideration of note is the above-mentioned report of the UN Secretary-General. This report observes that, “the system that has evolved over several years for facilitating the interaction between the UN and civil society actors is showing signs of strain,” [para.139] and announces the establishment of “a panel of eminent persons to review the relationship ... and offer practical recommendations for improved modalities of interaction.”[action 19] The outcome of these deliberations will no doubt have implications for the United Nations' system including UNEP's policies and modalities for engagement with civil society. Considering this new development it will be important to bear in mind that a review of the strategies presented in this paper may be necessary once the panel's findings are made public.

c) Overview of current practice

At the operational level, there are many examples of successful engagement with civil society by UNEP's divisional programmes. Business and industry engage with UNEP at all levels and with all divisions. These include:

- Expanding and enhancing regular communication and consultation with CSOs through the establishment in 1999 of the Civil Society and NGOs Unit in the Division of Policy Development and Law (DPDL);
- Promoting mechanisms for engagement with NGOs in information-sharing and assessment activities, such as with the Global Environmental Outlook, UNEP.Net and Infoterra;
- Identifying and collaborating with NGOs in the design and implementation of GEF medium sized projects, including projects with indigenous peoples and on biological diversity;
- Fostering strong NGO constituencies by convention secretariats and regional and out-posted offices;
- The Environmental Law Branch of UNEP has established good working relationships with CSOs through the support of the regional offices, and CSOs are playing an important role in developing national and international legal instruments;
- Compiling NGOs best practices and monitoring NGO pilot projects by the Division of Environment Implementation;
- Implementing special initiatives jointly with civil society actors, such as the Coral Reef Initiative;
- The Communication and Public Information Division implements several projects in partnership with civil society and private sector groups, and has spearheaded UNEP's outreach to youth organizations. UNEP also undertakes extensive work with educational organizations and academic institutions on environmental education.

UNEP has engaged with industry and business associations to promote, for example, cleaner production, management of industrial pollution, and voluntary environmental initiatives. A major aspect of this role has been to establish partnerships with the private sector, to launch corresponding outreach activities, to disseminate information and to implement activities in the regions. UNEP also collects information regarding the relevant needs of the countries and private sector groups.

Representatives of business and industry associations from various sectors and regions participate in the annual consultative meeting of UNEP with industry and trade associations, where they have the opportunity to advise UNEP/Division of Technology, Industry and Economics on the execution of its work programme.

Key examples of voluntary initiatives promoted by UNEP, which benefited from significant input by NGOs and other stakeholders, include:

- The Financial Institutions Initiative;

- The Insurance Industry Initiative;
- The Tour Operators Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development;
- A Telecommunications Initiative;
- The Global Reporting Initiative;
- The Global Compact Initiative of the UN Secretary-General;
- The Advertising Initiative.

d) Recent developments in enhancing engagement with civil society

In the spirit of the Nairobi and Malmö Declarations, the Governing Council of UNEP, in early 2001, called on the Executive Director “to further the consultative process, including at the regional level, with Governments, the civil society, private sector and other major groups on ways and means to enhance the active engagement and participation of civil society in the work of the United Nations Environment Programme”.

Subsequently, the seventh special session of the GC/GMEF, in February 2002, requested the Executive Director, *inter alia*, “to further develop, and review and revise as necessary the strategy for engaging civil society in the programme of activities of the United Nations Environment Programme,” and “to consider the best way to include the views of civil society in the proceedings of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum.”

As a result of these decisions, the past years have witnessed an acceleration of consultations and collaborative thinking on how UNEP should be working with civil society and the private sector in order to enhance commitment and effectiveness in addressing the environmental and sustainable development challenges of the 21st century. Global and regional meetings have been convened with civil society representatives to gather their views on engagement with UNEP. Electronic consultations have also been conducted. In this endeavour, it is clear that the way forward is to build stronger bonds and to promote respect for cultural diversity among the myriad of constituencies and major groups engaged with UNEP.

2. Strategic framework for enhancing engagement

It is clear from the above that UNEP already engages with civil society in a wide variety of ways and at numerous levels. So the issue is not so much how to increase engagement, but how to make it more effective in supporting UNEP’s mandate and objectives. This is necessary in order to respond to the evolving context of international governance as it relates to the formulation and implementation of environmental and sustainable development policy.

The objectives of this strategy can therefore be stated as follows:

- *For UNEP: To seek greater collaboration with civil society in the fulfilment of its mandate to respond to global environmental concerns.*
- *For civil society: To effectively network with other groups, build internal capacity through raising awareness of UNEP's activities at national, regional and international levels*

There are two principal focuses for engagement with civil society. One concentration point is at the level of governance and policy formulation, elaborated in Chapter 4, Strategy Pillar II. A second pillar is at the level of programme operations, discussed under Strategy Pillar III in Chapter 5.

As these two focuses are quite distinct, they are treated as two of three pillars in the new UNEP strategy for engaging civil society. What they have in common is a need for an institutional environment with good information and communication mechanisms in order to ensure qualitative exchange between UNEP and its partners at both the policy and the programmatic levels. This institutional environment forms the third pillar, although it will be addressed first, in Chapter 3, since it underpins the strategies for addressing the other two.

The strategy will emphasize an incremental approach, building on current mechanisms and practices, and envisioning activities and innovations to strengthen civil society engagement over three to four years, after

which the strategy should be reviewed. The fact that it would be unrealistic to propose new activities that will require mobilization of substantial financial resources that patently are not available, argues for such an approach. In addition, any strategy that aims to enhance the quality of inter-institutional relationships must take into account that attitudes towards and practices of "working together" cannot be made to change overnight.

This does not mean that UNEP will in any way delay implementation of the strategy. On the contrary, demands for a stronger role in engaging civil society in addressing the global environmental agenda, particularly in the follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), require that the organization move forward expediently in this area. To this end, the Secretariat will commence implementation of the strategy before the end of 2002, concentrating on components that will provide the foundation for other changes. These will include strengthening of information/communication systems, developing regional strategies for enhanced engagement, and preparing for a Global Civil Society Forum in conjunction with the 22nd session of the Governing Council in February 2003.

3. Strategy Pillar I: Strengthening institutional relations through information management and a decentralised approach

a) Introduction

In decision SS.VII/5, the GC/GMEF further requested "the Executive Director to review the practices of civil society engagement in other United Nations agencies, as well as precise modalities of civil society engagement, including involvement of the private sector in the work of the United Nations Environment Programme to achieve constructive partnership with the business community. This involvement should be further discussed, developed, and formulated in consultation with the representatives of civil society and under the guidance of the Committee of Permanent Representatives."

Frequent concerns expressed in consultations relate to information management about and for NGOs. Concerns include: lack of information about who is doing what and with which NGOs; how to find appropriate NGOs to engage with; questions of the legitimacy of organizations as representatives at international forums; how NGOs can interact with one another to have more effective input to UNEP, etc. There are many ways that NGOs interact with UNEP, and all divisions have some level of engagement with civil society, but coordination has been weak. Until 1999, there was no programme dedicated solely to civil society matters – although matters have been somewhat different with respect to the private sector, where the Division of Technology, Industry and Economics is dedicated to deal with this sector. Apart from the outreach programme run under the former Information and Public Affairs Branch, the rest of the major groups have not had a comparable and consistent access. Another inhibiting factor has been the lack of a national level presence for UNEP, where much civil society activity takes place.

The first pillar of the strategy to strengthen engagement of civil society must therefore address such issues of institutional and information-communication support mechanisms. Special focus will be given in this area to addressing the needs of NGOs from developing countries.

b) Information management: virtual communication

Databases and other information management mechanisms

A revamped civil society database is under development by the CS and NGOs Unit, which will oversee its long-term maintenance in collaboration with the Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA). It will be linked to the Environmental Directory. The CS focal point in each regional office will ensure the accuracy and regular updating of the database for their respective region. The database will hold qualitative data on UNEP's engagement history with civil society, areas of expertise and basic contact information. It will also provide a mechanism for managing information to be used for accreditation and programme partnership identification purposes.

Better quality information management systems will support the strengthening of accreditation procedures. By viewing accreditation and assessment procedures as a facility in the engagement process beyond mere participation in governance activities, it takes on a much broader role as a gateway to engagement. Well-formulated assessment criteria can assist UNEP to identify NGOs with capacity and areas of technical expertise that can be valuable for programme implementation.

UNEP will improve its support to business and industry in the areas of capacity building and technology through its databases such as:

- **MaESTro** information system of UNEP IETC, providing a database on environmentally sound technology products and contacts.
- **Sustainable Alternatives Network (SANet)**, and web portal system to disseminate information and advance a network of partnerships to replicate win-win solutions in the field of technology transfer.
- **Green procurement database**, providing environmental product criteria for procurement offices.

Internet and other information / communication media

UNEP.Net can be a prototype for modalities to guarantee independent voice and participation by civil society, as well as an opportunity for capacity-building and fostering national and regional networking. UNEP.Net is the global environmental information portal being developed by UNEP in cooperation with a diverse range of partner institutions world-wide, and NGOs have a key role to play in this implementation process.

UNEP.Net will provide national NGOs with a practical mechanism to promote their activities and joint cooperation with UNEP, making use of a NGO section of the country profile, which can evolve into a comprehensive NGO bulletin board. This will facilitate two-way information exchange between UNEP and NGOs at the national level as recommended in the UN Secretary-General's Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements.

Dynamic civil society activities over the past decade have been built on internet-based communication systems. List-serves, on-line conferences, and other such mechanisms have supported information sharing and technical advice, consensus-building around specific issues, early warning of emerging environmental threats, joint advocacy for policy change, etc. In fact, there is so much activity of this nature that it is often difficult to find the information channels most relevant to an organization's needs. It should be noted, however, that the predominant users of these technologies are in developed countries. An important role that can be played by UNEP.net is to provide a service to link NGOs at the local and national level with related internet-based activity. This will focus especially on increasing the participation in such activity by NGOs from developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

Mechanisms need to be put in place for strengthening communication with UNEP's civil society constituencies. When it is fully operational, UNEP.Net and the civil society database will provide the primary contact base for such communication. The Civil Society and NGOs Unit will be responsible for providing regular communication to this contact base on matters of interest to the constituency. There are numerous communication tools that can be utilised to strengthen the engagement of civil society, and the Civil Society and NGOs Unit in consultation with the interdivisional civil society task group (see below) will identify tools to fulfil its outreach potential. A guided format for CSOs to respond and make suggestions on specific UNEP initiatives will be developed.

The communication strategy will aim to ensure that UNEP's outreach to civil society becomes more than simply an information dissemination process, but rather a mechanism of engagement through which organizations interact in dialogue with UNEP and with each other, share information and identify emerging issues. UNEP will come to act as a helpful and definitive authority on a select number of issues of greatest interest for civil society, and to actively package relevant information to make it more useful for civil society.

With respect to developing countries, we recognise that information communication technology can not reach all CSOs. Therefore strengthening the regional offices in developing countries on civil society issues

and providing hard copies of reports on UNEP's activities is one of the highest priorities. Additionally, Regional Offices could establish and support Radio and TV communication and transmissions through programmes and projects and foster cooperation among Radio and TV broadcasters in developing countries through programme exchange and joint Radio and TV productions.

With specific reference to business and industry, UNEP will continue to prepare and update technical publications and electronic information systems on cleaner and safer production, environmental technologies and sustainable consumption. This will be done through:

- sector specific websites related to its voluntary initiatives with industry sectors and its work on chemicals, ozone, energy and trade;
- improved electronic information systems for information exchange and promoting dialogues on key issues and policies, including its: Mineral Resources Forum, Offshore Oil and Gas Environment Forum, and Sustainable Agri-food Production and Consumption Forum.
- Strengthening SC.net, a monthly web newsletter on sustainable consumption and www.youthxchange.net, an interactive website for youth worldwide to promote sustainable consumption.

c) Decentralized approach: physical communication

Role of regional and outposted offices

Regional and outposted offices will be the “front line” in implementation of the civil society engagement strategy. Regional Offices need to be proactive in strengthening and working with national and regional NGO networks, and these should have a link with global forums. These regional processes should focus on specific issues, and UNEP will concentrate on networks to tap information and catalyse discussion groups. Funding sources will need to be found to support the Regional Offices in this activity, particularly for identifying appropriate NGO partners and convening periodic consultations with them in order to foster regional networking structures. Regional Offices, as the primary contact point with NGOs, will play a lead role in fostering programmatic engagement. Regional Offices will help delivering UNEP outreach to business and industry, and will have primary responsibility for database management.

Interdivisional coordination

Every UNEP division – as well as regional and out-posted offices – will designate a focal point for CSO issues. The Civil Society and NGOs Unit in isolation cannot achieve the mainstreaming of CSO engagement. Integration will require a focused effort by all parts of UNEP. The Unit will therefore coordinate action with the different programmes to identify CSO focal points, and establish a task group that will meet on a regular basis to address common issues related to CSO engagement, advise the Unit, and support the implementation and evaluation of the civil society engagement strategy goals.

The task group will examine possibilities for a more coordinated approach to working with the various major groups. At present, groups such as women/gender, youth, NGOs and the private sector are all dealt with by separate programme divisions, as are UNEP National Committees, which cross over several major groups. This diversity of approaches calls for a more systematic framework, for which the inter-divisional task group will be naturally placed to address.

d) Accreditation procedures

The responsibility for action to protect and enhance the environment rests primarily with governments, and international cooperative programmes in the field of the environment must be undertaken with due respect for the sovereign rights of states and in conformity with the Charter of the UN and principles of international law. However, it is also understood that maximum cooperation and coordination is necessary to defend and improve the environment for present and future generations. This calls for the acceptance of responsibility by citizens, communities, enterprises and institutions at every level, all sharing equitably in common efforts for the preservation and improvement of the environment and to achieve sustainable development.

In response to the recognition that a new level of cooperation among states and key sectors of society and people is needed in order to establish an equitable global partnership, the UN General Assembly adopted

Resolution 1996/31, in which the UN system is called upon to take action, due to the changes in the non-governmental sector, including the emergence of a large number of national and regional organizations. Subsequently, decision SS.VII/5 adopted by the GC/GMEF at its seventh special session, on enhancing civil society engagement in the work of UNEP, states that in order to meaningfully consider the views of representatives of major groups and NGOs, clear channels for providing governments with their views should be given, within established rules and modalities of the UN system.

With the amendment of Rule 69 of the Rules of Procedure of the Governing Council on "Observers of international non-governmental organizations", accreditation procedures will be in line with the evolved views such as incorporated in the above documents. Enhanced involvement of civil society organizations will thus not only enhance possibilities for their participation within UNEP, but will also create and improve prospects for UNEP regarding implementation of its work programme, and will invigorate and reinforce UNEP's capacity-building efforts and its work towards engaging society as a whole.

Current criteria for accreditation are attached in Annex I. The revised criteria for accreditation will be based on UNGA Resolution 1996/31 on the consultative relationship between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. It is noted that the aims and purposes of the civil society organization will have to be in conformity with the spirit, purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Further it entails, inter alia, that documented proof of interest in the field of the environment and proof of non-profit status and formal registration must be provided by applicant organizations. Where an organization has already obtained consultative status with ECOSOC, they will only be required to provide documentation of their interest in the field of the environment. UNEP Secretariat will have the responsibility for processing accreditation applications. If the application for accreditation has been assessed positively by the Secretariat, the Governing Council shall adopt and, when necessary, revise the list of organizations accredited to UNEP.

Regional Offices, being the primary contact point with NGOs, will be actively involved in the accreditation process. They will undertake a preliminary assessment of all accreditation applications from their region, in accordance with the revised Criteria for Accreditation. CSOs may apply directly to the Civil Society and NGOs Unit at the UNEP Secretariat, or alternatively, they may apply through a regional office or through their national government. At the Regional Civil Society Fora, NGOs will decide among themselves which organizations will represent them at the subsequent Global Civil Society Forum, with a maximum of, for example, five organizations. Furthermore, Regional Offices can also encourage NGOs that are operating within the field of UNEP's mandate, both at the policy and programme levels, to apply for accreditation.

4. Strategy Pillar II: Modalities of Civil Society input at policy level

In decision SS.VII/5, the GC/GMEF requested "the Executive Director to continue the current practice of convening a civil society forum that is regionally balanced and representative in conjunction with the meetings of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in close consultation with civil society". It further invited "the Executive Director to consider the best way to include the views of civil society in the proceedings of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum".

Several mechanisms are being instituted to implement Governing Council decisions on civil society:

a) Global Civil Society Forum in conjunction with the Governing Council

Decision SS.VII/5 has made the convening of a Global Civil Society Forum to coincide with GC/GMEF meetings mandatory. The challenge now is to develop mechanisms that will enhance the quality of input from these forums to the GC/GMEF, both in terms of the competence of the participating NGOs as well of substance. Regional networking will be the main strategy to support this endeavour. The Forum will be a multi-stakeholder body and will meet prior to the GC/GMEF meetings. It will reflect on issues of major concern to UNEP and the Governing Council, and might formulate recommendations on these matters. The Forum will not have any decision-making role in UNEP. It is proposed that multi-stakeholder "dialogue sessions" be organized at future GC/GMEF sessions, where representatives of major groups participating in the Global Civil Society Forum will engage with government delegations in discussions on the issues being

addressed in the GC/GMEF session. To ensure that the Global Civil Society Forum is able to address the Governing Council in a meaningful way, the participants will be informed on the issues to be discussed at the Governing Council meeting as early as possible.

In consideration of the need to ensure that such stakeholder contributions reflect a balanced representation from all regions, including at local and national levels, Regional Offices will play a key role in facilitating participation. To this end, the strategy envisions increased support for the convening of sub-regional and regional multi-stakeholder forums, on the model of the preparatory process of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. These regional processes would nominate representatives to the Global Civil Society Forum taking into account the topics that will be discussed with the objective to consider and benefit from all views represented. The Civil Society & NGOs Unit in collaboration with DRC will then assure that those regional selections reflect equally the broadest views at the Global Civil Society Forum. Extra resources will need to be allocated to ensure the participation of NGOs from developing countries and countries with economies in transition. UNEP intends to support civil society organizations in acquiring additional funding.

In order to identify relevant participants for the sub-regional and regional forums, UNEP's Regional Offices will work in consultation with national level umbrella groups or networks of major groups, or with National Councils for Sustainable Development, UNEP National Committees, or other appropriate civil society entities. Where such bodies do not exist, governments can be requested to convene multi-stakeholder meetings that can select representatives to regional meetings, as well as deliberate and provide recommendations on substantive issues. In either case, an important part of the function of Regional Offices in this process will aim to strengthen capacity of national bodies in building consensus around environmental issues. The Civil Society and NGOs Unit will work closely with the Regional Offices to design and implement this component of the strategy.

b) Civil Society Advisory Group to the Executive Director

A mechanism will be established, possibly as a standing committee, for providing ongoing advice to the Executive Director. They will meet as required by the Executive Director, but will form a nucleus of civil society partners who can provide qualitative input to policy and programme strategy formulation. Members of this committee will be selected by UNEP on the basis of their experience and expertise in environmental and sustainable development issues, and will, as much as possible, be part of existing CSO networks focused on the multilateral environmental agreements or other international environment and sustainable development processes.

c) Civil society liaison with the Committee of Permanent Representatives

The Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR), as a subsidiary body to the Governing Council, formalized and strengthened by decision 19/32, would benefit from the views of civil society on the matters under its consideration. To this end the Secretariat will develop mechanisms for improved information exchange between the CPR and CSOs, in consultation with the Civil Society Advisory Group to the Executive Director.

d) Institutional support to multi-stakeholder consultations

The above three mechanisms for civil society input to policy deliberations will enhance the capability for UNEP to be responsive to the views of civil society on a wide range of issues on an on-going basis. There will remain a need, however, to address specific emerging issues from time to time through multi-stakeholder consultations in a more concentrated time-bound and results-oriented approach. Issues that call for urgent action but where decisions are obstructed by strongly divergent positions taken by key stakeholders often can only be resolved through skilful facilitation of dialogue between opposing parties. Frequently such divergence arises between the private sector and civil society actors, around such issues as corporate accountability or "voluntary initiatives". UNEP has a long history of working with private sector groups and developing sector-wise strategies for addressing environmental problems. In the process of

enhancing its engagement with civil society UNEP is well placed to build on its private sector relations to play a strong mediating role between this sector and NGOs.

One mechanism that can be used more effectively in this regard is the concept of global public policy networks (GPPNs). This model is emerging as a viable alternative to create new ways to respond to international issues such as climate change and alternative trade. GPPNs enable leading representatives of different sectors (governments, IGOs, NGOs and the private sector) to engage in extended dialogue in a way that is not always well-fostered through short-term consultations. The World Commission on Dams, the Mining Initiative, the Global Reporting Initiative and the Crucible Group are examples of GPPNs where the results have been extremely positive and enduring for all stakeholders.

UNEP, in its capacity as an information-brokering and normative institution, will explore such mechanisms to convene reflective consultation around key issues, that bring diverse views to the same table to find areas of agreement and consensual solutions. The regional networks and information system should assist the identification of participants in these consultative mechanisms. UNEP will need to build in-house capacity to support specific dialogues as issues emerge to be addressed in this way. The Civil Society Advisory Group to the Executive Director will play an instrumental role in assisting the design of this mechanism.

e) Capacity building

Improving the effectiveness of CSO contributions at the policy level will require strengthening capacity to participate, especially for NGOs from developing countries and from Central/Eastern Europe and countries with economies in transition. The Civil Society and NGOs Unit will develop training initiatives to support this, possibly in collaboration with the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service, while keeping in mind that NGOs themselves can provide valuable guidance on how to design and implement capacity building. If such training were conducted as part of periodic civil society meetings, the cost implications will be minimal. UNEP Divisions, Regional Offices and the Civil Society & NGOs Unit should identify active grassroots groups and engage them at national and regional levels and support them through capacity building for their international work engagement. The level of awareness in grassroots and national organizations of international initiatives and policies is still very limited, and there is much scope for UNEP to raise awareness on how government commitments on an international level can be useful to environmental advocates at the national level.

5. Strategy Pillar III: Civil Society engagement in programme design and implementation

In decision SS.VII/5, the GC/GMEF directed that “The strategy should provide clear direction to the secretariat to ensure that all programmes take into account opportunities for multi-stakeholder participation in design, implementation, monitoring of activities, and dissemination of outputs.” It also requested the Executive Director “to report to the twenty-second session of the Governing Council on the progress made in the enhancement of civil society engagement in the work of the United Nations Environment Programme”

a) Institutionalising procedures for engagement

As requested in decision SS.VII/5, a more systematic and proactive implementation of UNEP's policy pertaining to civil society needs to be pursued, to ensure that inclusion and consideration of CSOs in design of activities is a standard requirement in order for UNEP to gain in constancy and transparency when implementing its programme of work. Programme/project planning procedures will require documented consideration of how civil society and private sector will participate in the various stages of the activity. UNEP's programme manual will be amended to provide more detailed guidance on modalities for engagement of NGOs in programme/project design, implementation, and monitoring.

UNEP needs to strengthen the Civil Society and NGOs Unit with human and financial resources, to act as secretariat for the forums and the inter-divisional task group, CS information management, and to develop a training programme to address internal and external capacity building needs.

The Civil Society Advisory Group to the Executive Director will play a key role in enhancing programme engagement, in addition to its role at the policy level. As a group, they will advise the secretariat on development of engagement guidelines, capacity building needs, and monitoring and evaluation of CSO engagement practices. The CPR will be informed on the Advisory Group's activities.

b) Capacity building

UNEP will provide increasing and concentrated effort on capacity building of CSOs for more effective environmental programme planning and implementation, especially for CSOs in developing countries in order to strengthen engagement at the programme level. UNEP training projects (e.g. in environmental law) should accommodate CSO participants, and training programmes will be targeted specifically at CSOs, to cover environmental advocacy, awareness raising and fund raising skills.

A key tool for programme engagement capacity building will be an operational manual for CSOs, to increase awareness of the opportunities for working with UNEP, and build understanding of the policies and procedures for doing so. This will be a particularly important tool for Regional Offices to expand their outreach to and support for CSOs within their regions.

c) Enhancing engagement with civil society

UNEP will continue to engage business and industry and related CSOs in multi-stakeholder voluntary initiatives by industry sector. Cross-sectoral voluntary initiatives will also be developed to promote sustainable consumption and production, working with fellow UN organizations, research partners and stakeholder groups, expanding and building on the experience of existing initiatives such as the Life Cycle Initiative, Global Reporting Initiative, and the UN Global Compact.

In follow-up to the WSSD, UNEP intends to support industry partners who wish to produce sector reports for Johannesburg+5, building on the consultative process prior to WSSD. The reports will indicate progress made with the implementation of the Johannesburg Programme of Action. Greater contributions from the developing world will be advanced through regional meetings, organized with UNEP regional offices in order to help industry associations engaged in regional processes.

d) Monitoring and evaluation of CS engagement

Learning mechanisms are needed to guide future policy development with respect to civil society engagement. Indicators for monitoring and evaluating quality and impact of multi-stakeholder approaches will be established. These include the development of indicators of institutional capacity, the need to measure the environmental impact of institutional strengthening, and the need for a performance monitoring plan with biophysical and socio-economic indicators.

UNEP will monitor and evaluate progress of the involvement of industry partners and related stakeholders in its voluntary initiatives through:

- organising annual board and general meetings to examine annual progress reports,
- organising annual roundtable conferences and workshops on topical issues to strengthen industry awareness and involvement, and
- advancing improved reporting along the Guidelines (general, thematic and sectoral) of the Global Reporting Initiative.

UNEP will also ensure that clear guidelines exist for engaging business and industry, disseminating internally and adapting to its mandate the "*Guidelines on Co-operation between the United Nations and the Business Community*" issued by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

6. Strategic approaches to implementation

Enhancing civil society engagement in the work of UNEP is not an end in itself. The goal of the strategy is rather to enhance UNEP's capacity to respond to environmental problems world-wide. If the strategy is to contribute significantly to this goal, it must be underpinned with adequate means for effective implementation, in terms of institutional modalities and financial resources. Such means will be obtained through two principal strategic approaches, a medium term plan, and burden-sharing mechanisms.

a) Medium term plan

As noted in Chapter 2, the strategy is envisioned to be implemented over a three to four-year period. Institutional changes as proposed, such as the strengthening of the roles of Regional Offices and CS focal points in each Division, operationalising the Civil Society Advisory Group, and strengthening procedures for project design and implementation, will require time for detailed planning and mobilising. In terms of the CSO constituency that will be involved at the various levels of implementing the strategy, they will also need to organise their own response.

In order to keep the strategy in focus over this period, for both the internal and external actors, these measures will be incorporated in the medium term plan. This plan will provide the framework to guide implementation, through the identification of roles and timelines, resource needs, outlining strategies to ensure complementarity with the overall UNEP programme of work and budget, and development of strategic partnerships with specific CSOs, governments and agencies.

b) Burden-sharing mechanisms

Given the goal of enhancing UNEP's capacity to respond to environmental problems world-wide, through enhanced engagement with civil society including the private sector, the responsibility for providing the resources to achieve this will need to, and should, be shared amongst the array of actors who participate in both the implementation and the benefits.

Currently, all activities are government funded except those initiated through DTIE which benefit from support from the private sector. Through the medium term plan, UNEP will incorporate activities in its biennium budgetary process as appropriate. Costed work plans will allocate resources dedicated to activities envisioned in the strategy.

The civil society strategy will be adapted to regional specifications and realities. UNEP will build its own capacity to deal with civil society through improved interdepartmental co-ordination and through improved collaboration with its Regional Offices. UNEP will also seek to be fair and equitable in its relations with the private sector on the one hand, and the other constituencies of the civil society on the other.

Financial allocations separate from the Environment Fund will be required to support implementation of the institutional, capacity building and programmatic measures that cannot be accommodated within the costed work plan. Such funds should not be designed as a small grants facility to respond to a myriad of NGO projects, as it would be difficult to administer and there are alternative sources for such funding. These funds, instead, will be designed for targeted use to support implementation of the larger CSO strategy. They will provide a vehicle for donors – including governments, NGOs, foundations and other agencies – to target their funds for UNEP Civil Society relations. At the same time, donor agencies will be invited to share the costs of specific activities, such as civil society forums or joint projects with NGOs.

The private sector already covers much of the cost of UNEP initiatives aimed at this sector. With the enhanced engagement of the private sector as envisioned in this strategy, it is expected that such burden-sharing will be made more equitable in future.

A further measure in burden-sharing will be increased efforts to fundraise jointly with CSO partners to obtain the resources needed for implementation of many of the initiatives that emerge during implementation of the medium term plan.

Annex I

**Criteria for NGO accreditation as observers to the Governing Council of UNEP
and its subsidiary bodies**

The following criteria apply:

1. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972 Section IV Paragraph 5 which "invites other intergovernmental and those non-governmental organizations that have an interest in the field of the environment to lend their full support and collaboration to the United Nations with a view to achieving the largest possible degree of co-operation and co-ordination".
2. Rules of Procedure of the Governing Council (1988) - Rule 69 which states:

"1. International non-governmental organizations having an interest in the field of the environment, referred to in section IV, paragraph 5, of General Assembly Resolution 2997 (XXVII), may designate representatives to sit as observers at public meetings of the Governing Council and its subsidiary organs, if any. The Governing Council shall from time to time adopt and revise when necessary a list of such organizations. Upon the invitation of the President or Chairman, as the case may be, and subject to the approval of the Governing Council or of the subsidiary organ concerned, international non-governmental organizations may make oral statements on matters within the scope of their activities.

2. Written statements provided by international non-governmental organizations referred to in paragraph 1 above, related to items on the agenda of the Governing Council or of its subsidiary organs, shall be circulated by the Secretariat to members of the Governing Council or of the subsidiary organ concerned in the quantities and in the languages in which the statements were made available to the Secretariat for distribution."
3. Proof of interest in the field of the environment and proof of non-profit making status, including documents of incorporation of the entity, as well as the following:

Annual reports;
Conference or seminar reports;
Backgrounders;
Newsletters or other periodicals;
Bulletins and pamphlets;
Press releases or media statements.
4. In addition, NGOs applying for observer status to the Governing Council of UNEP are asked whether they have consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The Governing Council of UNEP applies the relevant sections of the guidelines on arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations.
